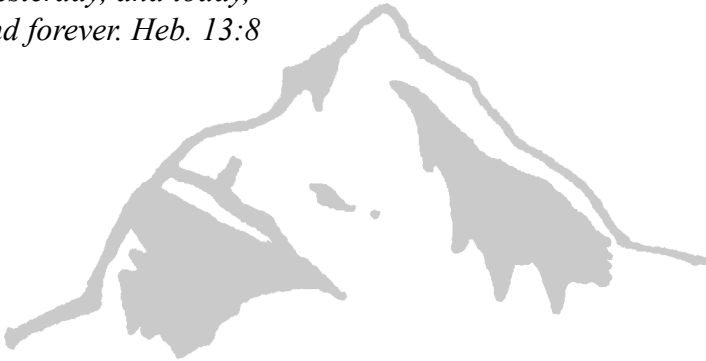


The Journal
of
The Church of England
(Continuing)

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



Issue No: 24
December 2002

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
edward@macmail.com

Contributions toward postage costs are gratefully received.

From the Presiding Bishop, Edward Malcolm

15, Bridge Street
Knighton
Powys
LD7 1BT

Dear Friends,

God is using you. Do not be discouraged by comparing today with the past, nor sit waiting for God to act. This is the day of small things yet not to be despised. There are encouraging things happening which will appear openly in God's time.

The word of the Lord to us is, "Consider your ways." From the day that the foundation of the Lord's temple was laid, there is a blessing in all we do. Is the seed yet in the barn and the fruit tree has not brought forth? This is God's word, "from this day will I bless you." Blessing has started, though unseen as yet, for the righteous who holds on his way.

Let our hands be strong, let us keep from uncleanness personally, and then our work will be acceptable says the Lord through Haggai the prophet. God is shaking the heavens and the earth, overthrowing thrones, destroying the strength of kingdoms, overthrowing the chariots and horses and all their riders, every one by the sword of his brother.

Do not concern yourself over the shaking and removal of earthly kingdoms. All that is not of God's planting must be rooted up. Let it not paralyse our hands. In sunshine or under storm-clouds we plough on, and one day shall reap, if we faint not.

We have a kingdom which cannot be moved, unseen by the world, yet within each of us and within the Church of God on earth, although still lying ahead ready to be revealed in that Day when our King shall come and we shall appear and reign with Him.

Let God use you more and more. Especially pity the children, spiritual waifs in the hands of misguided faddists, and try this winter to gather a few and feed them God's Word. It is better to do that than to spend our time striving against 'the generation of thy children' by spreading dissatisfaction and discouragement.

If you would rather, start a very simple Bible Study in the work place, or at home of an evening or by day with one or two relations, neighbours, or friends, seeking

the help of someone else from church. Or visit, or pray, but redeem the time, for the days are evil. Are you homebound, caring for someone? God give you a spirit of contentment and love.

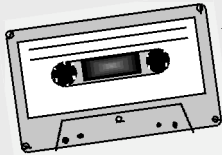
May the Lord stir up the spirit of all the remnant of the people to work in the house of the Lord of hosts, their God.

Yours sincerely,

Edmund Malcota

THE QUEEN'S JUBILEE—WHAT NEXT? by The Rt. Rev. D.N. Samuel PhD. The Trustees of the Gospel Magazine have produced his address to the General Assembly as a booklet. Both the PRS and we have taken numbers of copies. We ask churches to order what they can use from Mr. Dave Mansell, whilst it is still Jubilee year. Mrs. Rachel Westmacott has sent one to each of the great number of Member of the Lower and Upper Houses and Regional Assemblies. *Please help distribute the remainder.* (Not suitable for mass distribution.)

TAPE MINISTRY



A number of the congregations within the Continuing Church are in the habit of recording sermons onto tape. These are available to readers of the *Journal* who may wish to hear sermons in this way.

Contact the Editor for details of sermon texts available, and to request copies of tapes.

Tapes cost £1.25 each, including postage and packing

*Please make cheques payable to **St. Mary's Castle Street***

A TIME TO CHOOSE

By David N. Samuel

If we look at the history of the people of God in the Bible, we see that it was punctuated by certain crises of a spiritual nature, in which the nation had to choose between the true worship of God and the false religions of the heathen round about them. This choice may appear to have been a straightforward one between good and evil, truth and falsehood. But it may not always have seemed so simple in the actual historical context. Evil and error rarely present themselves in their true colours in real life, and the problem rarely confronts people suddenly. The wiles of the devil are more subtle than that. Evil insinuates itself slowly and imperceptibly into society. Error spreads gradually in a church. Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, said Our Lord, meaning their doctrine, because false doctrine does its work secretly and slowly, like the yeast working in the dough, until the whole is leavened. And always the evil and the error are allied with those things that appear to be good and true.

Thus the threat to Israel came so often in their history not from heathenism, pure and simple, but from syncretism, an amalgam of true religion and false, a comprehensiveness which wanted both the revelation of the true and living God in Judaism, and the cults and practices, the idolatry and perversions, of the heathen religions. It was those people like Ahab who wanted comprehensiveness, both/and, who created the danger of apostasy for Israel. It was the prophets like Elijah who confronted the nation with an either/or, who appealed to the essential exclusiveness of the worship of Jehovah, and called upon the people to choose, who offered the hope of salvation. Both together created a spiritual crisis for the nation. On the borders of the promised land, and again at Carmel, the people were compelled to decide: 'Choose you this day whom ye will serve'; 'How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him'. It was impossible any longer to have both Baal and Jehovah, to have both false religion and true. The patience of God had been exhausted and the limits of comprehensiveness passed. You must now decide, says the prophet, and if not, then it will be the same as if you had decided against God, for you will become an apostate people — a people who have denied the faith of Israel and rejected the Lord God of their fathers.

THE NATURE OF SPIRITUAL CRISIS

There can be no greater crisis for a nation than a spiritual or religious crisis, because it has to do with the identity and character of the nation. It touches the spirit, the will and the morale of a people, and it must be evident that these things

are of primary importance. The spirit takes priority over everything else. If a nation has vision and the will to strive for its realization, these spiritual qualities will ensure its survival, as was proved in 1940. But whatever natural or material resources a nation may have, if it lacks these qualities of the spirit it will fail. 'Where there is no vision, the people perish'. 'Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people'. Those things that touch the springs of a nation's conscience, will and spirit are more important than anything else. That is why religion is important, yes, even today! But it is not enough to have any religion, it must be *true* religion.

We ourselves now face a spiritual crisis. It is partly of our own making, and partly it is forced upon us by circumstances. We now must decide where we stand. This applies in the first instance to the people in the churches, but it has wider implications for the nation as a whole. I will put before you the factors that have contributed to this.

FIRST, THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

The ecumenical movement began effectively in 1910 with the conference of missionary societies in Edinburgh. In the beginning it was a Protestant movement. Now, it is possible to conceive of a movement whose purpose is to unite and bring together Protestant Christians and churches. There have been many such movements since the Reformation, because all the churches of the Reformation share a common heritage. There is often a close affinity between their Confessions of Faith, as Theodore Beza showed by his *Harmony of Protestant Confessions* in 1581. Thus the aims of the movement in the beginning were both laudable and realistic. But since the development of the World Council of Churches it has taken a different direction. It has been moving towards organic unity, towards a super-church. It has extended its interests beyond the churches of the Reformation to include the unreformed Church of Rome, and the equally unreformed Churches of the East. But it has even gone beyond that to think in terms of embracing all faiths, all religions. Missionary work and conversion in the traditional sense are now frowned on. This syncretism is influencing our hymns, our liturgies, and the teaching of religion in our schools. We can no longer be indifferent to it, or we shall acquiesce in the dismantling of Reformed Christianity in this country.

But I am concerned now with the way this movement has influenced relations between the Churches of the Reformation and the Roman Catholic Church in this country. It has created a climate in which many people in those churches now regard with complacency the enormity of the antiscritural claims of Rome. We should be in no doubt as to what the papacy represents when the titles which belong to Almighty God are ascribed to a man in the Vatican — 'Holy Father', 'Vicar of Christ', the 'Vicegerent of God on earth'. We should be in no doubt as

to the real character of the Roman Catholic priesthood when it arrogates to itself the power to bring God down upon the altar at the word of command and to offer the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary to the Father. We should be in no doubt about the nature of a church that binds the Word of God in fetters of human tradition and enslaves the conscience with man-made laws. All these things make it an apostate church, an unfaithful harlot church. Yet the ecumenical movement has succeeded in creating a climate in which these errors are regarded with equanimity by many Protestant Christians, who even consider that they are not wholly incompatible with their own beliefs.

Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones described the Church of Rome as ‘Satan’s masterpiece’ for this 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. In Scripture it is spoken of as “the mystery of iniquity”, which sets out to work in the church in opposition to “the mystery of godliness”. And even in the apostle Paul’s day, Satan was initiating that apostasy which, beginning in small ways in the church, would in time grow to become universal. The mystery of iniquity is not open sin and wickedness, but dissembled piety, specious errors, wickedness under the form of godliness, cunningly managed. Which is why the apostle warns specifically against it and gives clear instruction concerning it. They will be men, he says, “having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away” (2 Timothy 3:5). Shun them, have nothing to do with them.

If proof is wanted of this, we have it in the *Agreed Statements* of the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches. You know the history of this, and of the Commission set up by Archbishop Ramsey and Pope Paul VI in 1966. In 1982 the Commission produced its final report. Since then it has been approved by the Church of England and by the whole Anglican Communion. The Church of England has effectively ratified the doctrine of the Council of Trent on Scripture and Tradition, and on the Lord’s Supper, and it has accepted in principle the primacy of the Pope. The latest document of this Commission is entitled *The Gift of Authority*, and is simply intended to educate Anglicans into what acceptance of papal primacy means.

The Report states: “Within his wider ministry, the Bishop of Rome offers a specific ministry concerning the discernment of truth, as an expression of universal primacy”. This is the point to which the Anglican Church has been brought by the ecumenical movement. What did Bishop Ryle say? “Give me a really Protestant, evangelical established church or no established church at all!” And again, “Rather than be reunited with the idolatrous Church of Rome, I would willingly see my own beloved church perish and go to pieces. Rather than

become popish once more she had better die". The trouble is not that Anglicans have loved their church too well, but that they have not loved it enough, for if they had it would not be in the state it is now.

But as the Church of England slides towards Rome, the Vatican is wooing evangelicals through *Evangelicals and Catholics Together* by compromising and corrupting their understanding of justification by faith.

All this should make plain beyond a shadow of doubt which way the ecumenical movement is heading, and the method by which it proceeds. It first creates a climate in which truth and error can be viewed complacently and accommodated side by side. Then it proceeds to neutralize and eliminate the truth. And we must never forget that the ecumenical movement is a *movement*. It is never standing still, it is moving steadily towards its goal, which is the reunion of all churches under the Pope.

SECONDLY, THEOLOGICAL LIBERALISM

Theological liberalism in all its forms and throughout its long history has been a threat to Protestantism, because it undermines the foundation on which it rests — confidence in the Holy Scriptures as the revealed Word of God. The supreme authority for Protestants in all matters of faith and practice is the Bible, as all the great confessions of the Protestant churches witness.

Liberalism attacks the authority of Scripture by purporting to show that its documents are unreliable, its teachings merely of human origin, and its writings merely the product of historical forces. Thus the miraculous is excluded, Divine intervention in the natural world is ruled out, and inspiration regarded as very little different from human creativity.

Bishop David Jenkins' remarks on the Virgin Birth and the empty tomb some years ago, which caused so much controversy, brought the debate on to the popular level, and revealed just how much support his view had both inside and outside the churches.

Now we see this monster of liberalism assuming an even more formidable appearance in the person of Rowan Williams the new Archbishop of Canterbury. Rowan Williams's position represents the apogee of liberalism. In God, particularly in Christ, he asserts, we encounter darkness and silence. The revelation of God is the negation of all systems. Jesus confronts us not with answers but questions, and silence, as he did Pilate.

Ours is an agnostic age, and Williams captures the spirit of it by sanctifying, or

we might say, deifying agnosticism. Thus he pursues liberalism to its extreme point. He represents the *reductio ad absurdum* of liberalism. But he fails to see it himself, as do those who share his position. How such a position can be considered to be compatible with common sense, let alone the classical position of the Christian Church, is a mystery — that Church which sees Christ as the Word of God, and the Scriptures as witnessing to that Word.

Surely, the proper course for someone of Rowan Williams's views is to become a Trappist monk, but not to take upon himself the office of the chief pastor and teacher of the Church of England. It is a pity he does not take the advice of Wittgenstein, the philosopher he is said to admire, who declared, "Whereof we cannot speak, thereof we must be silent".

Liberalism, however, is not just a problem in the church at large; it is a problem in evangelicalism too. Anyone who has read the late Dr Schæffer's book *The Great Evangelical Disaster* or the more recent book by Iain Murray, *Evangelicalism Divided*, will realise how deeply liberalism has penetrated evangelicalism.

Some evangelical leaders and scholars are now teaching that, while the Bible may be free from error on matters of faith and morals, it is not necessarily so in matters of history.

But we cannot separate the two. Where do matters of fact cease to be matters of faith? If the Virgin Birth is not a fact, does that not affect my faith? If the fall of man is not a historical truth, does not that influence our whole understanding of redemption? "If the foundation be destroyed what shall the righteous do?" The foundation of Protestant religion is the Scriptures; it rests upon their trustworthiness, and authority. It is this understanding of the Scriptures that we must guard and maintain.

THIRDLY, ARMINIANISM

Arminianism, it has been said, is the back door to Romanism. I believe that to be true. Arminianism speaks of man's free will and of his ability to choose to accept or reject the Saviour and the gift of salvation. That means that he has power to co-operate with God in his salvation, and co-operation, as we know, is the cornerstone of the Roman Catholic system.

The great weakness today of the Protestant churches is that they are, broadly speaking, though often unconsciously so, Arminian in their outlook. That is why they are so uncritical of Rome and so sympathetically disposed towards her. At the time of the Reformation all the Protestant Churches held to the doctrines of predestination and election, to the sovereignty of God in man's redemption and

salvation, and it is reflected in their confessions of faith. It was this that gave them strength to resist Rome. For a time this was maintained, but from the 18th century onwards Arminianism has steadily gained ground.

Some two hundred years ago a celebrated preacher in London wrote these prophetic words:

Arminianism at present sadly obscures the truth of God. Popery and that system will one day unite under one displayed banner, and out of each host the elect of God will one day be called; and light sufficient will be given them to discover the enemies of their liberties, to which by a covenant of sovereign grace, they were predestinated.

Until the eighteenth century the doctrines of sovereign grace, predestination and election had been largely maintained in the Protestant churches in this country. Augustus Toplady's classic work *The Historic Proof of the Doctrinal Calvinism of the Church of England* proves that conclusively, as far as the Church of England is concerned, and it is a work which Bishop Ryle said has never been answered. But gradually, as time went on, it was being eroded and replaced by Arminianism. That process went on generally in the 19th century; Spurgeon and other Calvinistic preachers found themselves in a minority in their denominations by the end of the century.

We are now witnessing the consequences of all this in the radically weakened Protestantism of our time, which has lost its *raison d'etre*, and is ready in many cases to re-unite with the Church of Rome, that great system of popery, which at all times has been the antithesis of the true gospel.

I can illustrate this from personal experience. Shortly after the visit of the Pope to this country, I was asked by the BBC to take part in a discussion about it with Canon Eric James and a Roman Catholic Franciscan monk. We had a useful discussion. I walked from the studio to the tube station with the friar, who was very friendly. We talked about a number of things, including justification by faith. He said he could go along with me about justification by faith. But when I pointed out that justification by faith rested upon predestination and election, because God's choice was not on the basis of merit, but the secret will and counsel of God, he said he had to part company with me.

The Church of Rome will go a long way to include Protestants, but it cannot swallow the doctrines of free grace. That is the acid test that reveals the difference between the Protestant Reformed religion and the religion of Rome.

Ecumenism, Liberalism, Arminianism — such are the factors that contribute to the crisis that confronts the Church today. This is an unprecedented crisis, but it has

been developing and gaining upon us for some time. The late Dr. Philip Hughes, speaking at the Keele Congress in 1967, amidst all the false optimism of that gathering, struck a warning note. He spoke of the “rise and swift spread of antichristianity within the church”, and he referred to such things as “its merely human Jesus, its anticredalism, its secularism, its utter relativism, its antinomianism, and its free-will-for-all-ism”. All this, he said, was “rapidly leading the church into a state of crisis”. Well, the crisis has arrived; that is what we are now experiencing. But he continued, **“This church will be so incredible as to be unrecognisable as the church of Christ”**. I look around me, and I see what he said is true. That is what has happened to the major denominations in this country.

That crisis that was anticipated has come upon us; the Lord is bringing us into the ‘valley of decision’. No longer can Christians enjoy the luxury of being undecided. If we do not stand out publicly for the Lord and his Truth, we shall be against him. There is no neutral ground. “He who is not with me is against me”, said Our Lord, “and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad”. (Matthew 12:30).

I know how costly it is to take a stand, and what practical implications there are in taking a stand for the truth, and choosing your side. But it must now be done. It must be done for this reason: that he who hesitates is lost. All the time he is undecided, all the time he is temporizing, he is being assimilated, he is being conformed to the errors and the compromise of the institutional churches which have apostatised from the faith. His mind is being subtly conditioned by the ecumenism, the liberalism, the Arminianism and the antinomianism which prevail all around him.

As Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones put it,

We have the evidence before our very eyes that our staying amongst such people does not seem to be converting them to our view, but rather to a lowering of the spiritual temperature of those who are staying amongst them, and an increasing tendency to doctrinal accommodation and compromise.

And about the same time Francis Schaeffer said something very similar.

The tendency (for those evangelicals in the mainline churches in the United States) is to go from ecclesiastical latitudinarianism to co-operative comprehensiveness. Thus Christians may still talk about truth but tend less and less to practice truth.

All the time that Christians are undecided and temporising they are in peril.

Why do I say these things? Because I believe now is the time to say them. Now is the time of decision.

When Elijah addressed the people on Mount Carmel, he confronted them with a choice. You remember his words. “How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him.” It was no longer possible to procrastinate and delay. The time for decision had come. But the response of the people was significant. “They answered him not a word.” Why? Because the will of the people had become atrophied, like a limb that has withered through disuse. They had been lulled into complacency, by a bland acceptance of both Jehovah worship and Baal worship, side by side. That had been the liberal, comprehensive policy of Ahab. The worship of the true God alongside that of the false. But the living God, the God of Israel, will not tolerate that state of affairs. He demands exclusive devotion and worship, for he is a jealous God, he is the living and true God and there is none beside him. And that is the truth that Elijah now confronts the people with. They have not been in the habit of making serious decisions. This disjunction, this choice is a novel and painful experience for them; but they had now to face it.

The same thing was true for the early Christians. The novel thing about the Christian Gospel for the pagan hearer was its exclusive nature. Not merely was salvation preached through Christ, but all other saviours were resolutely rejected. This ran directly counter to the religion and devotion of the Hellenistic age. In that age a multitude of saviours was offered by a variety of religions. They were all thought to be compatible with each other. When a man embraced a new god, it did not mean that he had to give up the others. He simply added another to his pantheon.

But Christianity was different from these “courtly polygamies of the soul”. It demanded absolute and exclusive commitment to Christ. Salvation was not merely through Christ, it was only through Christ. And in that little word ‘only’ lay all the difference and all the offence of Christianity. This is the very genius and nature of Biblical religion. If it is not exclusive in this way it is not true, it is not orthodox, it is not the Word of God and the saving Gospel.

And the same must be true today, for the nature of the Gospel cannot change. But our age is one that would have both/and. It rejects the exclusive claims of Christ and the Word of God. It would have some synthesis, some syncretism of its own making. It would worship at the shrine of the true God and the false. It would enter in at the strait gate and yet travel the broad way. It would have God and mammon, Christ and Belial. But it cannot be!

Out of the moribund hosts of Romanism and ecumenical Christianity God will call his elect, though they have been preserved until now by a miracle of grace like that which preserved the three children in the fiery furnace.

We cannot look upon the condition of our nation today - its moral decline and spiritual confusion - without being distressed. "If one look unto the land, behold darkness and sorrow, and the light is darkened in the heavens thereof". But the message of the Bible is clear in this situation, it is to repent and return to God. But how shall this people return if they are not shown the way? Or if they are told that one way is as good as another? Or that the erroneous path is the true way? We who know the way have a great responsibility. If we would keep faith with the present generation, we must show them the true way, and not remain silent about the wrong way.

God set his mark upon this nation when, four hundred years ago, he set up again his kingdom in our midst; when he dispelled the darkness of superstition and error and gave us the light of his Word; when he cleansed the churches of idolatry and set up the true worship of his name; when he put down lordly prelates and gave us true pastors to feed the flock.

Since then our nation has had one vocation, one path; no competing roles or alternative paths. We dare not despise the providences of God, the signs of his favour to our fathers and to us. If we reject our calling as a people to follow the Protestant Reformed faith, then we have no other, for we incur the judgment of God. Romanism, ecumenism, secularism, godless materialism, are not alternative ways for this nation, but the ways of declension and death.

There is only one way, and that is to return into the way of righteousness and truth, to turn from idols to serve the living and true God and to wait for his Son from heaven.

There is no greater crisis then the spiritual crisis we now face. "Choose you this day whom ye will serve." The decision cannot be delayed. It is no longer possible to have true and false religion. Our God is a *jealous* God, jealous for his honour and his truth. He cannot be served with indifference or compromise. God will only be served with the complete dedication of our lives to the truth which he has revealed in his word. How apposite are the words of Moses to our situation today:

"I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live" (Deuteronomy 30: 19).

Now is the time to choose!

THE ADVENT COLLECT

by John James

Prebendary of Peterborough, 1839

ALMIGHTY GOD, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which thy Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility, that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty, to judge both the quick and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal, through him who liveth and reigneth, with thee and the Holy Ghost, now and ever. Amen.

ADVENT is a word which signifies *Coming*. It is here applied to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; who *came*, in the fulness of time, according to God's appointment, to redeem the world. At this *first coming* he visited us in great humility, as is signified in the Gospel of this day (Matt. 21:5); and *in every particular* exactly answered to the descriptions which the Prophets (principally the Prophet Isaiah, who is therefore called the "Evangelical" or "Gospel Prophet.") had given of *him*, whom God would send as the promised Redeemer. At the end of the world he will come again in a different character; even as a glorious King, to judge both the quick and the dead: which *second Coming* is called his second *Advent*.

The term *Darkness* is expressive sometimes of *Ignorance*, sometimes of *Wickedness*; in the present instance, of *both*. For, at the time of the Messiah's advent, the generality of mankind were deeply sunk, both in *ignorance* and *wickedness*. Uncertain what worship God required of *them*, or what degree of regard *they* might expect from *him*, either in their present or their future state of existence, they were *ignorant* of their duty (Acts 17:23); it is no wonder then that they were also *wicked* in practice (Prov 4:19). Though some of the heathens professed a regard for the attainment of wisdom and the practice of virtue, and were themselves eminently wise and virtuous; yet their virtues were practised generally with a view to human applause; and their wisdom, not carrying them to the knowledge of true religion, was but foolishness with God. Of that virtue which refers every thing good, or great, or laudable, to Him who dwelleth above; and of that wisdom, which maketh men wise unto salvation, by making them children of God's grace, sharers of his love, and inheritors of his kingdom through the atonement of his Son; — of such virtue and of such wisdom they were ignorant. And this ignorance is spoken of by the Prophet as darkness: — "darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people" (Isa 60:2). When

Jesus Christ came — the day-star, from on high — He rose, not only a glory to his people Israel, but a *light* to lighten the Gentiles — a light to lighten even *us*.

The comparison of light with knowledge, and darkness with ignorance, is here very properly applied. For as the light of the sun drives away the darkness of night, shows us what is our daily work, points out the dangers which may oppose us in the prosecution of it, and gives us opportunity to take means of avoiding them; so by the light of his *word* in the Gospel, Jesus Christ, the Sun of Righteousness (Malachi 4:2), enables us to see and to escape the dangers of sin, and to work out our own salvation; which is our daily *work* as Christians. Thus David calls the Word of God, “a lamp unto his feet, and a light unto his path” (Psalm 119:105), “the commandment of the Lord is pure, and *giveth light unto the eyes*” (Psalm 19:8). And St. Paul, in the Epistle for the day (Romans 13:8), declares to the Romans, that the Night of Heathen Ignorance was far spent: the Day of Salvation, — the light of Divine Knowledge, — was at hand, in the fulness of which guiding and cheering light *we* live. For in whatever situation we find ourselves placed amid the varied conditions of life, and among its unceasing fluctuations, the Word of God, and the example of his Blessed Son, will direct us how to act in it. However we may be perplexed with difficulties, temporal or spiritual, before God or man, we have only to turn to the Holy Scriptures; and there we shall instantly find some direction, by following which we may see and guide our way safely, if we will accept the guidance. The precepts of the Gospel are suited to us in joy or in sorrow, in sickness or in health, under adversity and oppression, or in the days of prosperity and power: they will always guide us into the straight path of duty, and keep us in the way of *Spiritual* peace. We have also the example of our merciful Redeemer, for our instruction and humble imitation. By his own actual conduct in his human character, he shows us how *we also* may practise every modification of the Christian graces; from Faith before God to Charity before man.

The object of this beautiful prayer therefore is, that we may be enlightened by the Word of God, and enabled, by Divine Grace, to lead a holy life. So enlightened, we shall be neither *ignorant* of duty, nor *wicked* in practice; but knowing Jesus Christ to be the Saviour of the world, and defended from the evil of sin by the armour of spiritual light, we shall live in the knowledge of the true God; in faith in his Son; in fellowship with his Spirit (Romans 8:16). We shall be steady in our obedience to his laws, as our Father who is in heaven: who thence seeth, clearer than light (I John 1:5), all we do, whether for evil, or for good: who taketh account even of our thoughts; who will hereafter judge the quick and the dead by that Man whom he hath ordained; and who, finally, will lead those who have done good, into life eternal; and will cast those who have done evil, into everlasting fire.

Thus to live, is to walk, *not* in darkness, but in light; not in wickedness or ignorance, but in knowledge and holiness; not in danger, but in safety; not in a weak apprehension of the probable dangers of this present life, but in an awful dread of the terrors of an hereafter; not a slave to the fears or the hopes of this perishing world, but restrained by the fears, and free to the hopes of another and a better world, which passeth not away. Thus to hold our course through this state of probation, is to live wise unto salvation, and sanctified as Children of the Highest; supported under every trial of a patient faith, by the animating hope, that at the *second* Advent of the Son of man, when he shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him — when he shall sit on the throne of his glory — when, before him shall be gathered all nations — when, in the awful moment of final doom, he shall separate the evil and the good — the one from another — He who will then be our *Judge*, may prove in his undeserved and unbounded Mercy, our *Saviour* also.

A BRIEF ADMONITION

Written by John Bradford

in the New Testament of a friend

This book is called, The word of the Cross, because the cross always accompanies it: so that if you will be a student thereof, you must needs prepare yourself to that cross which you began to learn before you learned your alphabet. And Christ requires it of every one that will be his disciple, therein not swerving from the common [manner] of calling or vocations: for no profession or kind of life [lacks] its cross. So they are [much mistaken] who think that the profession of the gospel, which the devil most envies, the world most hates, and the flesh most repines at, can be without a cross. Let us therefore pray that God would enable us to take up our cross by denying ourselves.

From prison, 18th February, 1555.

A CALL TO UNITED PRAYER

A Week of Prayer — January 18-25 2003

The following is reprinted from ‘Protestant Truth’, the magazine of the Protestant Truth Society.

“The Council of the Protestant Truth Society is made up of men from different church backgrounds united by common Gospel convictions. It believes there is a great need for united prayer by evangelical churches not involved with the ecumenical movement embodied in Churches Together. Accordingly, it invites such churches to consider coming together for that purpose during the same week in January kept by Churches Together as the week of prayer for Christian unity.

“Not only would this demonstrate the unity we already share through the work of the Holy Spirit, but there is also much we need to pray about – the revival and spread of Biblical Christianity in our nation, the spiritual health of the churches and a concern for holy living, a reversal of the present antibiblical trends in public life, particularly in parliamentary legislation and the media, and renewed consecration to the great commission given to His church by the Lord Himself. These headings could well be added to.

“The Wickliffe Preachers of the PTS will be seeking to encourage and help co-ordinate such prayer meetings in co-operation with local churches in their areas, but their scope is obviously limited. The Council’s hope is that local church leaders in many parts of the country who are in sympathy with this aim will launch their own initiatives. Our need for the power of God to be experienced in our land is at the heart of this call.

“We do not know what the outcome might be of such united and heartfelt supplication. We do know the need we have to experience the power of God if we are to uphold His truth effectively and honour the Lord Jesus Christ. The prayer of the Council is that this call will be heeded by many churches.

“For more information please contact the PTS office at 184 Fleet Street, London, EC4A 2HJ. Phone/fax: 020 7405 4960. Email: PTSLONDON@btinternet.com

“Some interest has already been shown, but we would be glad and encouraged to hear from other churches that hope to plan such meetings. Suggested topics for prayer should be available from October and will be sent to all who request them.”

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity that is now observed in January of each year was, once, an evangelical concern. It was run under the auspices of the Evangelical Alliance. However, when the ecumenists looked to take over the week for their own purposes, the Evangelical Alliance gave it up with hardly a murmur. Since that time a number of evangelical ministers, congregations and individuals have sought to maintain a week of prayer for true Christian unity and for the needs of the nation. The hope of the PTS council members is that this can be extended. As the extract reproduced above shows, there are two reasons for this.

The first reason is that our church and nation are open to the judgement of God. The actions of successive governments have eroded our Christian and moral laws. The actions of individuals and organisations in society have pushed back the boundaries of taste and decency, and have given licence to all manner of lifestyles and actions that are abhorrent to God according to His Word. The churches have played their part, both in promoting those things that have contributed to the moral decay — though always for such plausible reasons — and also in encouraging the removal of spiritual safeguards through the liberal teachings of so many church leaders. Consequently there is general agreement between the civil and spiritual authorities in these matters, and each is grist to the other's mill.

The second reason is that while we all recognise the need both for true Christian unity and for prayer for these things, we are kept from such gatherings due to their ecumenical nature. We cannot and will not be party to such things. By organising events of our own, and by encouraging others to join us, we are showing that we are not a part of that false ecumenical movement. Individuals and congregations who ought to know better will be given a choice.

The Protestant Truth Society is not organising the week. What it is seeking to do is to promote the idea, and encourage congregations and organisations to consider the matter prayerfully, and to make plans, so far as they can, to observe the week of prayer. It is to be hoped, if possible, that links between local congregations can be established and promoted, as Bible-believing Christians meet together, perhaps for only a couple of hours, to pray together for the needs of the church and nation.

It may be that very few meetings are organised this January. It is hoped that those who do so will want to repeat the event next year, and encourage others to join them. The Word of God shows us that faithful people have sought Him in prayer, and He has always answered. May He do so in our day, as we bring our nation before Him.

“UNDERSTANDEST THOU WHAT THOU READEST?”

The Christian and his Bible

by E J Malcolm

It ought to be taken for granted that every Christian man, woman and child reads, or participates in the communal reading of, the Bible. In short, we each make time either individually, or in groups such as families, to read the Bible. However, conversations with Christian brethren suggests that this is not always so. Indeed, it seems that Christians in our generation are less likely to read the Bible than ever before. This is not a healthy state of affairs, and indicates that there is a general sickness among Christians today. It also warns us that churches are more open than ever to the cold wind of doctrinal error that can blow us every which way.

We shall begin by looking at some reasons why Christians do not read their Bibles, then consider why we should do so, before attempting to offer some suggestions to assist us in this matter.

OBSTACLES

When speaking to Christians about their Bible reading habits, two things are clear. First, they believe that they ought to read, and secondly, they confess that they do not read as often or as much as they should. Human nature being what it is, almost all are ready with an excuse or reason for their practice - or lack of it.

The most common reason given for not reading the Bible is that people find it hard to gain any benefit from so doing. They do not understand what they read. They speak as the Ethiopian eunuch, who answered Philip's question, "Understandest thou what thou redest?" by saying "How can I, except some man should guide me?" (Acts 8:30f). It is not usually the words themselves that cause the difficulty, but the sense of them, and the intention of the author in writing them. They cannot get any meaning from what they read, and so are confused as to why they should read. Also in this group are those who do understand the words and see something of the meaning, but fail to make any connection between it and themselves. The Bible seems irrelevant. It does not address them, and so they see little value in reading.

The second most common reason is lack of time. People have very busy lives. Even those who have retired from employment can be heard to say that they have

no idea how they ever managed to find time to go to work! Bible reading is given no time in their busy daily schedule. They rush from one thing to another, and the Word of God is left aside.

A third reason is that some people can see no point in reading the Bible. They think they know enough. They do not consider that it has anything further to teach them. Their knowledge is surely sufficient; what reason do they have to add to it?

It must be added that it is not just Bible reading that is left undone in such groups, but also prayer. The two go very much hand in hand, and to leave off one is to leave off the other for most believers. There are some who claim that they *cannot* pray, and they tend to be the ones who say that reading the Bible does them no good at all.

ENCOURAGEMENTS

Why should Christians read the Bible? The simplest answer is given in the words of Moses to Israel, in explaining the reason why God dealt with them as He had, “that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live”. (Deuteronomy 8:3). The application made by the Lord Jesus of these words when tempted by Satan shows that the spiritual food of God’s word is in fact more important than daily food. Yet those who cannot find time to read will always be found at the meal table.

That we should read is taken for granted by all, and the guilty looks of the non-reader confirm this. *Why* we should read is not so easily answered for some. We need to consider why we have the Bible in the first place, and what it is.

The Bible is the collection of writings from Israel and the early church, which have been preserved over millennia, and faithfully translated into the common language of our nation. These are not secular writings, but purport to be the very Word of God. So when we read the Bible we are reading what God has caused to be written down. That in itself should make us want to read it, for we are given in the Bible the very words that God has spoken to men. But when we consider the *content* of the Bible we are presented with an even stronger reason for reading. The Bible is nothing less than God’s revelation of Himself to mankind. Without the Bible our knowledge of God would be almost nil. To be sure, the most enlightened of the philosophers of ancient Athens managed by dint of mental effort to arrive at various conclusions regarding the First Cause, interpreted as God. But they could fathom out nothing of the nature of sin, nor of a holy and just God who would punish sin and sinners. They could see nothing

of redemption, nor of Jesus Christ. It is only in the Bible that these things are revealed to us. Further, they are not revealed in mysterious language but in plain and simple words that all can understand.

Some may argue that we do not need the Bible because we have Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh. But how do we know who Jesus is? If we say, "Because He told us", it might be objected that we have no way of knowing if He told the truth. However, when we see that Jesus' coming is after centuries of prophecy and preparation concerning that event, then we find that, on top of His own claims, He is *shown* to be Messiah. And we can only know this if we have read the Old Testament in detail.

But some might say, "I know who Jesus is. Of what further use is the Bible to me?" It might be asked in return, "Do you know why He came?" All Christians should be able to answer this easily, and to speak of His coming to be the propitiation for our sins, to redeem us as the people of God, and to open the way of salvation. Reading about this is vital to us, not only so that we can come to a right understanding of the doctrine of salvation, but also that we might continually remind ourselves of these things. When you go into the doctor's surgery or the solicitor's office you see the certificates of their qualifications on the wall. They are proud of them and display them for all to see. They remind themselves of what they have accomplished. The Christian ought to delight in being reminded of what Jesus has done for him or her. We ought to rejoice always for the salvation we have received, and glory in the mercy and lovingkindness of God to us in Jesus Christ.

The Christian will respond by saying, "I know all these things, and I know that I am a child of God through grace." Very well then, how does a child of God live? What does God require of us? What are we to expect in this life? Now that we are His children, how is our living to differ from our previous conduct? The answers to these and many more questions are contained in the Bible. Not that we should use the Bible as a kind of encyclopædia of practical advice, though it contains much of value, but that as we read we see the Christian character and conduct laid out before us in examples and in instructions.

Then there will be the Christians who say, "I only read the Bible when I am in trouble and need help." But David said, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." (Psalm 119:11). Had we been regular and careful readers of the Bible, we might have avoided the trouble we are now in. The value of a map lies in the help it affords in planning a journey in order to avoid getting lost. Once the traveller is lost, the map only helps if he can work out where he is at that moment. Knowing where he ought to be is of no great help. If we read the

Bible daily, and meditate upon what we read, then we shall, by God's grace, find that our feet are not prone to wandering.

And so to the matter of time. The usual response to those who complain of lack of time is that they must learn to make time. There is truth in this, but we know that there are only so many hours in a day. The need is less to make time and more to make good use of time. Time is a precious commodity. In the days of Noah God said that man had only one hundred and twenty years left, meaning that after that time the Flood would come and there would be no more time for those outside the ark. The story is told of the chemistry teacher who gave his class a bucket, a pile of sand, a pile of gravel, and a pile of large pebbles. He told them to put all the material into the bucket. So the sand was poured in, then the gravel, and then the large pebbles. However, there was not enough room to get them all in. The teacher then came forward to demonstrate. He began by placing the large pebbles in the bucket, then the gravel was poured in, and finally the sand was allowed to trickle through the gaps between the other materials. It all went in. His point was to show the space that exists between molecules; our point is to show that here are certain large demands on our time that must be given priority. Once those are dealt with we can move on to the less urgent, and leave the decidedly unimportant to the very last. If Bible reading and prayer are treated as vital, and are given first priority in our day, the other things will be fitted in. But if the day is given over to minor matters, then the serious things of our faith will be left out.

Martin Luther said that if he had a busy day ahead of him, he had to get up even earlier to spend time with God. That is the attitude we need to cultivate. A successful businessman was once asked for the secret of his success. He put it down to getting up early and making a start at work before anyone else. He was asked how he managed to get up so early for so many years. He replied that he began by sitting up, then he put one foot on the floor, followed by the other, and then stood up. There are no easy answers to getting up early, even for such a necessary activity as Bible reading and prayer. The flesh is still weak, and the warm bed still calls. But if we consider the benefits of spending that time with God, then we shall be able, by God's grace, to give ourselves to these things.

ASSISTANCE

Some will say, "But how will this help me in understanding what I read?" There are ways in which we can make Bible reading easier.

The most obvious way is to use Bible reading notes. These give a daily portion, and offer some application of the main point of the passage. There may also be pointers for prayer. For some people this is a very satisfactory way of engaging

in private Bible study. They are given assistance, and the passage is shown to have some relevance to them. However, a word of caution needs to be sounded.

Not all who prepare Bible-reading notes are those we would normally submit to in other circumstances. Their views may not always be compatible with biblical Christianity. Some lean to views that do damage to the text of the Bible, or to its authority, or to the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. We need to be discerning in our following of their doctrine. Again, many Bible-reading notes are very selective in the portions set for each day. The hard passages are overlooked, and in this instance ‘hard’ can often be those verses with which the note-writer has difficulty. The Apostle Paul was able to tell the Ephesian elders that he had declared unto them “all the counsel of God” (Acts 20:27). We also need the whole counsel of God .

Some will prefer to use a commentary. This will depend on ability in handling deeper study, and also on the availability of such books. Some of the same cautions need to be observed. Not all commentators are worth following, and nearly all are to be treated with caution at one point or another. Bishop Ryle used to say, “In theology I dare not call any man master and father”. Let us have the same cautious spirit.

There is a tendency today to meet in small groups in order to study together. This can be a great help, though clearly not all will be able to find such a group. However, again it is necessary to say that when people meet and discuss, they can tend to become convinced of their own views without ever subjecting them to any dispassionate scrutiny. They have merely exchanged a man in print for a man in the flesh as their authority on matters spiritual. A godly and wise believer is a valuable asset at such a meeting; a proud and somewhat ignorant one is a true bane. Generally it is the latter who prevail.

The only sure guide to understanding God’s Word is God’s Word. The Articles state, “Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation.” (Article VI). And again, “It is not lawful for the Church to ordain any thing that is contrary to God’s Word written neither may it so expound one place of Scripture, that it may be repugnant to another.” (Article XX). The Berean band should be our example, who “searched the scriptures daily” (Acts 17:11). To do this requires our reading the Bible; we will be unable to compare what we do not know with anything else! Therefore in order to read with understanding we must read. In short, the more we read, the more we shall understand.

However, our understanding is not limited to our own senses. Just as prayer is an exercise conducted in union with the indwelling Holy Spirit, Romans 8:15, so the reading of God's Word must be with His assistance. Paul wrote, "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual." (1 Cor 2:12-13). When we pray for understanding, we believe we shall receive it, because God has promised it to us. The same Holy Spirit who inspired the prophets, psalmists, Gospel writers, apostles and others, will give us understanding. And He will not cause us to understand something in a way that is alien to His original intention when the words were first written. There is a wonderful continuity in this, in that what was first intended is what we will be led to understand. "All these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit."

So the Christian has prayed for understanding. He takes up his Bible. But where should he open his Bible? The best course is to read systematically, book by book. For a variation, read it chronologically. Or read the various types of book; history, wisdom, the prophets, and so on. Do not simply read the favourite passages or books. A diet of sweets may sound wonderful, but before long we miss basic foods. We need a balanced diet.

Reading chronologically has another great benefit. God did not present Moses, or even John the Divine, with a complete Bible. Rather, we have before us the account of the unfolding of the divine revelation. Read Genesis as Adam and Eve would have received the first words of God. Read of the sacrifice of Isaac on Mount Moriah as Abraham would have experienced it. Allow the Bible to speak to us as it was first heard. When we read the promise of God in Genesis 3:15, we immediately think of Jesus Christ. Adam and Eve did not, for they knew no such Person. Nor did Moses, nor David, nor Isaiah. However, before we get to Isaiah it is clear that God is preparing Israel for the coming of her king. See how the nation was prepared through types and prophecies for the Messiah. Look at the types, and see what they teach. Compare them with the Antitype, Jesus Christ, and learn what the Israelites were being taught. Understand the relationship between the kingdom of Israel and the kingdom of God. See the kingdom in Genesis 2:8-14. See how God prepares us for the reality to be revealed in Jesus Christ.

There is a term for this. It is called biblical theology. All theology should be biblical. However, when people complain that they do not understand the Bible it is often because they are treating it as a mine from which they must wrest the raw doctrines before refining them in the fires of their own minds. This is not

how Paul did theology. Paul preached Christ as the fulfilment of prophecy. He taught people to live according to the consequences of their being in union with the crucified, resurrected and ascended Messiah. He encouraged the faithful, exhorted the weak and corrected the erroneous on this basis. It must be the basis on which we are similarly exhorted, encouraged and corrected.

If we learn to read the Bible on its own terms, rather than trying to make it fit our mould, we shall hear the voice of God speaking “in accents loud and clear”. If we humbly submit to the Word of God we shall find that it does its work of guiding and correcting us, of comforting and uplifting us. We shall find that there is true joy and delight in Bible reading. This is not to say that we shall have understood every last word, or seen all that there is to see. But we shall begin to look into those things “the angels desire to look into”. May God give to us that heart desire to read His Word, to know His will, and to be guided by His Spirit. May we be strong in the Lord, being fed upon His Word.

The central message of the New Testament concerns God incarnate, Jesus of Nazareth, who did for us what we could not do for ourselves, in order to bring us, a lost people, back to God. The whole of scripture is filled with the sense of the divine initiative in salvation. In the Old Testament the sin of Adam and Eve, which brings the judgment of God, is not the end of the story because God has a plan of mercy and grace. The narratives of Noah and Abraham are eloquent of the sovereign work of God to bring rebellious humanity back from the brink of destruction. The covenant [that] God made with the chosen people is before all else a covenant of grace. God elects his people, makes significant promises to them, and acts to bring about the fulfilment of these promises. Only after the great redemptive act in the exodus from Egypt is Israel given the code of conduct in the law: “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage” (Exodus 20:2). They are already his people through what he has done in the past. They could not save themselves from Egypt and from their bondage to foreign gods; they could only stand still and see the salvation that God would achieve for them (Exodus 14:13-14). Then, having been saved by grace, they are bonded to their God in the covenant of Sinai. This primacy of grace, which is at work all the way through the Old Testament, points us to the centrality and primacy of the gospel of grace in the New Testament.

*Graeme Goldsworthy, Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture
(Leicester: IVP, 2000)*

CHRIST'S ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM

Expository Thoughts on Matthew 21:1-13

by J C Ryle

These verses contain a very remarkable passage in our Lord Jesus Christ's life. They describe His public entry into Jerusalem, when He came there for the last time, before He was crucified.

There is something peculiarly striking in this incident in our Lord's history. The narrative reads like the account of some royal conqueror's return to his own city: "A very great multitude" accompanies Him in a kind of triumphal procession; loud cries and expressions of praise are heard around Him: "All the city was moved." The whole transaction is singularly at variance with the past tenor of our Lord's life; it is curiously unlike the ways of Him who did not "cry, nor strive, nor let His voice be heard in the streets," who withdrew Himself from the multitude on other occasions, and sometimes said to those He healed, "See thou say nothing to any man!" (Mark 1:44.) And yet the whole transaction admits of explanation. The reasons of this public entry are not hard to find out. Let us see what they were.

The plain truth is that our Lord knew well that the time of His earthly ministry was drawing to a close; He knew that the hour was approaching when He must finish the mighty work He came to do, by dying for our sins upon the cross; He knew that His last journey had been accomplished, and that there remained nothing now in His earthly ministry, but to be offered as a sacrifice on Calvary. Knowing all this, He no longer, as in times past, sought secrecy; knowing all this, He thought it good to enter the place where He was to be delivered to death, with peculiar solemnity and publicity. It was not fitting that the Lamb of God should come to be slain on Calvary privately and silently: before the great sacrifice for the sin of the world was offered up, it was right that every eye should be fixed on the victim. It was suitable that the crowning act of our Lord's life should be done with as much notoriety as possible: therefore it was that He made this public entry; therefore it was that He attracted to Himself the eyes of the wondering multitude; therefore it was that "all Jerusalem was moved." The atoning blood of the Lamb of God was about to be shed: this deed was not to be "done in a corner" (Acts 26: 26.)

It is good to remember these things. The real meaning of our Lord's conduct at this period of His history is not sufficiently considered by many readers of this

passage. It remains for us to consider the practical lessons which these verses appear to point out.

In the first place, let us notice in these verses an example of our Lord Jesus Christ's perfect knowledge. He sends His two disciples into a village; He tells them that they will there find the ass on which He was to ride; He provides them with an answer to the inquiry of those to whom the ass belonged; He tells them that on giving that answer the ass will be sent: and all happens exactly as He foretells.

There is nothing hid from the Lord's eyes: there are no secrets with Him. Alone or in company, by night or by day, in private or in public, He is acquainted with all our ways. He that saw Nathanael under the fig tree is unchanged. Go where we will, and retire from the world as we may, we are never out of sight of Christ.

This is a thought that ought to exercise a restraining and sanctifying effect on our souls. We all know the influence which the presence of the rulers of this world has upon their subjects: nature itself teaches us to put a check on our tongues, and demeanour, and behaviour, when we are under the eye of a King. The sense of our Lord Jesus Christ's perfect knowledge of all our ways, ought to have the same effect upon our hearts. Let us do nothing we would not like Christ to see, and say nothing we would not like Christ to hear; let us seek to live and move and have our being under a continual recollection of Christ's presence; let us behave as we would have done had we walked beside Him, in the company of James and John, by the sea of Galilee. This is the way to be trained for heaven. In heaven, "we shall ever be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:17.)

In the second place, let us notice in these verses an example of the manner in which prophecies concerning our Lord's first coming were fulfilled. We are told that His public entry fulfilled the words of Zachariah: "Thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass."

It appears that this prediction was literally and exactly fulfilled. The words which the prophet spake by the Holy Ghost received no figurative accomplishment: as he said, so it came to pass; as he foretold, so it was done. Five hundred and fifty years had passed away since the prediction was made, and then, when the appointed time arrived, the long-promised Messiah did literally ride into Zion "on an ass." No doubt the vast majority of the inhabitants of Jerusalem saw nothing in the circumstance; the veil was upon their hearts: but we are not left in doubt as to the fulfilment of the prophecy. We are told plainly, "All this was done that it might be fulfilled."

From the fulfilment of God's word in time past, we are surely intended to gather something as to the manner of its fulfilment in time to come. We have a right to expect that prophecies respecting the second advent of Christ will be as literally fulfilled as those respecting His first advent. He came to this earth literally in person the first time; He will come to this earth literally in person the second time; He came in humiliation once literally to suffer; He will come again in glory literally to reign. Every prediction respecting things accompanying His first advent was literally accomplished: it will be just the same when He returns. All that is foretold about the restoration of the Jews, the judgments on the ungodly, the unbelief of the world, the gathering of the elect, shall be made good to the letter. Let us not forget this. In the study of unfulfilled prophecy, a fixed principle of interpretation is of the first importance.

Finally, let us notice in these verses a striking example of the worthlessness of man's favour. Of all the admiring crowds who thronged round our Lord as He entered Jerusalem, none stood by Him when He was delivered into the hands of wicked men. Many cried, "Hosannah," who four days after cried, "Away with Him, crucify Him."

But this is a faithful picture of human nature: this is a proof of the utter folly of thinking more of the praise of man than the praise of God. Nothing in truth is so fickle and uncertain as popularity: it is here today and gone tomorrow; it is a sandy foundation, and sure to fail those who build upon it. Let us not care for it. Let us seek the favour of Him who is "the same yesterday, and to-day and for ever." (Heb. 13:8.) Christ never changes: those whom He loves, He loves to the end. His favour endureth for ever.

We have in these verses (vv12-13) an account of a remarkable event in our Lord's history. In it there was something eminently figurative and typical; it was an emblem of a spiritual thing. Beneath the surface lies a lesson of solemn instruction.

The event that demands our attention is our Lord's visit to the temple. He found His Father's house in a state which too truly shadowed forth the general condition of the whole Jewish Church: everything out of order, and out of course. He found the courts of that holy building disgracefully profaned by worldly transactions. Trading, and buying, and selling, were actually going on within its walls; there stood dealers ready to supply the Jew who came from distant countries, with any sacrifice he wanted; there sat the money-changer, ready to change foreign money for the current coin of the land†. Bullocks, and sheep, and goats, and pigeons, were there exposed for sale, as if the place had been a market: the jingling of money might there be heard, as if those holy courts had

been a bank or an exchange. Such were the scenes that met our Lord's eyes. He saw it all with holy indignation. "He cast out all them that sold and bought"; He "overthrew the tables of the money-changers": resistance there was none, for men knew that He was right; objection there was none, for all felt that He was only reforming a notorious abuse, which had been basely permitted for the sake of gain. Well might He sound in the ears of the astonished traders, as they fled from the temple, those solemn words of Isaiah, "It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves."

Let us see in our Lord's conduct on this occasion, a striking type of what He will do when He comes again the second time. He will purify His visible Church as He purified the temple; He will cleanse it from every thing that defiles and works iniquity, and cast every worldly professor out of its pale; He will allow no worshipper of money, or lover of gain to have a place in that glorious temple, which He will finally exhibit before the world. May we all strive to live in the daily expectation of that coming! May we judge ourselves that we be not condemned, and cast out in that searching and sifting day! We should often study those words of Malachi: "Who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appeareth? for He is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap." (Mal. 3:2.)

†*The practice of changing money arose less from the presence of foreign coins per se, as Bishop Ryle implies, than from the fact that most coinage was debased. Only Tyrian coin, whose silver content was high, was considered suitable for the payment of the obligatory half-shekel for the temple-tax. Thus the desire of the temple authorities was to ensure that the tax paid did not fall below a certain standard; the money-changer made sure that the exchange-rate was in his favour; and the command of God to pay the temple-tax (Ex 30:13) became an opportunity for greed and deceit. Hon. Ed.*

Readers who want to buy new printings of the works of Bishop Ryle may like to know that the Church Society is selling many of his titles, at very reasonable prices. Please contact the Church Society, Dean Wace House, 16 Rosslyn Road, Watford, Herts, WD18 0NY. Tel: 01923 235111. Books may be ordered and paid for by credit card on their web site, www.churchsociety.org

NEW BOOKS

We have been informed about three new books from the Reformed Free Publishing Association, 4949 Ivanrest Ave SW, Grandville, MI 49418-9709, USA. www.rfpa.org. Details as below.

Righteous By Faith Alone: A Devotional Commentary on Romans. Herman Hoeksema. Ed. David J. Engelsma. ISBN 0-916206-71-8. 728pp hdbk \$41.95.

This book is described as ‘a fresh, bold, and faithful exposition of Romans, the book of the Bible that the Protestant Reformation rightly regarded as the *summa* of the gospel of salvation by grace alone. The 97 short chapters, each taking a section of verses from Romans, are devotional in tone. They are characterized by clear language, simplicity of explanation, warmth of teaching, sharpness of application, and homeliness of illustration’.

The book is written ‘to the very same audience for whom the apostle Paul wrote the epistle: the “beloved of God, called to be saints.”’

Whosoever Will. Herman Hoeksema. ISBN 0-916206-67X. 128pp pbk. \$12.95.

“Examining the phrase “whosoever will may come” from a popular hymn chorus of his day, Hoeksema shows the error of its usual Arminian interpretation, but he also shows the truth of the phrase according to God’s sovereignty as taught in Scripture.

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Saved by Grace: A Study of the Five Points of Calvinism. Ronald Cammenga and Ronald Hanko. 0-916206-74-2. 263pp hdbk. \$17.95/ISBN 0-916206-72-6. 263pp pbk. \$13.95

“The authors strove for—and achieved—easy to read, brief, and clear explanations of the Five Points of Calvinism, also known as the “doctrines of grace”, that sum up the Reformed Faith. They also expose errors that have arisen against these biblical truths. Each chapter is arranged into the following main headings: The Doctrine, Scripture Proofs, Objections, Denials; the Practical Importance of the Doctrine, and the Relation of the Doctrine to the Other Points.”

Readers should be aware that we have not read these books, and are only reproducing selections from publicity material. The illustrations provided show that they are nicely produced.

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**MATERIAL FOR APRIL ISSUE OF *THE JOURNAL*
AND *INTERCESSIONS* BY MARCH 21st 2003, 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.

CHURCHES IN UK

Boston Protestant Reformed Church. Meeting at 4, Charles Street, Boston, Lincolnshire. Services 11.00 am and 6.30 pm. *Enquiries* Mr. Alistair Turner, 01205 311082

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. Mary's, Castle Street, Reading. Sunday Services: 11.00 a.m. Morning Prayer (first Sunday Lord's Supper), 6.30 p.m. Evening Prayer (third Sunday Lord's Supper). Tuesday 8.00 pm Bible Study. *Enquiries* Rev. E.J. Malcolm 0118 959 5131. www.castlestreet.org

St. Silas Congregation, Wolverhampton, meeting in St. John's Cloisters Chapel, St. John's Square (A-Z p29 H2). 11.00 am Morning Prayer (1st Sunday Holy Communion); 6.30 p.m. Evening Prayer (3rd Sunday Holy Communion). Tuesdays in term time 7.00 p.m. Bible Study; 7.45 p.m. Prayer Meeting. On-street parking. *Enquiries* Rt. Rev. E. Malcolm 01547 528815. Hon. Curate Rev. I.R. Budgen, 01902 656514.

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