

# **The Journal of the Church of England Continuing**

*“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever” Hebrews 13:8.*

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**From Bishop David Samuel**

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**Dear Friends,**

**This year marks the 450th anniversary of Luther’s death. The Lutheran church is holding celebrations to mark the occasion, but what are they celebrating? The liberalisation of Lutheranism has led to a marked departure from his teachings, so they are now only Lutheran in name. This has led an independent Lutheran bishop to ask the pertinent question, “An anniversary in honour of Luther without Luther’s teachings?”**

A similar sense of bewilderment was expressed by some of us in 1989 when the Church of England celebrated the 450th anniversary of Cranmer’s birth. What could it be celebrating? Having effectively jettisoned the Thirty Nine Articles which contained Cranmer’s doctrine, and bidden farewell to Cranmer’s liturgy in the Book of Common Prayer, the whole occasion was rendered meaningless and no more than a historical curiosity. Indeed the official organisers seemed embarrassed to know what to say about the great man and would no doubt have been happier if they had not had to say anything at all.

It reminds one of the stinging rebuke Christ administered to the Scribes and Pharisees, *Woe unto you, ye Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets,*

*wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets (Matthew 23:29-31)*

Surely, the best and truest way to honour the memory of prophets and reformers is to perpetuate their spirit and their teachings. It is not those who organise and arrange celebrations and also claim the name of Luther who show the greatest respect for the Reformer, but those who preach and teach the doctrines dear to him - justification by faith alone and the imputed righteousness of Christ.

Similarly those who show the greatest regard for Cranmer are those who declare the teachings of the Articles of Religion, specially those of salvation, and keep the Lord’s Supper in the simple, Scriptural and reformed service that he bequeathed to the Church of England.

When the Jews claimed they were Abraham’s descendants, Jesus said to

them, *If ye were Abraham's children ye would do the works of Abraham.* Whatever claims you make, your spiritual lineage and descent is clear, you are not the children of Abraham at all, but the children of the devil, for you reject me and seek to kill me. *Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it, and was glad* (John 8:56).

Let us be careful not to rest our claim to authenticity upon a mere name or

historical connection. It must be seen in the doctrines that we preach, the worship that we offer and the lives that we lead. That is the only claim to succession in the truth that really matters, and that is the best way to honour prophets, apostles and reformers.

Yours sincerely

David Samuel.

Bishop Samuel has now retired as incumbent of St. Mary's Episcopal Chapel, Castle Street, Reading, but will continue as Presiding Bishop of the Church of England (Continuing).

## **An Important Notice**

The *Association of the Continuing Church Trust* is now a registered charity, number 1055010, and is responsible for the custody and management of the funds of the Continuing Church.

We are not permitted by the Charity Commissioners to raise or accept money in the name of the *Church of England (Continuing)*. For instance, a legacy left to the *Church of England (Continuing)* is most unlikely to be paid to us as there is no such body in law.

Therefore all cheques, gifts and legacies must be made to the *Association of The Continuing Church Trust*. If you wish the gift to be earmarked for a special fund such as the Bishop's Fund, the Allan Bowhill Memorial Ministry Fund or the Journal, please make this clear at the time.

Member churches of the Continuing Church are responsible for setting up their own trusts for the custody and management of their own funds. Gifts intended for member churches must therefore be made out to the particular church trust concerned.

# The Times in Which We Now Live

by The Reverend John F. Shearer

## **Something has happened to our country! Something has happened to our churches! But what is it?**

One secular commentator recently described our country as being “chronically depressed”. Things seem to be in a state of flux and uncertainty in every area of our national life. There appears to be no one in authority who offers any serious answers or even (at least openly) acknowledges the existence of the problem. Meanwhile the great bulk of the population feverishly seeks satisfaction in entertainment, sport, pleasure and selfish materialism while being studiously disinterested in the deeper things of life.

### **Animosity**

The Christian believes that the key to a nation’s well-being lies in its relation to a holy God, from whom all valid authority derives. So much is clear from both the history of Israel in the Old Testament and the history of the nations of Northwest Europe. The blessing that once came to these peoples derived essentially from that great revival known as the Protestant Reformation. Those times of national blessing are now largely forgotten and there is widespread disregard for and indeed animosity towards, the things of God.

### **Octopus-like tentacles**

The churches seem to have been “done over” too. They also are

“chronically depressed”, weakened by the octopus-like tentacles of the charismatic, ecumenical and liberal theological movements. They have lost their Biblical and Gospel bite while Mother Rome *sits as queen* (Rev. 18.7) ready to pick up the pieces and gather them to herself! As we have handed over our national sovereignty to an (as yet) faceless Europe, so we have ceded our Biblical, Protestant and Evangelical heritage to the interests of a false unity as represented for instance by *Churches Together in England*. The liberty to insist on unadulterated Biblical teaching and order in our churches has been surrendered. As far as the Church of England is concerned (and it is a terrible thing to say) there is now no possibility of a man of informed Biblical integrity being accepted, for ordination unless pending a programme of re-education!

### **No blessing**

As a result there are now large numbers of godly people (exactly how many it is difficult to estimate) who find they can no longer attend their local church or chapel because they come away grieved, disturbed and even angry, which is no way to be blessed of God on His day! It is rare for people to be fed on the pure Word of God these days.

### **House meetings**

We in the Church of England (Continuing) are very concerned about this trend, as indeed are others. We are therefore seeking to persuade such people to get in touch with us for their encouragement where this is geographically possible. We also try to put people in touch with one another with a view to establishing a house-meeting on the Lord's Day, when the Prayer Book can be read and a sermon can be heard. We can be confident that such a move would have the blessing of the Lord Himself who said *Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them* (Matt. 18.20).

## **Apostacy**

So what has happened to our country? to our churches? The answer is that we are witnessing the greatest and most widespread apostacy the world has ever seen. Apostacy is the "falling away" of churches and professing Christians from the Biblical faith of the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Of such our Lord graciously took the trouble to warn us: *That day shall not come except there come a falling away first* (II Thess. 2.3.). Far then from being depressed about these things, we should rejoice in that the Lord's purposes are ripening fast!

*(The Rev. John Shearer B.Sc. is a minister of The Church of England (Continuing)), Rector of Nuffield near Henley-on-Thames and Honourary Secretary of the United Protestant Council.)*

## **Isolated Members**

We welcome as an "isolated member" anyone who is baptised and confirmed (or desires to be so), who subscribes to the constitution and who lives too far away from a congregation to be a congregational member.

**Please contact the Isolated Members Secretary, Mr. David Mansell of 17 Greenfels Rise, Oakham, Dudley, West Midlands. DY2 7TP. Phone (01384)-259781.**

Please let us know if you are interested in starting a group or if you would allow us to pass your name, address and/or telephone number to someone else who might be interested in starting such a group. Would you be interested in having a speaker if one were available?

Two people have kindly offered to set up groups. Please contact them if you live in their part of the country. They are:-

- The Revd E. J. Hart, of 135 Grace Dieu Road, Thringstone, **Leicester**, LE67 5AP. Phone (01530) 222767.
- Mr. G. Prosser, Diocesan Reader, of 56 Babbages, Bickington, near **Barnstaple**, EX31 2LW. Phone (01271) 73944.

## A Firm Foundation

# The Clarity of Scripture

By Bishop David N. Samuel

**The Scriptures are spoken of in the Bible itself as a bright light, the source of spiritual illumination for the whole world. As God has set a sun in the heavens, so also he has given a source of spiritual light to men, and that is the sacred and inspired Scriptures. *Thy word is a Lamp to my feet, and a light to my path (Psalm 119:105)*. The Scriptures are *a light that shineth in a dark place (2 Peter 1:19)*. They shine with pure radiance in the murk and gloom of this world. The Bible is the only source of the true knowledge of God, of the creation of the world, of the fall of man, of the coming of the Son of God into the world, of the story of our redemption, of the descent of the Holy Ghost, of the hope of the second coming of Christ and of heaven and eternal life. The Bible is the only source of these teachings and therefore of the spiritual light that is shed upon us by them.**

Since this is the case, it should not surprise us that he who is the Prince of Darkness, the adversary of all truth and righteousness should seek to extinguish that light and to deny it to mankind. He has sought to do this in every way since the light first shone in the world. He sought to corrupt the Word of God in Eden, and to cast doubt upon it, “Yea hath God said....”

He made the manuscripts of the New Testament his special mark, when he sought through various heretical teachers to corrupt them with Gnostic teachings regarding the person of Christ, and so to eclipse the light of the Gospel.

By the Middle Ages the rule of the kingdom of darkness had been greatly extended by the denial of the Scriptures to the people. Though Europe claimed to be Christian and though the Bible was outwardly venerated by the church in fact the people were denied its light. The Bible was in a language they could not understand and so they were effectively denied access to it. It was a closed book, capable of being read by very few, and those chiefly the priests of the church.

### **Translation of the Scriptures.**

The great resolve of the Reformers was to translate the Bible into the language of the people. This was first done by Luther with his translation of the Bible into German, and was quickly followed by our own immortal Tyndale giving the people the Bible in the English language. Tyndale declared that he would cause the boy that drove the plough to know more of the Scriptures than many a worldly cleric. The fundamental premise underlying the translation of the Scriptures by the Reformers was, that if the Bible was given to the people in their own language, and they were able to hear and read the message for themselves, it would be intelligible to them. It would no longer be a closed Book, no longer a lamp hidden under a bushel, but set upon a candlestick to give light to all in the house.

Of course they were fully aware that the saving message of the Bible could only be understood and received by faith; that it is possible for a man to know the Scriptures, to understand them

grammatically and historically and yet not believe their message savingly; that spiritual understanding and faith in them can only be imparted by the Holy Spirit and is given to God's elect. But the outward meaning, what Luther calls the openness of Scripture, is available to all who read and hear them, and is the ground of the spiritual understanding of them. For example a man may read and know the whole story of Jesus Christ in the Gospels, yet not trust in him as Saviour. However the contention of the Reformers, and the presupposition on which they translated the Bible was that its outward message, its historical and grammatical meaning, were intelligible to all once it was translated into their own language. That was a necessary preliminary to any spiritual understanding that might follow.

This was part and parcel of the principle that underlay the position of the Reformers, namely, that all things necessary to salvation are contained in Holy Scripture, and that whatsoever is not read in them nor may be proved by them, is not required to be believed as an article of faith or be thought necessary for salvation. These necessary truths are sufficiently simple to be understood even by the unlearned. The Bible is a plain book. It is intelligible to the people, and they have a right to read it for themselves so that their faith might rest upon the testimony of the Scriptures and not merely on that of the church. That is the doctrine of Protestants on the subject.

### **Opposition from Rome**

The Church of Rome opposed this position, because for centuries they had rested their teachings upon tradition rather than upon the Scriptures. The teachings of Rome concerning

intercession of saints, the sacrifice of the mass, purgatory, pardons, indulgences, the treasury of merit, the supremacy of the pope, all rested upon tradition not upon scripture. Such Scriptural texts as they adduced were wrested from their context and forced into service to appear to give support to these teachings. Rome was therefore strongly opposed to the translation of the Bible into the common language of the people, for in this way the nakedness and untenability of their position would be revealed. William Tyndale said that he wanted to give the people the Scriptures in their own language so that they could see for themselves how the priests juggled with the text and abused it for their own ends.

The strong resistance of the Church of Rome to the translation of the Bible is itself one of the greatest testimonies to its perspicuity, for if its meaning were not on the face of things clear, then they would have had nothing to fear from its translation and dissemination. There would have been no need for Bibles to be bought up and burned in heaps, as they were by the Church of Rome.

Of course, the Reformers did not argue that everything in the Bible was equally clear. They acknowledged that some things were harder to understand than others and that diligent study is required to understand the most difficult parts. But they maintained that all things necessary to salvation are sufficiently plain to be understood even by the unlearned. That Scripture is its own interpreter, and that the hard things of Scripture are to be explained by the passages which are easy to be understood. The hard passages contain nothing which is in principle different from the easier passages. They claimed the support of Augustine in this matter

who wrote:

*The Holy Spirit provides for our hunger in the plainer places, and hardly anything can be obtained from the obscurer passages, which is not said elsewhere with the utmost plainness.*

Again,

*Amongst those things that are plainly set down in Scripture, are to be found all those things which make the sum of our faith and practice<sup>1</sup>*

Or again, Whitaker argued using this time an image taken from Gregory,

*As there are some places in the Scriptures such as that an elephant may swim in them, so there are others so dis-embarrassed, plain and utterly free from prejudices or danger, that a lamb may, as it were, easily wade over them.<sup>2</sup>*

## **God is Light**

The Reformers also maintained the clarity of Scripture upon an *a priori* argument regarding the nature and character of God. That is, that since God himself is the source of all wisdom and truth and spiritual light he would not give to mankind a communication of His will which was not clear. William Whitaker put it thus in his *Disputation on Holy Scripture*,

*If as the Church of Rome maintained the Scriptures were so obscure and difficult to be understood, that they cannot be read with advantage by the people, then this hath happened, either because the Holy Spirit could not write more plainly, or because he would not. No one will say that he could not: and that he would not is repugnant to the end of writing; because God willed that they should be written and committed to let-*

<sup>1</sup> William Whitaker, *A Disputation on Holy Scripture*, p.374

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

*ters for the very end, that we should learn what was written, and thence derive a knowledge of his will, as is plain from Romans XV.4 "Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope" Besides, God does not mock us when he bids us read the Scriptures~ but he would have us read the Scriptures in order that we might know and understand them<sup>3</sup>.*

On the whole the Reformers had the best of the argument with Rome over the clarity of Scripture. These arguments gave great confidence to the Reformers to persevere in the translation of the Bible, in making it available to the people, and in preaching to all the Word of God, which was given a high priority in Protestant countries. And that momentum was maintained later in the 18th and 19th centuries, as was witnessed in the Evangelical awakening and in the formation of the Bible Societies for the world-wide distribution of the Scripture in all languages. George Borrow's *The Bible in Spain* is a fascinating book. He acted for a time as the agent for the British and Foreign Bible Society and distributed copies of the Bible in Spanish all over Spain to the ordinary peasant people in the firm conviction, shared by all Protestants at that time, that the Scriptures can bring light and understanding of salvation, if only men will read them. *The entrance of thy word giveth light* (Psalm 119: 130).

## **Advent of Modern Criticism**

And so this movement continued until it received its first major setback with the advent of the Higher Criticism of the Bible in the 19th Century. That movement challenged the *authority* of

<sup>3</sup> Page 392

Scripture, asserting that the Bible was a human composition, deriving from many different sources, written by many different authors, often anonymous. It attacked the doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture. Higher Criticism derives its name from being concerned not merely with the text of Scripture, which is lower criticism or textual criticism, but from being concerned with rationalistic arguments about the background and composition of the Scriptures, the sources from which they supposedly derived. Thus for example the Book of Genesis is split up and attributed to different anonymous authors, who were supposed to have reflected in their writings the views of their background which coloured their account of creation and of history, and so forth.

However this movement, destructive and harmful as it was to the divine authority of Scripture, and firmly resisted at the time by those who understood its drift, like C. H. Spurgeon, was not an attack on the clarity of Scripture. That is something that has taken place in more recent times, since the last war. The current attack on the Bible is on that very position which the Reformers maintained, namely, its clarity or perspicuity. I shall try to explain why that is so.

### **New interpretation of Scripture**

This modern movement is known as the new hermeneutic. The word hermeneutic means interpretation; in other words, the new method of interpreting the Bible. That is what it claims to be. But that is a rather more hopeful title for the movement than it deserves, for it is really rooted in deep scepticism about whether we can interpret the Bible at all. If it is possible,

then it is assumed it is certainly beyond the means of the ordinary person to understand and interpret the Bible, for this reason. The Bible it is argued was written a very long time ago and in very different cultural context from that of our day. In order to interpret and understand the Bible, it is necessary first to understand the original context in which it was written, to enter in to the mind and background of, for example Isaiah in the 7th century BC or Paul in the 1st century AD. And then having done that, to seek to transpose what they were saying against their background into the cultural setting of our own time. Only in this way it is claimed, can we have a valid understanding of the meaning of Scripture. This is a very tall order, and the scholars with whom it originated seem very pessimistic about it being done successfully. They tend to the view that the past is very largely inaccessible to us. They ask,

*Can we today genuinely share the thoughts and feelings of the first readers of St. Paul's epistles...? Can we even begin to enter into the spiritual experience of a First Century Jew...? And if we cannot, can we really be sure that we are understanding the words of Jesus in the Gospels in the spirit in which they were originally intended?<sup>4</sup>*

This view of the Bible is a very destructive one, every bit as destructive as that of the earlier Higher Criticism, with its attack on the authority of Scripture. This is an attack on its perspicuity. It directly challenges the position of the Reformers and the basic tenet regarding the Bible to which they held, namely, its accessibility to ordinary people, once it was put in their own language. It restores, in principle, the position of the reactionary forces of the

<sup>4</sup> *Christian Believing*, SPCK 1976, p. 9.

Church of Rome, that the Bible cannot be understood by the people, and if it is understood at all it can only be understood by a special educated class - in the case of the Church of Rome the priests, but in the case of the moderns the savants and the professors.

### **Answer to critics.**

What answer can we give to this question? It is of profound and practical importance. This view has done much to undermine the position of Protestantism in recent years. A Protestantism severed from the Bible, a Protestantism for which the Bible is a closed book, is no Protestantism at all. It is finished! But you have only to read the official doctrinal reports of the □Church of England to see that they have taken this kind of thing on board. And the same is true of the other Protestant churches.

This wholly destructive teaching is working like leaven in the institutional churches producing a spiritual wasteland. Is it at all surprising that, when major doctrinal issues come before synods, they have no will or means to resist the spirit of the world and the moral and spiritual downgrade which is taking place. I have heard even Evangelicals say in General Synod, when these matters are discussed, we have to be agnostic on this question, we do not know what the Bible says, it is not clear. This is essentially an a-revelational position, i.e, it is as if God had given no word of truth to his church. For to have a revelation but not to be able to tell what it means is the same as having none at all. Christians are then in the position that the heathen were before them, when they claimed to have oracles but the sayings of the oracles were always ambiguous and could be understood in many different ways. *If the light that is*

*in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!*

### **Pessimism**

To understand what is happening we first have to understand this: the present pessimism of the new hermeneutic over the interpretation of Scripture is the direct result of the admission and acceptance of the earlier position of the Higher Criticism. The assault of Higher Criticism was against the divine authority of the Bible, and once that was admitted, and accepted then it was considered that the Scriptures derived not so much from God as from man. Once the churches had discarded the doctrine of verbal inspiration, i.e, that the Scriptures were “God breathed” (theopneustos) and had put in its place the view that they were the composition of fallible minds, the present position of the new hermeneutic became inevitable for this reason: If the Scriptures have been written merely by men you must understand those men, their minds and their backgrounds in order to understand what they wrote. Without that knowledge you cannot understand them at all. The fundamental question that needs to be settled at the outset, before we can approach the interpretation of Scripture at all is the question our Lord asked of the chief priests concerning the teaching of John: *Is it from heaven or of men?*

The liberal scholars and those who have followed them have largely answered the question in terms of the latter: It is of men. And therefore the Scriptures are a light which emanates from the world not from beyond it. The Scriptures, to use the scholars own description of them are “*man’s searchings*”, “*man’s discovery of God*”,

“*man’s exploration into God*”, and so forth. If, then, they are not transcendent but mundane, not from heaven but of men, it is not surprising that the only means by which they may be understood and interpreted must be historical research and investigation of the past.

By accepting the conclusion of the earlier Higher Criticism the churches have been brought to view the Bible as the record of man’s experience of God and as primarily a human composition. ‘*Insight*’ is the word that has replaced revelation. The Bible is seen as a “*collection of human insights*” into the nature of God. But if that is so, then you can only understand it by reconstructing those historical insights and recapturing their original setting. That as we have seen is no easy task and leads further and further into scepticism. It robs the Bible not only of its transcendent authority, but also of its perspicuity. Locked into our place and time in history it becomes difficult for us to understand the time and place in history of the prophets and apostles. Yet because a human approach to the Bible has been adopted this is the only way to try to interpret it. This is the circle in which the new method of interpreting the Bible has become trapped.

### **Supernatural revelation.**

We can and must break out of this circle. We must challenge the assumptions on which this humanistic approach to the interpretation of Scripture is based. We must do so along the following lines:

1. We must take seriously what the Bible says about itself, i.e, that it is a supernatural revelation of God’s will and purpose. It is the Word of God and not of man. Any phenomenon ought to be

studied in its own right, for what it is *sui generis*, e.g., if we are studying man we must recognise his uniqueness. Though he has a physical nature he is different from the animals. He possesses a mind and rational soul and requires a different treatment and assessment if we are rightly to understand him. And so with the Scriptures. If we are to understand the Bible properly and interpret it correctly we must be prepared to hear what it says about itself. If we do that we cannot adopt the modern, man-centred presuppositions and treat it as if it were any other book. That immediately blocks the path to a proper assessment and appreciation of it. It is the reason why the modern hermeneutic has run into the sand and ended up in scepticism and despair about the Bible’s meaning.

What then is the claim of the Bible about itself? What kind of book does it declare itself to be? The answer to these questions is conveyed in the whole tenor of Scripture. When we read it we find we are conscious that we are not being addressed by men, but by God himself. The whole of Scripture is redolent with the quality of transcendence. It’s thought is directed from God to man. *Thus saith the Lord* is the characteristic note of the Old Testament, and in the New Testament the emphasis is on the forthtelling of the Good News and the words spoken by the Son of God with more than human authority, *Verily, verily I say unto you...* This establishes the true nature and character of the Scriptures. They are a communication from God which requires that we listen rather than talk, a declaration that calls on us to be judged rather than to judge. Without such principles to guide us we must inevitably go astray, which is precisely what the modern critical approach has done. It has presumed to stand over

God's Word not under it. It has refused to treat it *sui generis* and has therefore failed to grasp the nature of the phenomenon with which it is dealing. It has treated of only one aspect - the human side of the Bible and therefore it has come to erroneous conclusions concerning it.

## **Humility**

2. If we recognise as we should the true nature and character of the Bible - that it is a revelation from God - then we must approach it in a particular way, otherwise it will not reveal to us its secrets and will remain to us a closed book. The only proper approach to God's Word is one of reverence and humility. Why? Because God hides these things from the wise and prudent and reveals them unto babes.

The truth and message of the Scriptures is always hidden from those who do not approach it for what it is the revealed truth of God - because they have been conditioned to regard it as the product of human minds and natural forces only. A revelation must be approached in a certain way, as Moses learned when he encountered the presence of God in the burning bush. *Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the ground on which thou standest is holy ground.* Or as Jacob discovered, who similarly was surprised to find himself in God's presence and exclaimed, *How dreadful is this place...*

To understand the message of the Bible and to discern its truth we must approach it with a humble, lowly, reverent and teachable mind. Archbishop Cranmer in his preface to the Bible in English, which was first set up in parish churches in 1538 wrote,

*The learning of a Christian man*

*ought to begin with the fear of God, and to end in matters of high speculation; and not to begin contrarily with speculation and end in fear...the fear of God must be the first beginning, and as if were an A B C or an introduction to all them that shall enter to the very true and most fruitful knowledge of holy Scriptures.*<sup>5</sup>

So unless we are prepared to begin here how can we hope to go further and make any progress at all in understanding the Bible? God has explicitly closed all other paths to the knowledge of his Word. Those who approach the Bible on the assumption that it is largely a document of human composition and that the principle tools for its elucidation are historical and cultural exclude themselves, automatically from the discernment of its truth. We cannot wrest the secrets of God's Word from the Scriptures in any way other than that which he himself has appointed, and should we try to do so we shall be like the Roman soldiers who forced their way into the temple to see what was there, and saw nothing!

## **Bible its own interpreter**

3. The third thing we must do for a right understanding of Scripture is to regard the Bible as its own interpreter. This is the necessary corollary of, treating it in its own right as the revelation of God's truth. This principle of interpreting Scripture by Scripture was axiomatic with the Reformers and indeed with the fathers.

If we would understand the harder passages of Scripture we must unlock their meaning with the other simpler and plainer statements that we find in it. since it is God himself through his Spirit who

<sup>5</sup>Miscellaneous Writings, etc., of Thomas Cranmer, Parker Society, 1846, p. 124

is the sole author of Scripture, its meaning and message must be essentially one throughout. Throughout all its parts, from Genesis to Revelation it is informed by the one mind of God. We may be sure therefore that there is no new truth in the hard and obscure passages which is not contained in simpler form in the more easy passages. As Cranmer has put it in his homily, *The Fruitful Exhortation to the Reading and Knowledge of Holy Scripture*,

*“Although many things in Scripture be spoken in obscure mysteries, yet there is nothing spoken under dark mysteries in one place but the selfsame thing in other places is spoken more familiarly and plainly to the capacity both of learned and unlearned.*

*And those things in the Scripture that be plain to be understood and necessary for salvation, every man’s duty is to learn them, to print them in the memory, and effectually exercise them; and as for the dark mysteries to be ignorant of them until such time as it shall please God to open those things to him... for the hardness of such places the reading of the whole should not be set apart...*

### **Comparing Scripture with Scripture.**

Now this being so we must compare Scripture with Scripture in order to explain its meaning. For example, we shall not assume the identity and meaning of the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53 can only be explained by historical research, and therefore only by specialists and scholars. We shall attend pre-eminently to the interpretation the Bible itself in Acts chapter 8 and 1 Peter 2, and so on, where the figure of the Suffering Servant is identified with Jesus Christ. *I pray thee*, asked the eunuch, *of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself or of some other man? Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same Scripture and preached unto*

*him Jesus.*

In 1 Peter 1: 10-12, Peter is saying that the prophets did not fully understand what they were writing about, they did not always fully grasp or comprehend the significance of the truths they were given under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. They were searching and seeing them afar off. These things of which they spoke and wrote only became fully meaningful through the coming of Christ, through his life, death and resurrection. The assumption therefore on which the liberal approach is based, namely, that we can only understand the prophets by getting into their minds, as it were, and by reconstructing their cultural background is patently false. What we are concerned with here is understanding the mind of God as it is revealed to us in Scripture. That is the significance of the Lamb in the Book of Revelation breaking the seals of the book and opening it. Only he, Christ, is worthy to open the book and to reveal to us the full meaning of Scripture. As Martin Luther put it,

*For what solemn truth can the Scripture still be concealing, now that the seals are broken, the stone rolled away from the door of the tomb, and the greatest of all mysteries brought to light - that Christ, God’s Son, became man, that God is three in one, that Christ suffered for us, and will reign forever? And are not these things known - and what more will you find in them? You see then that the entire content of the Scriptures has now been brought to light even though some passages which contain unknown words remain obscure*

In conclusion; Is it not reasonable to assume, that if God has seen fit to give mankind a revelation which concerns its ultimate good, he would not have left it

<sup>6</sup> Martin Luther. *Bondage of the Will*, p.71

in such obscurity that we could not understand it? He who wills the end wills the means. If God wills the salvation of men through the message of the Scriptures, he would not shroud them in obscurity and darkness and make them unintelligible to mankind. Those who insist upon the difficulty and obscurity of the Bible charge God with folly.

## Two Fronts

Today we must fight on two fronts. We must fight against the Roman Catholic idea that the Bible is not really a suitable book for ordinary people. That they cannot understand it without the magisterium, the teaching office of the church which resides in the pope and the bishops. We must also fight against the idea now current in Protestantism, the new hermeneutic, that the Bible is a very difficult book, incapable of being understood by people because its meaning has been locked away in history, in the cultural past, which is inaccessible to all except some scholars and perhaps not even to them.

Both these positions militate directly against the simple plain truth that the Reformers sought to defend, namely that God has given to us a book and that it is accessible to all who will read or hear its message. That if we will come with a humble and teachable mind, seeking for God's help, we shall understand it and understand it savingly, for all the great truths of salvation are plainly revealed in it. That is why the Reformers were so anxious to translate it and to distribute it, for they believed that, *the entrance of thy words giveth light.*

Protestantism today has lapsed from this position. It no longer believes in or upholds the doctrine of the clarity or

perspicuity of Scripture, and because of that modern Protestantism is moribund. Its adherents now no longer seek for truth but for experience. If they use the Bible, they use it only to stimulate some kind of emotional and subjective feeling of well-being, some 'spiritual high'. They have been told by their leaders that the Bible is no longer intelligible to them. That is why preaching has been so largely laid aside in face of music, dance, drama and entertainment worship generally, which make no demands on the minds of the worshippers. All that people are seeking today it seems is a 'worship experience', because they do not think that anything else is possible for them. They have been told that they cannot trust the Bible to speak to them any truth. I suppose laughter, mindless laughter, is the only response in the face of this situation.

But against all this we must maintain with the Fathers and the Reformers, and the true church in all ages, that "*God has spoken*" in his Word, that the Bible is clear on all essential matters of salvation, and that man has a duty to hear and believe the Gospel. As Luther put it,

*Satan has used these unsubstantial spectres, that the Bible is a difficult book and is not clear, to scare men off reading the sacred text, and to destroy all sense of its value so as to ensure that his own brand of poisonous philosophy reigns supreme in the church.*<sup>7</sup>

*It should be settled as fundamental and most firmly fixed in the minds of Christians, that the Holy Scriptures are a spiritual light far brighter than the sun, especially in what relates to salvation and all essential matters.*<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Bondage of the Will, p. 71

<sup>8</sup> Bondage of the Will, p. 126

# Charlotte Elizabeth

by Dr. and Mrs. Clive V. Gillis

**Charlotte Elizabeth (1790-1846) was born in Norwich and grew up in a minister's home where the Bible was read aloud. She recalls, *that the Word was my delight many a year before it became my counsellor and when at last the veil was withdrawn from my heart and Jesus stood revealed as the A and W of that blessed Book it was not like gradually furnishing a vacant place with valuable goods but like letting a flood of daylight into one already richly stored with all that was precious, though for lack of light to discern their true nature the gems had been regarded as common things.***

A short spell of childhood blindness from which she providentially recovered, she recalls, was accompanied by her first imbibing, *the strength of Protestantism as deeply as it can be apart from spiritual understanding.* Her father showed her local Martyr Memorial sites where past Protestants had witnessed for the truth at the cost of their lives and also introduced her, *to an old folio of Foxe's Book of Martyrs and Monuments in venerable black letter and left me to examine it.* She describes how, *every wood-cut was scrutinised with aching eyes and a palpitating heart* and testifies *...and I took in the spirit of John Foxe.* This childhood impression never left her. Two days prior to her death from cancer she was passing through Canterbury and agreed with an observation that the cathedral was a fine sight but pointing to an ancient gateway retorted, *Yes, but that is the place the martyrs starved to death.*

She moved to Ireland, having married Captain Phelan, which rekindled her Protestant zeal. She began to write tracts in large quantities and soon moved on to larger works when she returned to

England five years later. The British Library catalogue contains several columns of her writings some of which are purely devotional but many contending for England's Protestant heritage. In 1834 she founded the *Christian Lady's Magazine* and in 1841 she became editor of the monthly *Protestant Magazine*, both of which she continued to edit until her death.

She involved herself in the protest against the Catholic Emancipation Act passed in 1829, *a year most hateful...in the annals of England's perfidy to her bounteous Lord.* She recalls her feelings in her "Personal Recollections": *How could I, with the Bible before me, cast a glance over the history of England and question for one moment that my country's strength lay in her protest.* She continues, *The first thing I did was to introduce a separate supplication into our family devotions morning and evening that God would avert the sin from this country.* She saw the enemy advancing through wide-spread complacency much as today so she, *procured a large number of simple tracts explaining*

<sup>9</sup> She was born Charlotte Elizabeth Brown, married Captain Phelan and following his death married again to a Mr. Tonna. She used *Charlotte Elizabeth* as a pen name, presumably to avoid confusion.

*on Scriptural grounds the dreadful nature of popery and the sinfulness, no less the peril, of taking such an inveterate foe to our bosoms. She also got up a petition which, was presented to the Commons by the county member; to the Lords by the bishop of London and the King by the noble honest protesting Duke of Newcastle.*

In 1837 she edited *Foxe's Martyrs* down into two affordable and easily readable volumes the writer has in his possession, which open with a fine *Dissuasive against Popery* by Edward Bickersteth. In her own dedication to Queen Adelaide she explains, *the voluminous work of Foxe is scarcely suited for general readers so I deemed it right to furnish the youth of our people with an extract of what especially concerns us as a Protestant Church, to know.*

By Providence one of her tracts reached Italy and led to the conversion of an Italian Physician. When the Archbishop of Sienna discovered this he was instrumental in placing all her writings in the Papal Index *Ex-purgatorius*, after condemning them publicly!

She passed into the presence of the Lord in Ramsgate on the 12th of July 1846, the text on her gravestone being *Looking unto Jesus*, and leaving literary remains in great quantity which could well do with reprinting in these dark days of Rome's ascendancy.

*(Dr. Gillis practices in Weston-super-Mare. He and Mrs. Gillis worship with the Bristol Congregation of the Church of England (Continuing))*

## **Archbishop Trench on Rev.3:21**

***“To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in my throne.***

Wonderful indeed is this promise. Being the last and the crowning promise of those made to the seven churches, it is the highest and most glorious of them all. Step by step the promises have advanced until such a height is reached that no higher promise can be conceived

It seemed much to promise the Apostles that they should sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Matt. 19:28); but here is promised to every believer something more than was there promised to the Twelve.

And it is more wonderful still when we consider to whom this promise is here addressed [the church in Laodicea]. He whom Christ threatened just now to reject with loathing out of his mouth, is offered a place with Him on his throne. And indeed so it is; the highest place is within the reach of the lowest; the faintest spark of grace may be fanned into the mightiest flame of divine love...

It shall be granted to them to sit down in Christ's throne. There can be nothing above or beyond this; and this promise is therefore the last. (*Commentary on the Epistles to the Seven Churches in Asia, 1861*)

*(Richard Chevenix Trench (1807-1886) was Archbishop of Dublin. His real name was La Tranches, being of Huguenot descent both through his father and mother Melesina Chevenix).*

## Confirmations and Licensings

On 2 June, Trinity Sunday, Bishop Samuel visited the Church at **Wolverhampton** and conducted a Communion Service at which two candidates, Mrs. Sonia Budgen and Mr. Timothy Simpson, were confirmed. At the same service Mr. George Hall was licensed as Reader.

On Sunday 9th June at St. Mary's, Castle Street, **Reading**, Mr. Edward John Malcolm was licensed as a Reader.

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## Constitution

**1. Doctrine:** The doctrine of the Church of England (Continuing) shall be that of the 39 Articles of Religion understood in their original, natural and intended sense.

**2. Worship:** The worship of the Church of England (Continuing) shall be generally according to the Book of Common Prayer (1662).

The Authorised Version of the Bible shall be the only version used in the lectern and the pulpit and in public readings and expositions at all meetings of the Church of England (Continuing).

**3. Ministry:** The consecration and ordination of ministers shall be according to the Ordinal of the Book of Common Prayer (1662).

The Church of England (Continuing) believes in the ministry of women according to Scripture which does not permit them to teach or exercise authority, particularly as bishops, priests, and deacons.

**4. Discipline:** The church shall be episcopally governed.

A general assembly shall be held not less than once a year consisting of the bishop and the ministers of the church and representatives of the local congregations to transact the business of the denomination and for mutual encouragement and edification.

**5. Membership:** New churches may apply for membership of the Church of England (Continuing) on the basis of their agreement with the doctrine, worship and discipline of that body. Membership of the local church shall be on the basis of baptism and confirmation and approval by the local presbyter.

Any matters incapable of resolution shall be referred to the Ordinary.

# Church of England (Continuing)

The Right Reverend Dr. David N. Samuel, M.A., Ph.D. *Presiding Bishop*

The Right Reverend Albion W. Knight, M.A., M.S. *Bishop*

## Committee

The Rt. Rev. Dr. D. N. Samuel, M.A., Ph.D. (*Chairman*)

The Rev. B. G. Felce, M.A.

The Rev. E. Malcolm, B.A.

The Rev. J. F. Shearer, B.Sc.

Dr. N. Malcolm, M.A., M.B., F.R.C.P. (*Secretary*)

Mr. D. K. Mansell (*Treasurer*)

## Churches

**St. Mary's, Castle Street, Reading.** The Rt. Rev. Dr. D. N. Samuel. Sunday Services 11 a.m. Morning Prayer (First Sunday, Lords Supper), 6.30 p.m. Evening Prayer (Third Sunday Lords Supper). Enquiries 01734 595131.

**Former Congregation of St. John the Baptist with Mary-le-Port,** Chapel of the Three Kings, Fosters Almshouses, top of Christmas Steps, Colston Street, Bristol 1. Sunday Service 11 a.m. Morning Prayer. Enquiries 01934 712520.

**Nuffield Parish Church,** Nuffield, near Henley-on-Thames, The Rev. J.F. Shearer. Sunday Services 11 a.m. Morning Prayer, 6.30 p.m. Evening Prayer. Lords Supper 8 a.m. first Sunday, 6.30 p.m. third Sunday. Bible Study Wednesday 8 p.m. Enquiries 01491 641305.

**South London Congregation,** St. Johns Ambulance Hall, Kingston Road (Opposite Palmerston Road), Wimbledon. The Rev. B. G. Felce and Mr. Andrew R. Price. Sunday Services 11.00 a.m. Morning Prayer, 6.30 p.m. Evening Prayer. Enquiries 0181 642 7885.

**Wolverhampton Congregation.** Bethany Chapel, Lower Prestwood Road, at junction with Blackwood Ave., Wednesfield. The Rev. E. Malcolm. Sunday Services 12.40 p.m. Morning Prayer, 4.00 p.m. Evening Prayer. Enquiries 01547-528815.

## Treasurer

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## Journal

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