

The Journal
of
The Church of England
(Continuing)

*Jesus Christ the same
yesterday, and today,
and forever. Heb. 13:8*



Issue No: 21
December 2001

The Association of the Continuing Church Trust. Registered Charity Number 1055010

CONSTITUTION

- 1 **Doctrine:** The doctrine of the Continuing Church shall be that of the 39 Articles of Religion understood in their original, natural and intended sense.
- 2 **Worship:** The worship of the Continuing Church 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 Continuing Church.

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

The Continuing Church publishes a prayer letter, "Intercessions." It is available free of charge to those who would like to receive news and to pray for the various needs.

Please write to
Rev. E. J. Malcolm, The Parsonage, 1, Downshire Square, Reading,
RG1 6NJ.

Would contributors please note that they can send their news via email, to
edwardj@malcolm.co.uk

Contributions toward postage costs are gratefully received.

From the Presiding Bishop, Edward Malcolm

15, Bridge Street
Knighton
Powys
LD7 1BT

Dear Friends,

Be sober, be vigilant (I Peter 5:8)

What Peter says is, 'be sane, keep watch'. He uses two words which go inseparably together, so puts no 'and' between them. 'Sober' describes the mind, and shows in our behaviour by being 'sane'; or as Mark and Luke say of the one out of whom demons had just been cast by the Lord, 'in his right mind'. Thus soberness within results in sound-minded actions, in self-possession, in having no excess of any kind, in being moderate and discreet; in a word, balanced. Keeping watch means vigilance, understanding the times, watching our adversary the devil's moves.

The world is unbalanced, although wise. A brother of mine years ago had a job in a big store, and whilst eating his sandwiches at lunch met a young paint salesman, who turned out to have an Oxbridge double first. The man had a rare academic distinction, but lacked what it takes, failing job after job. That man is the world for you. Cain's line produced all the inventions, but could not control themselves. Enoch's had nothing to match their technology, music, art and skill, but had self-control. Cain's ended in such a riot of violence and 'loudness' as the word used signifies, that God wiped them out. Quiet Noah, of Seth's line, brought 'rest' to mankind. That's what we mean by the saints having wisdom, the world lacking it. It isn't just the saints being wiser as regards eternity, but wiser here and now.

The response by all sides to September 11th illustrates exactly what is meant. They roll and reel about like drunkards, unable to see the obvious. From the moment I heard what had happened earlier that afternoon, the whole matter was as clear as noonday. There can be only two losers: Bible-believing Christians, and Israel. For the unworkable policies adopted will inevitably lead sooner or later, probably sooner, to Islam having the whip-hand, if Muslims are to be sufficiently placated to agree to any semblance of peace. Inevitably they will turn, together with the Lord-Jesus-hating world, against both believers and Israel. By bargaining with our freedoms, bought dear in blood and fire by our Reformers, and by selling

Israel down the river, and by these alone, will they get themselves out of this mess. The world is getting itself into an ever-deeper mess by its unbalanced mindset.

This is just one more of an ever-growing list of ever-more-unwise actions. As governments desert God's commandments, so they enforce man-made laws to 'improve' (yes, Lord save us!) life. These are in fact paltry (foxes), murderous (unborn babies), vile (laws governing sex), unfair (some equality legislation), unreal (putting the world to rights whilst denying man is lost in sin), unworkable (family legislation, school discipline), and ostrich-like (never admitting the obvious fact that everything is getting worse and worse).

Isaiah summed it up many centuries ago in chapter five, verse twenty: *Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!*

What a pleasure to turn from all that, now rapidly spreading into the churches, to the Church of England (Continuing), and an atmosphere of peace and sweet forgiveness to all who feel they do not love us. We are able to report that the Boston Protestant Reformed Church joined us, and that the inauguration service went well. They meet in pleasant, convenient and central premises, in the 'Upper Room' in the old Blackfriars monastery, and we welcome and pray for them and their leader, Mr. Alistair Turner.

It is also good to know that the Rev. Brian Felce was twice brought safely through major heart surgery, and that Mrs Judith Samuel's heart condition is continuing to respond to treatment. Others also have faced major medical problems and the Lord has restored them to us. We are full of gratitude.

We look to the Lord to send forth labourers into His harvest, not of constraint, but willingly, especially to call and equip men for the ministry. Likewise for their needs to be met by the Lord's people, again not of necessity, but of a willing mind. May God open the way ahead.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Samuel Malcolm". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

THE GOSPEL SANDALS

“And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace”

by Edward Malcolm*

I want to encourage you to stand firm, in peace, in the Gospel. The third piece of armour which the Christian soldier is to put on is footwear. The words ‘put on!’ are a military order. They ring out with the clear note of a bugle summoning to the fight without delay. The picture is of the Roman heavy infantryman, ten cohorts of whom provided the principal strength of an imperial legion. You, as a soldier of Jesus Christ, are compared to such a man, not to the lightly armed skirmisher, or the soldier in barracks to whom Paul was chained. Among the ten cohorts, you have chosen the post of honour, the thickest part of the fight, one of those eleven hundred and five soldiers of the first cohort, the guardians of the sacred eagle, the most approved for valour and fidelity. That is the Apostle’s comparison here, not to the Jewish warrior, even though Judah the Lion was and is formidable in the fight.

You have chosen, having done all, to stand and fight just where the devil is attacking, the most exposed place, the most criticized, marginalized, pitied, and despised. Hear what Martin Luther said.

If I profess with the loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except precisely that little point which the world and the devil are at the moment attacking, I am not confessing Christ. Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved, and to be steady on all the battle front besides is mere flight and disgrace - if he flinches at that point.

I say from my heart that you are the ones who have taken a logical position, where you can stand. Many are attempting to shut doors through which the horse has already bolted. I say this after many years of watching the situation: it is impossible to stand foursquare for the Gospel being preserved in the Church of England if your position involves some degree of unreality, or fighting at some other front than the hottest part of the battle. What is at stake is not some minor matter; it is the Gospel of peace as we know it.

1. YOUR SANDALS ARE FOR THE DEFENCE OF THE GOSPEL

Notice here the word ‘preparation’. One meaning is ‘preparedness’, defence being the foremost idea. But the word is not just that, it is more. It is the attack by the Christians with the Gospel. The Roman Empire had long frontiers facing

** A paper given at the Annual Assembly, Benson, July 21st, 2001*

the barbarian hordes. They despised as weakness keeping the legions in fortified cities. No! Instead they placed them on the frontiers in the open field, apparently in maximum danger. In fact it was wisdom, it gave them mobility, showing the barbarians they were not afraid, but would rush out like a swarm of bees if provoked. Preparedness thus is not just a prepared foundation. It *is* that, for we know and depend on the Gospel to give us peace and stability of life and conscience. But it is more, we stand unmoved against the foe, ready to defend ourselves and the Gospel at any moment. That is the great need today.

2. YOU HAVE GOSPEL SANDALS FOR #UIDITY

The old Greek phalanx stood shoulder to shoulder, each man's shield covering the next. The legions beat the Greeks by opening out the lines, three feet between each man, eight feet between the ranks. This gave room for long, rapid charges and room to weave and fight, and to run in reinforcements among the exhausted legionaries during long, hard-fought battles. The sandal speaks of disciplined manœvering.

The Gospel is under a thousand attacks today from every quarter. How quickly the devil can change his appearance, weapons and dispositions. He appears to hold the initiative, and we are always forced to respond. However, shod with gospel sandals we can move as fast as he. The gentle, quick movements of the Gospel are like the feet of a Roman soldier in the thick of the fight, turning this way and that as fresh waves of attackers come on, never taken at a disadvantage.

The movements of the National Church appear to me to be those of men responding - always one step behind the devil, always reacting, while he always advances. Now I say this, if they would only trust the Gospel of our Lord Jesus, they would take the initiative from the devil, and the world. The church behaves like the back wheel of a bicycle whose front wheel is the world. By this Gospel, in peace, not continual bickering over baptisms, services, an almost endless list, with clever men taking the chance to show their superior knowledge; but in peace, the Gospel makes us the front wheel.

3. YOU HAVE GOSPEL SANDALS TO GIVE GREAT SWIFTNESS.

The central meaning of the word 'preparation' is 'equipment', meaning what makes the soldier prepared, ready. THE great mark of the Roman legion was speed, and that depended on the sandal. Caesar won his wars like Alexander or Napoleon, by the sandal! Again and again advancing so rapidly that the enemy were caught when they thought there was plenty of time yet to set up defensive lines. The first and great use of the nail-studded Roman sandal was to march - nearly 20 miles in the first six hours, 40 a day normally, over all types of terrain, in all weathers. The meaning is simple: swiftness of movement in response is the best method of defence.

4. YOU HAVE GOSPEL SANDALS BECAUSE YOU ARE IN CONFLICT.

The idea Paul has in mind is wrestling with the devil, standing firm against all his many tricks, stratagems and powers. We have withstood the headlong rush of the devil's troops, and now we are in the thick of it. Unless we stand in the Gospel of peace, we shall fall and be beaten. The sandal was designed to keep the soldier on his feet on blood-soaked, slippery, muddy ground, 'm the thick of battle, or running to the ramparts of the overnight fort to repel a surprise attack of the barbarians under cover of darkness. It included carrying the battle to the enemy in disciplined advance, preserving the baffle lines, carrying all before.

5. AT ALL TIMES YOU NEED THESE GOSPEL SANDALS.

Soldiers' winter quarters had great sheds in which the Romans fulfilled their motto: prepare for war in time of peace. Here they fought daily, the only difference to the battlefield being the lack of blood. They had five years of exercises when training, which included endurance and agility training designed to learn to keep one's feet in the thick of a fight. You must always remain fit and active, never let up.

Have we a definite position? Do we know what we stand for? The Romans reduced warfare to an art, teaching tactics, especially knowing how to choose their ground on which to make their stand. Here we stand, this is our chosen position, Will we yield, move away, compromise? Many are saying, why do the various different Continuing Churches not combine? That would give numbers, unity, strength. At present there are at least 20, from Anglo-Catholic to Protestant, from Traditionalist to ourselves. Our answer is, we have no wish to interpret 'stand' as immobility, stubborn refusal to be reasonable, but we do mean we have taken our stand on both doctrine and practice, and have no wish to get into contradictory positions. Indeed the call is to accept certain anti-gospel traits of others, so as to include everyone. But above all we are in earnest, and as I look around, many are simply playing with words, lacking deep seriousness, taking a step back from reality and seeming to shrug off responsibility. My answer is, better to reduce one's army from 32,000 to 300 with Gideon, all determined to stand, for the devil is roaring today. Like Luther let us say: 'Here I stand, I can do no other'.

O what will God do with this degenerate age we live in! O England! England! I fear some sad judgment or other bodes thee! If such glad tidings as the gospel brings be rejected, sad news cannot be far off – I cannot think of less than of a departing gospel. God never made such a settlement of his gospel among any people but he could remove it from them.

William Gurnall - *The Christian in Complete Armour*. (c. 1665)

APOSTASY

by David N. Samuel*

John Owen is one who has written comprehensively on this subject. I have, therefore, taken his writings as the basis for what I want to say, while drawing on the contribution of others here and there, and interjecting some comments of my own.

By way of definition, Owen helpfully says that ‘apostasy is the relinquishing of any important truth or way in religion; and heresy is the embracing of any new distinctive opinion, or principle, or way in the profession of it.’ A man may be an apostate by partial apostasy, that is, depart from the profession of some truth he had formerly embraced, or from the performance of some duty which he had engaged in, without being a heretic, or choosing any new opinion which he did not before embrace. Conversely, a man may be a heretic, that is, choose and embrace some new false opinion, which he may invent out of his own imagination, without a direct renunciation of any truth which he had held before.

On these grounds, Owen argued that the Church of Rome is both apostate and heretical. Apostate because it has renounced the great truths of the Gospel, and heretical because it has invented and coined many articles of pretended faith, which the old Roman Church never had. We shall come back to the subject of the Church of Rome later. For the moment the definition of apostasy, and its distinction from heresy, is an important one to bear in mind.

I propose to divide this article into five parts. Firstly, Man’s Apostasy from God. Secondly, The Apostasy of the Church of Rome. Thirdly, The Causes of Apostasy Amongst all Persons in all Ages. Fourthly, The Question Whether a True Believer Can Fall from Grace and be Lost. Finally, Some Directions on How to Avoid the Prevailing Apostasy.

1. THE APOSTASY OF MAN FROM GOD - THE REJECTION BY MAN OF THE IMAGE OF GOD

When God created man, He made him in His own image, and by so doing He distinguished man from all the other works of creation. Genesis 1:26-27: *And God said, Let us make man in our image ... in the image of God created he him.* Nowhere else is there any such emphasis of expression concerning any work of God. There was an involvement of all the Persons of the Trinity. *Let us make man...* God intended three things by this communication of His image to man.

1. To make a representation of His holiness and righteousness. *The heavens declare the glory of God* - His eternal power and Godhead - but none of these things was able to receive impressions of His righteousness and holiness. It

* A paper given at the Annual Assembly, Benson, July 21st, 2001

was this that God intended when He made man in His image. And when it was lost in Adam it was restored in Christ.

2. It was meant to render actual glory to God. However wonderful and beautiful the works of creation were, without the image of God here below, there was nothing to understand and appreciate them.
3. It was intended to be the means to bring man to the eternal enjoyment of God. This was to be done by way of obedience - *This do and live*. But we were only enabled to do it by the image of God in our natures. The image of God in man was, therefore, the crowning expression of all the outward works of God in nature. In man, made in the image of God, the circle of creation was complete.

But the apostasy of man from God, by sin, defaced the image of God in man, and at the same time subjected the whole creation to vanity or futility. There is, in consequence, no way left by which the glory of God might be manifested in the creation to His praise and glory. The nature of man alone was designed to that end and purpose. He, therefore, not only fell himself, but dragged down the whole of creation. In his debased condition he worshipped the heavenly bodies above as his gods, and those creatures below he abused with his lusts. Therefore God was dishonoured in every way, as Paul declared to the Romans, in chapter 1 of that great epistle.

When we consider the greatness of this apostasy from God, we have to acknowledge that the recovery of a portion of mankind from this miserable state was an act of free-will on the part of God. He had no obligation to do so. It would not have been inconsistent with the nature of God's righteousness to have left the whole of mankind to perish eternally. Therefore, wherever there is any mention made in Scripture of the restoration of mankind, it is constantly said to be of the mere sovereign grace and mercy of God (Ephesians 1:3-11).

Those who make objection to this do not seem to understand the nature of our original apostasy from God, nor the righteousness of God in dealing with the angels that sinned. Man had voluntarily broken all the relations of love and moral good between himself and God, had defaced His image - the only representation of His holiness and righteousness in the lower world - and deprived Him of all His glory from the works of His hands, and had allied himself with the devil. What dishonour would it have been to God if He had left man to His own choice, and the consequences of it?

Here, in the original apostasy of man from God we have the source of all subsequent defection and falling away from God in the history of the world and of the Church. It all partakes of this evil and rebellious character, in seeking to frustrate and oppose the purposes of God. This brings us to the second head of this paper -

2. THE APOSTASY OF THE CHURCH OF ROME

When God, in the fulness of time, put into execution His plan to save and redeem a people, through His Son Jesus Christ, the second Adam, and thereby to restore the fallen creation, the devil sought to counter and overthrow that plan. This he did, and does, through the “mystery of iniquity”, which he sets to work in the Church in opposition to the “mystery of godliness”. Even in the apostle Paul’s days, Satan was initiating that apostasy which, beginning in small ways in the Church, would in time grow to be universal.

‘A mystery,’ says Poole, in his commentary on this passage in 2 Thessalonians, ‘is something which is abstruse, intricate, and not easily discerned. There are mysteries in doctrine and in practice, mysteries of godliness and mysteries of iniquity; mysteries of the kingdom of God and the devil’s kingdom. So there are the deep things of God, and the depths of Satan.’

The mystery of iniquity is not open sin and wickedness, but dissembled piety, specious errors, wickedness under a form of godliness cunningly managed. It works specially to undermine Christianity and the peculiar doctrines and practice of it. The early assaults on Christianity came from without, in the form of the Gnostic heresies, arising from heathen religion and philosophy, but this was to come from within, and to prove to be far more insidious and pervasive. I am alluding, of course, to the manifestation of this apostasy in the power of the Church of Rome, which growing from small beginnings led to the almost universal corruption of the doctrines and practices of the Christian faith in the medieval papacy.

Dr. Martyn Lloyd Jones, in a sermon on Ephesians 6, spoke of the Church of Rome as ‘Satan’s masterpiece’ for this very reason, that it seeks to overthrow Christianity not by open, frontal assault, but by counterfeiting its doctrines, and presenting its own version to the world as the truth. The differences, and yet apparent similarities, between the true catholic Church of Scripture and the apostles, and the false Roman Catholic Church is set out by Francis Turretin, the 17th century Protestant theologian who most ably followed in Calvin’s footsteps at Geneva. He wrote:

Christ wills that sola Scriptura, inspired by God be received by us as the perfect rule of faith and morals. The Pope denies Scripture alone is an adequate rule of faith, unwritten traditions must be attached. These traditions, together with Scripture, are to be equally adopted and venerated. They are to be held alike as the means of influencing godliness.

Christ wishes His Word to be believed on its own, because it does not take its authority from man. In our estimation, the Pope wishes the authority of the Word to be derived from his Church. Christ wishes no supreme judge to be acknowledged in ruling on controversies other than God speaking through Scripture. The Pope

sacrilegiously claims this prerogative for himself.

Furthermore, Christ teaches that He alone is the Mediator, appointed by the Father, who alone is the way, the truth and the life, without whom no man can come to the Father. Yet the Pope forces innumerable mediators upon us. Mediators who, he says, are to reveal the way to heaven for us. Also, Christ testifies that there is no other sacrifice apart from His own; no other satisfaction by which we may obtain remission of sins and the reward of salvation. But the Pope insists on human punishments and satisfactions, while demanding a new propitiatory sacrifice called the Mass.

Though Christ established that men are to be saved by grace through faith alone, the Pope includes works as well. Whereas Christ institutes only two sacraments, the Pope decrees seven. Christ ordains that no one but God be the object of cult and adoration, yet the Pope worships creatures as well. Christ declared Himself the sole Head and Groom of the Church, but the Pope -rants this to himself as well. Christ subjects Himself to the magistrates, ordering His servants to be likewise subject. Nevertheless, the Pope subjects the magistrates, rulers and emperors to himself.

Can it truly be said that those who teach such doctrines and defend such dogmas keep the faith of Christ? Or are they not adjudged guilty by the deserts of defection and the fact of apostasy?

Thus Turretin on the Roman Catholic apostasy. This was a view shared by all the Reformers and Puritans.

It is true that the Church of Rome suffered a great setback at the Reformation, and her deceptions were unmasked for very many. Bunyan, in *Pilgrim's Progress*, depicts Giant Pope sitting at the mouth of his cave, an old man, grown so crazy and stiff in his joints that he cannot come at pilgrims as they go by, which was indeed true of the situation in England at the height of the Reformation. But since then the Roman Catholic apostasy has revived. The deadly wound which the beast received has been healed and the whole world wonders after it. Today, the Church of Rome claims one billion members worldwide, which makes its power greater than at the time of its ascendancy in Europe in the Middle Ages. And besides that we must take into account its leading and dominating role in the ecumenical movement.

The Protestant Churches, having largely abandoned the biblical doctrines of the Reformation, which were their *raison d'être*, are capitulating to the leadership of the papacy and to Roman Catholic doctrine. There are, indeed, other ways that men and Churches may apostatise from the faith - into liberalism, for example, or other faiths - but Rome remains the great threat to the

Protestant churches, Satan's great masterpiece, his counterfeit Christianity by which he deceives the nations.

Of course, the Church of Rome boasts that it cannot fall away because it has the special privilege of indefectibility. But, as John Owen says: "It has fallen out with Rome as it did with him from whom she falsely claims to derive her indefectibility. When our Lord said that all men would forsake Him, Peter claimed exemption for himself. However, Peter was the only one who, in fact, forsook and denied his Lord. Likewise, the Church of Rome, with its special claim, distinguishes itself with a peculiar apostasy above all the Churches of the world."

He then adds what must possibly rate as the most damning indictment of the Church of Rome that has ever appeared in print. "If the kingdom of Christ - which once was a kingdom of light and truth and holiness, separation in principles, affection and conversation from the world; of communion with God and lovingkindness towards men; of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost - may become and is become a kingdom of darkness, pride, ignorance, ambition, persecution, blind superstition and idolatry, then and not else doth it visibly remain among them [i.e. the Romanists] and they have nothing apostatised from the laws and government of it."

So much, then, for the Roman apostasy. Let us now turn to our third head.

3. THE CAUSES OF APOSTASY AMONGST ALL PERSONS IN ALL AGES

The first cause, says Owen, is this: 'a rooted enmity in the minds of men to spiritual things, remaining uncured under the profession of the Gospel.'

The carnal mind is enmity against God (Romans 8:7). Men take to themselves the profession of the Gospel while this enmity remains in their minds. Many will entertain evangelical truth in the mind, but resent it when it begins to work in the conscience. They have received the truth, but not the love of it. Thus where you have a merely intellectual or formal profession of true religion you will have a great falling off from it, when carnal interests begin to come into conflict with it. That is the real test that we are witnessing today. With the growing influence of the ecumenical movement and broad and liberal views of Christianity gaining ground, the tide has turned in the churches from Reformed and Evangelical religion. Those who look for worldly advantage in religion must begin to look elsewhere. Loyalties are being tested and tried.

If there has not been a real work of grace in the heart there will be a falling away. We have seen it happening. The evangelical constituency has changed profoundly in my time, in the Church of England, which can only mean that there were a great many whose profession was merely formal and superficial, when it seemed the right and proper thing to be an evangelical, and even certain

advantages were to be gained from it.

Secondly, darkness in spiritual matters is another cause of apostasy

Man in his natural state stands in need of illumination. *The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him* (I Corinthians 2:14). His mind must be transformed by grace; and where men's minds have not been so transformed as to apprehend the truth, they have no stable grounds on which to abide in the profession of the truth. Here we have another cause of apostasy from the Gospel after it has been professed. Owen says: 'We have seen, in all ages, men learned and skilled in the doctrines of the truth, so as they might have been looked on as pillars of it, yet to have been as forward as any unto apostasy from it when they have been tried; yea, such have been the leaders of others thereunto'. Again, to my mind, this seems to account for the defection of many evangelicals in recent years from the truth.

Owen goes on to say: 'No man who forsakes the truth ever saw the glory of it, or had experience of its power.' They treat it with a degree of detachment and objectivity; they will talk and dispute about it with the greatest indifference as to what is true and false. They do not seem to recognise the wickedness, the confusion and the heinousness of error. They appear to regard truth and error with equanimity. They do not have that holy love of truth and equally holy hatred of error that would secure them against apostasy.

I think this explains the case with which many in recent years have been able to enter into dialogue with Roman Catholics and even Muslims and Hindus. It demands a certain detachment from the truth to be able to do that. You are obliged to put a question mark over it, otherwise you are not genuinely engaging in dialogue, which means, at least in principle, you are prepared to change and qualify your beliefs. I think we must be very careful to distinguish between dialogue and controversy. Dialogue carries with it implicitly this assumption, that you will be prepared to modify and change your position, in the light of the debate, if it so requires you. But controversy, in which all the Reformers engaged, is quite a different thing. You start from what you know and believe to be the truth, and your object is to expose the error and confusion of the opponent's position and, if possible, persuade him of the truth. It was dialogue in which Satan engaged Eve in the garden. She would have been safe if she had insisted on controversy. When men have not a fervent love of the truth and no sense of abhorrence of error they are in the anteroom of apostasy. It is said that the apostle John fled from the public baths, where Cerinthus the heretic appeared, lest they should fall on him. Today some evangelicals would be glad to stay and engage in friendly dialogue.

The reason for this is that the truth does not hold and control them, but they hold and control it, and therefore they think that they can change and modify it. But if a man has been apprehended, arrested and captured by the truth of God's

Word, he has no power to do that, and therefore is not in danger of falling away from it. For example, if justification by faith is just one doctrine amongst many, which you happen to hold in a theological system, you may feel quite relaxed about discussing it with others who hold different views, and even making some concession in the interest of agreement. But if justification by faith is the only ground by which you can stand and exist before a holy and righteous God, and any change in the terms of it would mean your damnation, then you will not have such a relaxed attitude to it. It is the difference between holding the truth existentially and merely intellectually.

Thirdly, ignorance is another cause of apostasy

Ignorance of any kind exposes people to great danger, and this is specially true with regard to the Christian faith. ‘The ignorant,’ says Owen, ‘are like children ‘tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine’, a prey to seducers, and exposed to the blandishments of Rome, which teaches a religion that is readily appreciated by an unregenerate mind, by the natural man. When men are called to give an account of their faith, they are at a loss, and can quite easily fall away to popery or some other creed. Ignorance is therefore a fatal danger’.

In our society today there is growing ignorance, a general lowering of standards, a ‘dumbing down’ process going on. People wish to be entertained, not edified. There is resistance to any strenuous effort of the mind and the will. And since this tendency is present generally in society it invades the churches too. It is seen in the bland and trite songs that are replacing hymns and psalms, in the dialogue and chat-show type of interviews that replace sermons, and in the general relaxed and free-wheeling format of worship generally.

The Reformation of the Church consisted in the deliverance of people from darkness and ignorance, and if they are reduced to the same condition again, they become a ready prey to popery. Is it any wonder that Rome is making such remarkable advances amongst Anglicans, Lutherans and the Free Churches? These are precisely the conditions in which she can flourish. Some are surprised that she is able to call Protestants ‘separated brethren’ and think that this arises out of charity. In fact, it is attributable to the Roman Catholic doctrine of ‘invincible ignorance’. Those Protestants who no longer understand their own faith (and that is now the large majority) and therefore do not knowingly reject the teachings of Rome, are technically in a state of ‘invincible ignorance’ and on those grounds may be termed ‘separated brethren’. Of course, those relatively few who are not in that position, and deliberately and knowingly reject the pope and the teachings of Rome, are heretics still.

This is a very serious matter, for it shows the desperate condition into which Protestantism has now fallen and the very real danger to which ignorance has reduced the once live and flourishing Protestant Churches.

Fourthly, pride and vanity

The innate pride and vanity of men's minds is, says Owen, another thing that leads to a falling away from the faith. The design of the Gospel is to 'cast down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God'. But the mind of man would be the measure of all things.

1. It exalts imaginations of its own which it loves and applauds.

2. It makes itself the sole and absolute judge, without desire or expectation of supernatural guidance or assistance.

Men cannot receive the Gospel where the former is not mortified and the latter is not eradicated by spiritual light. The Gospel must not be received as the word of man, but as the Word of God, which it is, with submission. Unless we deny ourselves and become humble and teachable, we can never be saved or acquainted with its mysteries. *The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him.*

There is nothing in revelation, says Owen, that is opposed to reason, but there is much that is above it. There are divine mysteries in the Word that we may understand, but which we cannot comprehend, for reason is finite. *Can men by searching find out God?* This is not because of the corruption of our nature but because of its constitution. But there are things in the Gospel that are contradictory to reason as it is corrupted. Reason is no longer just finite, but also depraved. It is not able to judge spiritual things, and is subject to prejudices.

So first of all, the Gospel requires men to believe in things that are above their comprehension, *things that eye hath not seen*, etc. And secondly, it requires men to believe in things that are opposed to their corrupted reason, for their minds naturally act in contradiction to the revealed will of God in the Gospel with enmity and hatred. Thus the wise men of Athens rejected the doctrine of the apostle. The design of the Gospel, in all its special truths and mysteries, is to bring every thought into subjection to the obedience of faith. *If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise* (I Corinthians 3:18). Thus, some when they have embraced the outward profession of the Gospel, find it contrary to their corrupt reason, and seek to re-enthroned reason. Some from the outworking of their own rational faculties, withdraw their minds from a humble attitude. All ancient heresies sprang from this root.

Such was the case, said Owen, with Socinianism. What is above reason - the doctrines of the Trinity, the Incarnation - they reject as against reason. The same is true, in our day, of liberalism. They bring to Scripture the template of their philosophical presuppositions and their rationalistic notions of God. If anything in the Bible agrees with what they think, they accept it; if it disagrees, they reject it. In this way they make to themselves an idol, and apostatise from revealed truth. The pride of men's minds has been in all ages the great principle of

opposition to, and apostasy from evangelical truth. A humble subjection of the mind and conscience to the authority of God in His Word is the only security against such a tendency.

In these several ways which we have enumerated here are to be found the chief causes of apostasy both in the past and the present. It is important that we be aware of them and use them to test the soundness of the teachings that are current in the churches today.

4. IS IT POSSIBLE FOR A BELIEVER TO APOSTATISE?

I must say something about this question. The locus classicus for this is Hebrews 6:4-6, and Owen deals with it in the following way. He says that it is given as a warning and to stir up those to whom the apostle is writing. The privileges referred to in the passage and enjoyed by those who fall away, were 'not such things as accompany salvation', which he is assured of in those to whom he writes, and who give evidence of persevering in the faith. 'This whole description therefore,' says Owen, 'refers to some special Gospel privileges, which professors (that is, those who made an outward profession of being Christians) in those days were promiscuously (generally) made partakers of.' What were these privileges?

1. 'Once enlightened.' Owen considers this was baptism, which in the early Church was called illumination. But it can also mean instruction in the Gospel.
2. 'Tasted of the heavenly gift,' seems to refer to the Holy Spirit, since in the New Testament 'the gift of God' is understood to be the Holy Spirit.
3. 'And tasted of the good word of God' - 'to taste' is to make experiment of something, but not to eat it fully. 'The meaning, then, of the character given to these apostates is, that they had some experience of the power of the Holy Spirit from heaven, in Gospel administration and worship.' But in what sense were they said to be partakers of the Holy Spirit? Not, says Owen, with regard to 'personal inhabitation', nor in respect of 'spiritual operations'. In the first way the world cannot receive Him, and therefore it cannot apply here; and in the second, since Peter said to Simon Magus that he had no part in spiritual gifts, neither does that apply. But since the Holy Spirit pervades Gospel ordinances, to that degree they have been partakers of the Holy Spirit, but not in the full sense. They are said to have 'tasted of the word of God', that is, they have heard the Gospel of Christ preached, but did not sincerely obey it. They took some delight in the Word of God, but were not renewed by it.
4. Lastly, 'the powers of the world to come.' This can mean the days of the Messiah; the Gospel age. They would have witnessed the things spoken of in the Acts of the Apostles, but were not changed by them.

Therefore, these are not true and sincere believers. There is no reference to them being born again, or called according to God's purpose, or justified, or sanctified. They are compared to ground that receives rain, but brings forth nothing but weeds and briars. So there is nothing in this passage to contradict the general teaching of the Bible on the indefectibility of grace and the final perseverance of all true believers. Apostasy can only take place in those who have never been truly renewed and justified.

Martyn Lloyd Jones, in his exposition of this passage, differs in some details from Owen, but comes to the same conclusion. But before tackling this passage, he lays down certain general principles for dealing with, and interpreting all, such difficulties in Scripture, and it is worth our while recalling them and keeping them constantly before us.

First, we must deal with Scripture alone - that is, we must keep to Scripture and not allow philosophy to intrude. It is no good allowing human ideas of what it might be thought appropriate for God to do, to influence our thinking. Our minds must be moulded by the Word of God.

Second, there can be no contradictions in Scripture. We must compare Scripture with Scripture to get the true interpretation. One part of Scripture ought not to be so expounded as to be repugnant to another part. This is called 'the analogy of faith'.

Third, we must start from the great positive statements of Scripture. There are certain things that are clearly and unequivocally stated in the Bible, and we must employ these to throw light upon the more difficult and obscure passages. In this way Scripture is its own interpreter; a principle laid down by the Reformers, which is further expression of the analogy of faith, but often neglected today.

An illustration of this is, for example, John 10:27-29. Here we have a clear unequivocal statement that the Lord will never allow His people, His sheep, to perish; they can never fall away because their security is guaranteed by God Himself. So it is an impossibility. Now it is from such statements, and there are many of them in the Bible, that we must proceed to interpret and understand those, such as the passage in Hebrews 6:4-6, that appear to present a difficulty. Lloyd Jones does this and comes to a similar conclusion to Owen; namely, that the passage does not refer to real believers, those who are truly regenerate, but those who have experienced something of the privileges of Church membership, its worship, preaching and ordinances, but are not grafted spiritually into the body of Christ.

On one point he differs from Owen, and that is on the meaning of the word 'tasted' - 'have tasted of the heavenly gift'. Of this Lloyd Jones says: 'Dr. Owen suggests that it means tasted but never thoroughly masticated and swallowed. I cannot accept that suggestion.' He goes on to give his reason, which is a good

and valid one. It is this: the same apostle says that Jesus, 'by the grace of God, tasted death for every man'. It is the same word exactly as in this passage. But our Lord did not merely taste death in his mouth, as it were. He drained the cup. 'He experienced death in a manner that none other will ever be called on to know. He knew it in all its fulness and bitterness, in all its terrible character.' I fully agree with that, and it makes Owen's suggested interpretation untenable.

The word translated 'tasted' means 'being acquainted with' and even 'experiencing', and Lloyd Jones says we must give it that value here. These people have experienced something of 'the heavenly gift'. But what ever it was, on the principle of the analogy of faith, and the clear statements elsewhere in Scripture on the final perseverance of believers, we must conclude that it was not an experience which resulted in the renovation and regeneration of their natures. It fell short of the new and justifying faith.

'Nowhere are we told that these people were born again, that they were regenerate; nowhere are we told that they were justified and sanctified; nowhere are we told that they were scaled with the Spirit of God; nowhere are we told that they were adopted into God's family.

'When reference is made to true believers, these are the terms that are used in Scripture. For example, I Corinthians 6:9-11: 'Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you.' But you are no longer people who can be so described, says Paul. Why? What does he say about them? Does he says, You were enlightened, you have tasted of the heavenly gift, you have been made partakers of the Holy Ghost, you have tasted of the good word of God and the powers of the world to come? No! what he says is this: 'But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.' But not one of these terms is used in Hebrews 6. What we are told about these people is not that they are unregenerate, not that they are justified, not that they are reconciled to God, but that they have had certain experiences which have brought them into the church and made them think, and made everyone else think, that they were truly Christian.... That surely is the only adequate explanation of this passage in the Hebrews.'

Thus Martyn Lloyd Jones on the subject, and his conclusion, with the exception of the point that we have mentioned about the meaning of the word 'tasted', is the same as that of John Owen. Those who apostatise, who fall away from the faith, are not true and real believers. The consistent testimony of the Word of

God is that those who are truly God's children by adoption and grace shall persevere to the end.

5. SOME DIRECTIONS CULLED FROM OWEN ON HOW TO AVOID THE PREVAILING APOSTASY

We live in such days ourselves. If Owen thought of his times as apostate, what would he think of the state of things now? I see that the Archbishop of Canterbury says that the tone of our society is now atheistic. We are seeing a great forsaking in the land, and the enemy is coming in like a flood. All the Churches have lost many members, and are no longer able to disguise the fact or explain it away. All this would come as no surprise to Owen, who said that where there was a prevailing nominal Christianity, there would be, when circumstances changed to make it no longer of material advantage to be known as Christian, a great falling away. What steps then can be taken to avoid the prevailing apostasy?

In such times, says Owen, we should above all be concerned for the glory of God, as Moses was when the Israelites rebelled in the wilderness, and Joshua later, when he said, *What wilt thou do unto thy great name?* They were not so much concerned for the people, but for God's glory in the world. Yet the concern and preoccupation today seems to be with the church, the image of the church, and how that will suffer. But what if the image of the church is wrong, and God is judging it for its apostasy? Our first concern in this situation should be for the glory of God, that His Name should be vindicated and honoured.

If we do that we shall mourn for the present state of Christianity in the world for the dishonour that it brings upon the Cause of God. *Rivers of water run down mine eyes*, says the Psalmist, *because they keep not thy law*. God sets a mark upon those who so mourn. The Lord said to Ezekiel: *Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof*. Likewise, our Lord said: *Blessed are they that mourn*. Is there much of this spirit about in this present age of apostasy, or is there not rather a vain self-confidence, that given a break and the right marketing technique, some imaginative advertising, and some new gimmick, we can crack the problem? What happened to that great new initiative that was going to turn the tide - the Decade of Evangelism? The time for self-sufficiency is not merely past, but never was for the true Church. When the enemy comes in like a flood, it is only the Spirit of God that can raise up a standard against him (Isaiah 59:19). And He will do it through the meanest instruments.

We should pray continually. There is nothing too hard for the Lord, and He can save by many of by few. This is the way the Church of old was delivered. *I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their*

peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth (Isaiah 62:6-7).

Then there is constancy of testimony: an open and avowed profession of, and contending for the faith and the truth of the Gospel. ‘The public contempt and scorn, that is by a prevalent fashion cast upon some evangelical truths, is a cause of discouraging many from owning the profession of them.’ How true that is. It only needs a few leading churchmen to express disapproval of some particular teaching or to distance themselves from a clear evangelical truth for many to back off from contending for it. I have seen this happen, and it accounts for the weakness of the public testimony in these days for the old paths. It also shows the astuteness, and cunning of the opponents of evangelical truth in going for the names of evangelical leaders and involving them in such ecumenical initiatives as Evangelicals and Catholics Together.

Those who would be preserved from apostasy must also keep a careful watch over their hearts. In the beginning the declension is in the heart. *Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life (Proverbs 4:23).* Literally: ‘Above all keeping, keep thy heart.’ Men show great diligence in keeping other things, but not their hearts. The heart is deceitful and wayward, which is why it needs keeping and constant watchfulness. We must keep our hearts awake and attentive to Christ, for it is He alone that can keep us in the hour of temptation. Do not trust, says Owen, to Church ordinances as ends in themselves. They are only means to an end, which is union with Christ.

Finally, in times of apostasy, such as ours is, beware of the infection of national vices, for their commonness will take off the sense of their guilt and remove shame. If we adopt indiscriminately the customs and habits of the times we shall be carried down stream with them.

These are some of the directions that Owen gives for avoiding the prevalent apostasy of the times.

He that will hold out to the end, must lay a good foundation of humiliation, dig deep enough at first, and cast up all the loose earth, that his house may stand. His repentance must be sincere, universal, constant, such as whereby the heart may be renewed; for the old heart will not hold out the hardships of holiness, when it comes to suffering especially, but will leap out of the fire, as a chestnut that hath not been cracked at the top; and as the stony ground, the seed straightway started up, and as soon withered, because not well rooted.

John Trapp - ‘Apostasy’, in *The Marrow of Many Good Authors*

LEGH RICHMOND & THE 'ANNALS OF THE POOR'

by James E North

Brading is a village in the Southeastern corner of the Isle of Wight a little below Brading Down. Just past the Bull Ring, up the hill and to the right, stands the parish church. Attached to the right-hand wall of the chancel (the south wall) is a brass plaque, which reads:

In memory of The Rev Legh Richmond MA of Trinity College, Cambridge, Rector of Turvey, Beds and chaplain to H R H the Duke of Kent. He began his ministry as curate in charge of Brading and Yaverland from 1797 to 1805. He has left the record of his faithful and loving care for the people of Brading in the history of Jane, the Young Cottager. This story is one of a volume entitled *The Annals of the Poor* including *The Dairyman's Daughter* which was translated into many foreign languages besides having a wide circulation in England, Scotland and America. These short and simple *Annals of the Poor* are remarkable for the graceful descriptions of the beautiful scenery of the Isle of Wight and the vivid reality of the characters portrayed.

This monument was placed in Brading Church with the consent of the Rev'd E Summers BD Vicar & Rural Dean by Legh Richmond's descendants of the second & third generations, Easter, 1898.

It is this man, Legh Richmond and his ministry at Brading that we shall consider. The brass plaque just quoted sums up in a few words, but also in an unsatisfactory manner, his ministry on the Isle of Wight by saying that 'These short and simple 'Annals of the Poor' are remarkable for the graceful descriptions of the beautiful scenery of the Isle of Wight and the vivid reality of the characters portrayed'. His ministry at Brading was more than just describing the scenery and the characters. His was the work of an evangelist. The book 'The Annals of the Poor' is a description of the work of God's grace in the hearts and lives of four families to whom his was an awakening ministry and to whom he was made a blessing.

However, before looking at Legh Richmond on the Isle of Wight, we must consider a little of his life, then we will take a glance at 'The Annals of the Poor'.

Legh Richmond was born 29th January 1772. It was a world that was completely different from our own. It was also the time of the great Evangelical Awakening. Men such as Wesley, Newton, Berridge, Huntington, Gill and others were at the height of their ministries but by the time Richmond was to enter the ministry in 1797 most of these men had passed away.

He was born in Liverpool into a privileged family. His father was a doctor and his mother is recorded as being a pious woman. His was an ancient family from Ashton Keynes in Wiltshire who could trace their roots as far back as the Norman conquest. He entered Trinity College, Cambridge in 1789 when he was 17 years old. The intention of his father was that he should study for the Bar. His own mind, however, was drawn to the Christian ministry. His father eventually conceded in his wish and Legh was ordained deacon in June 1797, and priest in February 1798.

The letter quoted above gives no indication of conversion, merely a desire to be happy in his work and to be respectable. Another letter written by him in 1794 suggests there was little or no spiritual life as he began to undertake the Christian ministry. 'I have,' he writes to his father, 'built up a fabric of confidence in, and love for, that holy religion of which I am now a professor. To this I ultimately look as my future guide through life, and I hope it will enable me to bear with fortitude those evils which may be in store for me....' He is saying that his confidence is in what he has built up in his knowledge of Christianity. While he professes Christianity there is no profession of a personal knowledge of a Saviour.

He entered the ministry and undertook his duties at Brading and Yaverland in a conscientious manner but lacking that essential knowledge which is essential in any ministry, that of sins forgiven, of hell subdued and peace with heaven. His gospel, his ministry was deficient because he did not know the Saviour of sinners. *And this is life eternal that they might know thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent* (John 17:3). Without this knowledge there can be no Christian ministry, there can be no Christian life, there can be no Christian hope. All other religion is vain and empty.

But the ways of God are wonderful and beyond comprehension. There had been, in the same college, another young man in the same situation about to take holy orders within the Church of England who was a friend of Richmond's. Just before his being ordained a relative sent him a book, 'A Practical View of Christianity' by William Wilberforce. This man appears to have been utterly careless. He sent the book to Richmond with the request that he read it, give his opinions so that he (the careless young man) could make suitable comments to the relative who had given him the book. In accordance with the request, he commenced reading it and its contents gripped him. His biographer says,

He received a powerful impulse, and was no longer able to rest under its former impressions. A change was effected in his views of divine truth, as decided as it was influential. He was no longer satisfied with the creed of the speculatist - he felt a certain conviction of his own state as a guilty and condemned sinner, and under that conviction, he sought mercy at the cross of the Saviour. There arose in his mind a solemn consciousness that, however outwardly moral and

apparently irreproachable his conduct might appear to men; yet within, there was wanting that entire surrender of the heart, that ascendancy of God in the soul, and that devotedness of life and conduct, which distinguishes morality from holiness; an assent to divine truth, from its cordial reception into the heart; and the external profession of religion, from the inward and transforming power. The impressions awakened were therefore followed by a transfer of his time, his talents, and his affections, to the service of his God and Saviour, and to the spiritual welfare of the flock committed to his care.

Some twenty-five years later, in his journal on 12th September 1822, he says,

A day to be remembered. On this day twenty-five years since, I first read Mr Wilberforce's book on Christianity, in my little study in the vicarage-house at Brading; and thence and then received my first serious, and I hope saving impressions.

'Impressions' the like of which all who would aspire to the Christian ministry and indeed all who would enter heaven must and shall receive by the effectual working of God's Holy Spirit applying the truth of the gospel to their hearts.

Legh Richmond was minister at Brading from 1797 until 1805, just eight short years, and yet it is for his ministry here on the Isle of Wight that he is chiefly remembered (if indeed he is remembered at all). For it was of the people here to whom he ministered that he wrote his articles which were first published in 'The Christian Guardian' in 1809-11. The simple narratives were collected together and published anonymously in 1814 under the title 'The Annals of the Poor'. They have been almost continually in print since that time until early in the 20th century when they were allowed to go out of print. They were republished in 1970.

He left Brading in 1805 spent a short time as chaplain to the Lock Hospital, London. He then moved to Turvey in Bedfordshire also in 1805 where he spent the remainder of his ministerial career. His was an active life spent in the cause of his Master. He frequently toured the nation speaking on behalf of the British & Foreign Bible Society and other Mission boards. He died from lung disease in 1827 aged fifty-five years.

One of his sons, Henry, entered the Christian ministry. He did so with his father's 'triple blessing.' Legh Richmond wrote to him on 1st October 1826,

And now, take my blessing. You are three sons in one to me. Accept a triple blessing, and may the great Three in one confirm it. Your welfare lies close to my heart, - your prospects in the ministry, if your life be spared, affect me greatly. I would far sooner hear you preach a gospel sermon from your heart, and visit the bed-side of a sick parishioner, with the language of experimental consolation, than

see you senior wrangler and medallist, with a cold heart and unconverted soul...

That blessing and that desire appears to have been fulfilled in Henry Richmond's life and ministry.

Legh Richmond died very quietly in the full assurance of faith. He died resting upon that covenant of God's eternal everlasting grace, resting only upon the merits of his dear Saviour.

But, as I said earlier, I want to concentrate for a short time upon Legh Richmond's work at Brading as illustrated in his book 'The Annals of the Poor.'

It is a book that has been largely forgotten by the former and present generation of Christians. But if we had lived some 100 or 150 years ago and had attended Sunday School, it would, no doubt, have been given to us as a Sunday School reward. Indeed, it may be that some of us still have copies which were given to our grandparents in their day.

The first of the 'Annals of the Poor' concerns the daughter of a poor dairyman from the village of Arreton - The Dairyman's Daughter, Elizabeth Wallbridge. She was not from either of the parishes of Brading or Yaverland but she contacted Legh Richmond with the request that he take the funeral of her sister who had just died. Her letter to Richmond, as well as being the request to conduct the funeral, is an encouragement to him to fulfil his ministry with sincerity and fervour. 'Sir, be fervent in prayer with God for the conviction and conversion of sinners,' she writes, 'his power is great, and who can withstand it? What a mercy, if we know Christ and the power of his resurrection in our own hearts.' From this beginning pastoral visits were made to the cottage. Further letters were received which speak of her experience and the encouragements she gave to him to continue being faithful to the gospel, all of which were published in full in the various chapters of the tract. As was common in those days, the dairyman's daughter took ill with consumption. 'Declining health seemed to indicate the will of God concerning her,' writes Richmond, 'but her character, conduct, and experience of the divine favour, increased in brightness as the setting sun of her mortal life approached its horizon.' Not content to let her die with any false hopes, or with her resting on sentiment, Legh Richmond sought to examine her regarding her hope and experience of the things of God. The following is a record of the conversation that took place between Legh Richmond and Elizabeth Wallbridge as she lay dying.

'What is your present view of the state in which you were, before you felt seriously concerned about the state of your soul?'

'Sir, I was a proud thoughtless girl... I loved the world, and the things that are in the world... I went once on a Sunday to church, more to see and be seen than to pray or hear the Word of God. I thought I

was quite good enough to be saved; and disliked, and often laughed at religious people... I was tolerably moral and decent in my conduct, from motives of carnal and worldly policy; but I was a stranger to God and Christ. I neglected my soul; and had I died in such a state, hell must, and would justly, have been my portion.'

She then goes on to recall how she heard a minister in Southampton preach on the text, *Be ye clothed with humility*.

He opened the riches of divine grace in God's method of saving the sinner. I was astonished at what I had been doing all the days of my life. He described the meek, lowly, and humble example of Christ: I felt proud, lofty, vain and self-consequential. He represented Christ as 'Wisdom'; I felt my ignorance. He held him forth as 'Righteousness'; I was convinced of my own guilt. He proved him to be 'Sanctification'; I saw my corruption. He proclaimed him as 'Redemption'; I felt my slavery to sin, and captivity to Satan. He concluded with an animated address to sinners, in which he exhorted them to flee from the wrath to come, to cast off the love of outward ornaments, and put on Jesus Christ, and be clothed with true humility.

From that time I was led ... to see my lost state as a sinner, and the great mercy of God through Jesus Christ, in raising sinful dust and ashes to a share in the glorious happiness of heaven. ... In his fulness I have found all that my poverty could need; in his bosom I have found a resting place from all sin and sorrow; in his Word I have found strength against doubt and unbelief.

And so she continues to express God's dealings with her. Now remember this was a poor ignorant farm labourer's daughter, a servant girl. Today, if we ask the majority of professed Christians of their experience, they know nothing of a conviction of sin, they know nothing of imputed righteousness, they speak of being 'zapped' by the Holy Spirit and so on. Oh, the poverty of our experience of Christ when compared to what Christians felt and experienced in a former day. Further conversation is recorded which speaks of her confidence as she faced death. She died in full assurance of faith. Legh Richmond writes of the funeral service and then concludes with a touching appeal to the reader:

Elizabeth Wallbridge was 31 years of age when she died in 1801. The second person of whom Richmond wrote was a child who died in 1799 when she was aged 12 years. He writes of Jane Squib, 'The Young Cottager' as the first fruits of his ministry at Brading.

I shall plead no further apology for introducing to the notice of my readers a few particulars relative to a young female cottager, whose memory is particularly endeared to me, from the circumstance

of her being, so far as I can trace or discover, my first-born spiritual child in the ministry of the gospel, of whose conversion to God under my own pastoral instruction, I can speak with precision and assurance.

How, then, did this come about?

Legh Richmond used to gather the youngsters attached to his congregation every week on a Saturday. They would read, repeat the catechism, the Psalms, hymns and other portions of Scripture, committing them to memory. Adjoining his vicarage was the churchyard into which he would send the children to read and learn the epitaphs on the various gravestones.

I had not far to look for subjects of warning and exhortation suitable to my little flock of lambs that I was feeding. I could point to the heaving sods that marked the different graves and separated them from each other, and tell my pupils that, young as they were, none of them were too young to die; and that probably more than half of the bodies which were buried there, were those of little children. I hence took occasion to speak of the nature and value of a soul, and to ask them where they expected their souls to go when they departed hence, and were no more seen upon earth.

We might think that this is a hard and perhaps a harsh and very direct way of dealing with children. We have to remember, however, that the infant mortality rate was a lot higher in those days, two hundred years ago. But let us never forget that, although, and thankfully, children do not die in the same numbers as they did then, death does come at all ages. The recent scandal of the retention of babies organs is a salutary reminder that death still visits the young. People are still taken away by death at all ages. The problem that we face today is that we have forgotten how to die and we live as if we are going to live forever upon this earth. John Wesley used to say that the Methodists knew how to die. Death is swept under the carpet, the dying are drugged and they know not what is happening to them. I heard recently of one lady dying at the age of 100 years and three months and a relative expressed surprise that she should die. Death comes upon all, young and old alike, and it was for this great change that Legh Richmond was ministering to the youngsters attached to his congregation.

Sometimes I sent the children to the various stones which stood at the head of the graves, and bid them learn the epitaphs inscribed upon them. I took pleasure in seeing the little ones dispersed in the churchyard, each committing to memory a few verses written in commemoration of the departed. They would soon accomplish the desired object, and eagerly return to me ambitious to repeat their task. Thus my churchyard became a book of instruction, and every gravestone a leaf of edification for my young disciples.

Little Jane was one of these young people who learned the epitaphs, and to whom they were made the means by which her soul was quickened and made alive unto God. Jane soon succumbed to consumption. Her minister, Legh Richmond, visited her and, being desirous of her eternal welfare he examined her as to her spiritual state:

‘Are you really desirous, my dear child, to be a true Christian?’

‘Oh yes, Sir; I am sure I desire that above all things.’

He is astonished at the earnestness and simplicity of the reply that Jane gives. He continues to speak simply to her and receives answers that we would hardly expect to receive from adults in these days:

‘I remember well you told us, that when our bodies are put in the grave, our souls will then go either to the good or the bad place.’

‘And to which of these places do you think that, as a sinner in the sight of God, you deserve to go?’

‘To the bad one, Sir.’

‘What! to everlasting destruction?’

‘Yes, Sir’

‘Why so?’

‘Because I am a great sinner.’

‘And must all great sinners go to hell?’

‘They all deserve it, and I am sure I do.’

But is there no way of escape? Is there no way for a great sinner to be saved?’

‘Yes, Sir, Christ is the Saviour.’

‘And whom does he save?’

‘All Believers.’

‘And do you believe in Christ yourself?’

‘I do not know, Sir, I wish I did; but I feel that I love him.’

So he continues, by way of question and answer, to draw out from her, and to show to her, the genuineness of her desire to be saved. He shows by this means that she has saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

‘Do you love Christ now in a way you never used to do before?’

‘Yes, I think so indeed.’

‘Why do you love him?’

‘Because he first loved me.’

‘How do you know that he first loved you?’

‘Because he sent me instruction, and made me feel the sin of my heart, and taught me to pray for pardon, and love his ways... And now I want to be saved in the way that he pleases. Sometimes I feel as if I loved all that he has said and done, so much, that I wish never to

think about anything else. I know that I did not use to feel so; and I think if he had not loved me first, my wicked heart would never have cared about him. I once loved anything better than religion, but now it is everything to me.'

Come now the very hour of her death. The family are gathered around. The parents are in tears. Jane is conscious that she is about to take her leave of time and enter eternity. Legh Richmond addresses her, 'My child, are you resigned to die? ... Where is your hope?'

She lifted up her finger, pointed to heaven, and then directed the same downward to her own heart, saying successfully as she did so, 'Christ there, and Christ here.' These words, accompanied by the action, spoke her meaning more solemnly than can easily be conceived.... The child suddenly rose up, with an unexpected exertion, threw her livid, wasted arms around me, as I sat on the bedside, laid her head on my shoulder, and said distinctly, 'God bless and reward you - give thanks for me to him - my soul is saved - Christ is everything to me! - Sir, we shall meet in heaven, shall we not? - Oh, yes, yes! - then all will be peace - peace - peace!' She sank back on the bed, and spoke no more - fetched a deep sigh - smiled - and died.

No, this is not morbidity. This is the victory of faith! *O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law, but thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ* (I Cor. 15:55-57). This is the hope of the Christian believer, whether young or old.

I said earlier that we would visit, in our imagination, Brading Churchyard.

Just as Legh Richmond sent the children to read the epitaphs on the grace stones, let us go and visit one of those graves. It is behind the east end of the church. It is the grave of Little Jane, 'The Young Cottager', and we read:

Ye who the power of God delight to trace
And mark with joy each monument of grace
Tread lightly o'er this grave as ye explore
The short and simple *Annals of the Poor*
A child reposes underneath this sod
A child to memory dear, and dear to God.
Rejoice! Yet shed the sympathetic tear
Jane 'The Young Cottager' lies buried here.

BOOK REVIEW

Milton and the Preaching Arts

by Jameela Lares (Cambridge: James Clarke, 2001, £40 hdbk)
ISBN 0-227-67964-4

This is an interesting and well-informed book, by the associate professor of English at the University of Southern Mississippi, concerned with the religious background of John Milton's poetry. Its scope is somewhat more confined than this, however, as the title indicates, and it concentrates on preaching. Preaching was, of course, of major concern to the Puritan movement, to which Milton belonged, and he had in his earlier life intended to seek ordination himself. Professor Lares draws attention to the differences between reformed preaching and classical rhetoric, and to the seminal treatise on preaching by the Lutheran Andreas Hyperius, which influenced English works on the subject, including writings by Milton's first tutor at Christ's College, Cambridge, William Chappell.

Milton's poems are not sermons, nor do they contain sermons. They do, however, contain speeches, and the author seeks parallels between the speeches in 'Paradise Lost' and 'Paradise Regained' and the rules for preaching. The parallels are not very impressive. To be fully convincing, the writer would need to demonstrate that the speeches are much more like the approved type of sermon than they are like the speeches in drama. Milton was a dramatist, and it is curious how few references are made here to his religious drama 'Samson Agonistes'.

The author has little to say about the religious content of sermons, or indeed about that of Milton's poems. Her concern is with form. It is perhaps worth remarking, however, that Milton's beliefs appear, sadly, to have declined through his life from orthodox Trinitarian faith to Arianism. Some of his early poems express his early orthodoxy, but his later poems are very guarded about his later heterodoxy. His posthumous Latin treatise 'On Christian Doctrine', which was suppressed by his literary executors and only came to light in the nineteenth century, seems to have been written shortly before 'Paradise Lost', but his great poem would not have achieved the immediate acceptance that it did if it had given clear expression to the poet's current beliefs. So discreet was Milton in his lifetime that Dr. Johnson could say in his 'Life of Milton' that he appeared to be 'untainted by any heretical peculiarity of opinion'. This whole matter is accurately discussed in chapter 12 of C.S. Lewis's 'Preface to Paradise Lost'.

ROGER BECKWITH

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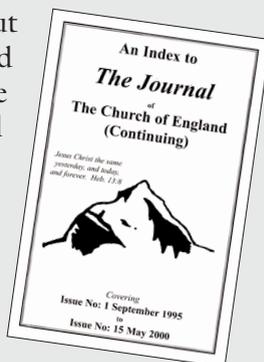
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THE *Journal* INDEX

The next mailing of the *Journal*, due out in April 2002, will include the updated Index. If you have already asked to be sent the Index in the past you will automatically receive the update.

If anyone else would like a copy of the new Index, which includes listings for all Articles and Authors since the first issue, please contact the *Journal* Editor.



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MATERIAL FOR APRIL ISSUE OF *THE JOURNAL* AND *INTERCESSIONS* BY MARCH 20th 2002, PLEASE

We thank all those who sent the names and addresses of others requiring the Journal, or whose names needed deleting. We are very grateful to all who sent donations. Please note that all address details supplied to the Editor for mailing purposes are treated as confidential. We do not pass on addresses to anyone.

** We apologise to our readers for the word demon which we are obliged to use as it is the name of the internet service provider (Demonstration), and has nothing to do with the occult.*

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Nuffield Congregation meeting with Nuffield Parish Church, near Henley-on-Thames, the Rev. John F. Shearer. Sunday Services: 11.00 a.m. Morning Prayer, 6.30 p.m. Evening Prayer. Lord's Supper 8.00 a.m. first Sunday, 6.30 p.m. third Sunday. Bible Study Wednesday 8.00 p.m. *Enquiries* 01491 641305.

St. John's Church, South London Meeting at the Shaftesbury Home, Trellis House (Mill Road (off Merton High Street), Colliers Wood, SW19), for 11.00 a.m. Morning Prayer and 6.30 p.m. Evening Prayer. Midweek as intimated. *Enquiries* Rev. A.R. Price, 0208 642 7885 or 0208 742 0151

St. Silas Church, Wolverhampton, Rt Rev E. Malcolm Hon. Minister; Rev. I.R. Budgen, Hon. Curate. Bethany Chapel, (A-Z page 21 2E, junction Lower Prestwood Road/Blackwood Avenue) Wednesfield. Sundays 12.40 p.m. Morning Prayer (1st Sunday Holy Communion); 4.00 p.m. Evening Prayer (3rd Sunday Holy Communion). Tuesdays in term time 4.15 p.m. Children's Class; 7.00 p.m. Bible Study; 7.45 p.m. Prayer Meeting. *Enquiries* 01547 528815.

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