

*The Journal*  
of  
**The Church of England**  
**(Continuing)**

*Jesus Christ the same  
yesterday, and to day, and  
for ever. Heb. 13:8*



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# 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

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Would contributors please note that they can send their news via email, to [edward@macmail.com](mailto:edward@macmail.com)

*Contributions toward postage costs are gratefully received.*

*From the Presiding Bishop, Edward Malcolm*

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Dear Friends,

*'I laboured more abundantly than they all.'* (1 Corinthians 15:10)

It used to be said that whilst there were many things wrong amongst the clergy of the Church of England, no one could accuse them of laziness: they worked very hard. I observe this is less and less true, with teaching that clergy are enablers, the hearers being the ones fired up to do the work. I notice less evening services, less midweek meetings, less hours given to labouring for Christ, more telephones off the hook, more insistence on leisure. This is a copy of a general malaise in society where it is assumed that the more time is spent in the office, the more work is done, and the rest of the time is for relaxation. I wonder if hours really equal intensity, or length effectiveness? Or if any time is my own?

Let every man examine himself, for the cause of this malady is not hard to seek. It is that the doctrines of grace are misunderstood. Of course the unconverted are strangers to grace, but what about believers? Paul says, 'But by the grace of God I am what I am'. 'You see me working all hours,' he says. 'The cause is I have felt burningly that God saved me, and I had no part in it. Therefore I owe everything I have and am to God's gracious choosing of me from eternity. I am his, bound to serve with everything I have.' Lack of that makes a believer say 'a little more sleep, a little more folding of the hands in sleep'. Estimating oneself 'the chief of sinners' makes one a miser of the minutes and turns a wastrel into an ant. If our hands are slack, here is the root cause.

Paul then fears the grace of God being in vain. His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain, is the 'protestant work ethic'. Grace in vain, what a thought! It nerves the Christian's effort. The proud and idle Romewardising crowd, converted and unconverted alike use it as a gibe, but they are really mocking Christ who worked so incessantly on earth, sparing nothing. Both spiritually in prayer, purity and love, and intellectually applying his powers to the full, as well as physically wearing himself to nothing, he wasted no grace. Many presume on grace today.

Yet he never gave the impression of pressure. No one turned away saying 'I can see he is too busy.' We are like Chaucer's sergeant at law, 'yet he seemed bisier

than he was.' If we give that impression we need to obey Christ's words, 'Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest'. Rest is not the absence of work, but 'take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart'. Rest in the yoke whilst pulling steadily.

The third reason Paul gives is, 'but I laboured more abundantly than they all.' The Holy Spirit within him knew he worked more unstintingly than all the others. His work was more effective. He took heaven by storm. I always remember a Christian Colonel I knew whose son lost his reason, abandoning his highly-promising medical career, and eating compulsively. Once he devoured a sack of dirty potatoes, another time all the pots of jam in the larder. He put up notices in the windows of the home, walked in front of cars, then attempted arson to kill his father. The old man, a retired missionary, called in a fellow worker and prayed. My! how they prayed. They laid hold of God's strength together, and after three days came the breakthrough. The son's condition was not perfectly restored, but he was discharged from the hospital where he was confined and held a job, and I believe later married. That is 'yet not I'.

Do not turn away and say 'I could not be a workaholic like that.' Say, 'Would God I understood grace. Then I would be freed to work.'

Your friend and bishop,

*Edmund Malatesta*

### **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 Mr J Westmacott, 1 Salisbury Close, Wokingham, Berkshire, RG41 4AJ 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***

# **FULL-TIME SERVICE**

## *Standing up with the Eleven (Acts 2:14)*

**by Edward Malcolm**

Christ freed you and gave you life in him. Now you must decide what to do with this ransomed thing. Today is not the day to enter into a detailed discussion of this passage. We need not enquire closely into ‘tongues’, or how overseas people knew the disciples were Galileans, not even whether Peter’s sermon is fully reported or merely summarised.

What is of concern is to see Christians stand up with the eleven, their lives at the Master’s disposal. We want to save believers from wasting God-given lives, letting unrepeatable opportunities slip through their fingers. I think to myself as I watch, ‘that one is heading for bitter regrets over life.’

What am I going to do with my life, or at least what is left of it?

### *Let me put you off Christ’s full-time service*

#### **If you can, go and sell vegetables**

That was the advice of Dr. Packer to his students years ago. Do not go into the ministry, or give up your life to spreading or preaching the Gospel, if with a good conscience you can stay at home. Get yourself a nice Christian wife or husband, have a family, make a home, and keep quit of what you are not called to, if conscience allows. You will do less damage that way.

#### **If not, can you face such a struggle?**

Struggle it is, make no mistake. Hard work, long hours, shortage of necessities, blazing opposition from friends let alone enemies, discouragements like douches of cold water daily, exposure to insult, being despised and crying into the wind as far as anyone taking any notice. You are servant to all, the proud have you in derision.

And all compounded by personal doubts, failures, wrestlings within an inch of life, told only to the blanket under your chin in the dark as you pour out your heart to him who is ever ready to hear and help, whilst others sleep. They are princes, you a pauper in their eyes. They little know God’s view of matters. It cost the eleven all that to stand up.

#### **Have you really got the faith needed?**

Not everyone has the same amount of faith. Christ described one as having ‘great

faith', others as 'O ye of little faith', and said to others 'according unto your faith be it unto you'. Faith as a grain of mustard seed gets you to heaven, but great faith is needed to do exploits for God. The way to grow in faith is to put your talent to the usurers like the parable. You take this trembling, hesitant thing and throw it into life's market place. There is no other way to multiply it. Luther was correct that the third thing which makes a minister of God is temptation. Bible reading, learning, preaching and half obedience are no substitute for imitating the Lord, who 'went throughout all the cities of Judaea'.

### **Count the cost**

Christ only accepts costly gifts. He knows well what you most value, what you dread losing, what you have set your heart on. He asks, 'is my sacrifice worth that to you? Will you entrust it to me, whatever it is, marriage, prospects, loved ones, or control of your own affairs?'

Whatever you most cherish, he will make the decision concerning, not you. And, remember, it is for life. No turning back if you are to be counted worthy of witnessing with the eleven.

### **Do it quickly**

Am I satisfied with what I am doing for God? All would have to answer 'no', but some more than others. Then, 'whatsoever he saith unto you, do it'. You know what fish bone is stuck in the throat of your conscience. Others do not know, but your Master knows. Throw restraint aside and do what you know you ought to. All your hard work, your sacrifice in his service is no substitute for simple obedience.

It looks to you as if you have time to decide at leisure. You have not, for in the New Testament decision was prompt. The Apostle Paul, the moment he was called said, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' When Christ called his disciples, 'they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him.' No decision is a decision not to. Tomorrow you will need money and a job to live in today's Britain. The silken tentacles of the world's octopus will grasp you a little tighter. Let the cement of hesitation harden for an hour or two and all is lost, the world's hold unbreakable.

They all say the same, 'I must first settle life, then I will obey and go'. Hm! Will you? And what if the new wife or husband refuses? Will it be easier next year to leave the ones you love, who depend upon you? Will you have more responsibilities, or less? Just guess!

### **Reason yourself out of it**

Most Christians seem to have an addiction to reasoning away obedience. It is quite easy really, with practice. It feeds pride to be able to differ, to judge what others preach and hide your opposition. To become a thorn when Christ formed you anew to be a rose. Break your habit of saying 'No', or 'wait', or 'I have a super-

spiritual reason not to'. Did Matthew do so when the Lord said 'Follow me' to him when at the receipt of custom? What of his money, his accounts, his sumptuous home and lucrative job? He threw them up and turned his back and walked.

I have done my part as Mr. Worldly Wiseman. Do you still want to stand up with the eleven?

*Let me try to convince you why you should*

### **You have one choice only so take it**

Some think they can change later, but only deceive themselves, for Christ said 'No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God'. Once take it and you will find he can call you here, anywhere in this wide world. All will hear your words in their own vernacular, for God will enable you.

### **Give Christ your best**

Christ will refuse half-service, half-used goods, or sharing the throne of your life with anything. You give him your best, your youth and all life's golden promise, untarnished.

'It is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.' No one is too late. Some of the finest came forward late in a misspent life, but once their eyes were opened, were more awake than the young and fit, and did exploits for God. I have heard of such.

### **A second call is impossible**

Lives now useless to God are pushing like Uzziah into the holy of holies with their unhallowed incense of life-offering, but too late. The leprosy rises up in their foreheads, for all to see, and the priests hurry them forth, saying 'It pertaineth not to thee O Uzziah!' I think, 'if only they had obeyed with alacrity', how much the poor suffering Church of God would be spared! But now we have to bear with them.' You had your call, you balked. God still accepts you to heaven, but in his service is a different matter.

To all who will listen I say, the moment he calls, follow without pause. Do not delay whatever age you are. His call enables.

### **Yet even so, pray, beseech God for a second opportunity**

Most will hear nothing but silence when they do. 'No', the silence says, 'you chose and you must abide by your choice'. However, in God's sovereign pleasure occasional Baraks receive a second opportunity, but the honour is no longer theirs, it is Deborah's. The great things of God belong to the unquestioningly, unhesitatingly obedient. They conquer for God and do exploits. There are in

God's army like David's, however, some who 'attained not to the first three'. Ask God for such a position, say 'I accept any position, just let me do thee service, Lord.' Get down on your knees, repent and plead, Oh if God might find some humble corner for such as me, even disobedient, forfeited me!

### **Your abilities will increase**

Christ promised that to him that hath more shall be given. Do not stand doubting your abilities. I should know if anyone does, that Christ improves us, once we follow him into his full-time service. For a start, every experience in life, however unlikely up to this point, now comes in useful. Apparently useless past bits of skill, knowledge and experience, he takes and utilises. One talent put to the usurers grows exceedingly, and quickly becomes three. It is far harder for the one-talent Christian to take that first step, than for the more talented. Yet all sorts of latent powers of mind, heart and will are called into play, and in full-time service grow strong in a way you could not imagine from where you are. Carey the boot mender writes a book, translates the Bible into many languages, launches a university, becomes the first professor of botany in India, and much more. Courage, fear not 'thou worm Jacob'.

### **There is a place for you**

There is a special place, foreordained, a niche cut with you in mind, and work only you can do. It is all mapped out. Why then let another have the reward, and at the last day hear the voice to that one, 'Friend, come up higher. And thou with shame begin to take the lowest room?' God formed you and called you. Obey and you will never regret it, even if you turn out a failure from this world's viewpoint. Yours eyes shall behold the land that is very far off, and see the King in his beauty, and enter into the joy of your Lord.

### **This is the highest calling**

Let who will make money, seek safety, ease, home and comfort. Serve the King, and He will make you His ambassador, as in Christ's stead. His smile or frown weighs more with us than all the plaudits of the world. They are nothing, His approval is the seventh heaven. There is nothing in life to compare with His service. Do not throw it away, but come whilst young, free, strong and able. He will provide, yours but to follow.

### **There is no Master like the Lord**

He is the kindest, the most patient with our failures, our obtuseness, our lack of sympathy with him in his tribulations and plans, I have found by experience that his yoke is easy, his burden is light. In his service my life blossomed, my health improved, my wants have been taken care of in detail, and my Master is my best Friend, although I am so insignificant and he so great. He has kept every promise,

given me back an hundredfold, and with all this, heaven ahead. He has promised me a reward, which he has earned, and his grace has worked in my life to make me able to receive it.

### **His servants are free**

You say to me, 'He chooses, appoints and demands obedience, and you turn round and say I am free?' Ah! but I knew the service of sin, with all its bondage and misery. The devil will never be my hard master again. I ran away and entered untrammelled into life.

Again I answer, Yes, for I love my Master, and will not leave him, though I have perfect freedom to do so. He called me to be a missionary to Islam, and it looked and felt very like prison for a start. However, it broke off many a sin and habit, and exposed and dealt with the grumbling, dissatisfied side of my nature. You could be made twice the person you are by entering his free service. I was unchained in a way I could not have guessed. Wisdom lives in him, and he has given me his counsel.

### **His servants are happy**

If you will follow him in full-time service, you will be happy in the midst of troubles. Perfection does not belong here below, but the mists of doubt will flee, life with its clear path and distant prospects will be yours. You will never regret it. Ask those who have had the hardest lots for Christ's sake, and they will tell you there was a fourth figure walking in the midst of the furnace, and it was well, well worth it. I have a purpose now, a cause which is dearer to me than it is to many who are not in Christ's full-time service.

The great secret is His love, which comes with the comfort of his emboldening Holy Spirit. That makes us stand with the eleven. Love flows into us, and overflows into other lives. It enables us to do all we are asked to do. It is the precious, precious secret of life.

### **Conclusion**

I have set before you ample reasons, and true ones, not to answer that call 'Follow me.' I have showed you some of the vast benefits of unhesitating obedience, of letting life go, laying it dead on the ash-heap, and following Christ full-time. I have shown you that he is the best of Masters, and full-time service is the happiest of all states, in spite of all the opposition and heartache it may bring.

Even if none of these things were so, he did so much for me, I long to do more for him, to show in some slight way that I love him not just for reward but for himself.

# THE SUFFERINGS OF THE CHRIST

*Luke 24:26*

by John Westmacott

In Luke 24, verse 26 we read these words of Jesus spoken to the two disciples, ‘Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?’ I do not need to go over the events which led to this conversation between Jesus and the two sorrowful disciples—they are known well enough. However far from sympathising with them in their sorrow, Jesus rebuked them for not believing what the prophets said about the Christ, the promised Messiah, ‘Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?’ Now of course this is not an open question to which there is more than one answer—the original Greek word used for the negative makes it clear that the answer is already understood—one might rephrase it ‘Surely no one denies that the Christ, the Messiah, had to suffer, and to enter into his glory’. It is inevitable; it was essential; Christ had to suffer these things and to enter into his glory. The disciples had been expecting the Messiah to be one who would come as an earthly conqueror to drive out the Roman occupying forces and to establish a Jewish kingdom. Yet they had seen Jesus, the one on whom their hopes were built, cruelly put to death and it seemed that he had proved to be no better than the other insurrectionist leaders of past years— a defeated failure. But no, says Jesus, did you not expect him to suffer—that is what the prophets foretold, that is what he himself had said would happen — the Messiah had to suffer and to enter into his glory. Let us then ask three questions;— Why did Christ have to suffer? What things did he suffer? And What did he accomplish through his suffering?

Firstly then, **Why did Christ have to suffer?** To answer this we must go back to that book which lays the foundation for all that follows in the Scriptures, to Genesis. Following the creation of the world and the placing of Adam in the garden in which he was to dwell, God made a covenant with him, a covenant of nature, a covenant of works, a covenant subject to the fulfilment of which Adam would not die Gen 2:16,17. ‘And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.’ As long as Adam was obedient to the command of God, he would live on in fellowship with, and in the presence of, God. But if he once disobeyed, if he broke the command, he would die. Sin would inevitably lead to death. Scripture reveals to us how the covenant was indeed broken through the influence

of the serpent, and man fell into sin. Man was seduced by the devil to transfer his allegiance from the holy and true God to the arch-deceiver, and it appeared that Satan had thwarted for ever God's plan for mankind. Man was guilty of disobedience to God's sovereign will, and death was the inevitable consequence.

It was then that God revealed another covenant. It is first referred to in Genesis 3:15 where God places a curse on the serpent and shows him that his apparent triumph will be brought to nothing 'And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.' Here was a covenant which preceded the covenant of works made with Adam, a covenant which had been entered into in eternity past, before the foundation of the world, before ever man was created, a covenant made, not between God and man, but between God the Father and God the Son, that covenant which we know as the covenant of grace. Although initially revealed in shadow, it was gradually made clearer as God's plan of redemption unfolded. It required the shedding of blood to make an atonement for sin. It required the sacrifice of one who was not a party to sin, one who did not share in the guilt of the sinner. It required the death of a victim who was without sin. Such a work could not therefore be undertaken by mortal man, for Adam's sin had infected for ever the whole race of man. It required one above man, one who was divine, and in the council of God, the Son expressed his willingness to become that sin-offering, to be the substitute for sinners, the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world. His role would require obedience to the will of his Father and to his law, Ps 40:7-8 'Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart;' and it would result in sacrifice and death, Isa 53:7-8 'He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.' Jesus Christ had to suffer—it was a condition of that covenant made with the Father in heaven, it was the only way in which the promise could be fulfilled, it was the only means by which man could be reconciled to God. God's holiness and righteousness demanded a perfect sacrifice for sin which neither you nor I can offer. No man who has ever lived has been without the taint, the corruption, the defilement of sin. Only Jesus Christ, God made man, was worthy to be offered up as a sacrifice for our sin—that is why he had to suffer.

Secondly, **What things did Christ suffer?** Most people, I suppose, think of Christ's sufferings as primarily relating to the events following his arrest and trial, yet as we read through the gospels, it becomes very clear that they began when he left his place of glory and exaltation at the right hand of the Father in heaven and came down to earth in the likeness of sinful men. Though he was without sin, yet by taking upon himself the very nature of man, he became subject to the limitations and restrictions of man, to the temptations of man, to the sufferings

of man. He suffered in the physical act of birth as any baby does, in the conditions of his birth, the rough manger in which he was laid, in his circumcision after eight days in obedience to the law of Moses, in the flight into Egypt to avoid Herod's soldiers. He suffered the same hunger and thirst, the same weariness and pain, the same sorrow and sadness as mortal man. He suffered from the persecution of his enemies and the faithlessness of his friends. He suffered the reproach of being called a blasphemer, an idolater, an imposter, a seditious person, a madman, one possessed with a devil. He was condemned for breaking the Sabbath Day laws, for fraternising with publicans and sinners, for claiming to be divine. He suffered from the fickleness of the disciples, their lack of understanding of those things which he spent three years teaching them, their forgetfulness, their desertion of him at the time of his greatest need, their unbelief even after the resurrection. He suffered agonies of soul and body as he fought with the devil in the wilderness, as he daily anticipated the inevitability of the cross, as he wrestled in Gethsemane facing imminent arrest and death.

Christ's sufferings accompanied him throughout his earthly life but even greater sufferings were his in the final arrest, trial and crucifixion which he experienced in the will of God the Father at the hands of men. The betrayal by one of his disciples, the travesty of the trial before Pilate, the buffeting, beating, and scourging by the soldiers, the agony of the act of crucifixion, the taunts and derision of those who watched, the revilings of the malefactors crucified with him, the forsaking of him by his Father,—the weight, burden and guilt which was laid upon him alone as he bore the sins of the world upon his shoulders—what sufferings he endured! We cannot enter into those sufferings, we cannot begin to imagine the agony and pain which he felt, yet to save us from the penalty of our sins, that eternal death and separation and punishment resulting from the sin of Adam, he suffered these things for us, for you individually and for me.

Arising then from his sufferings, we ask our final question, **What did Christ accomplish through his suffering?** In John 19:30 we have recorded the last moments of Jesus as he died upon the cross, where John writes 'When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.' **It is finished**, he said, it is done, my work is complete. On more than one occasion during his earthly ministry, Jesus spelled out why he had been sent, what it was that he had come to do. To the disciples he said, Matt 20:28. 'Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.' The paying of a ransom, or a redemption-price, was a familiar concept in Jewish life, but in this case it was Jesus' own life which was to be forfeit for others, for those who would believe on him, those whom God had given him. To the people by the sea of Galilee in John 6:40 he said 'And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last

day.' By giving his own life he would thereby effect the salvation of a people for himself as God had promised him, a people whom he would raise up to new life, a people who would live with him for ever. And not only that, but he had brought glory and honour to God—for to the Father he said, John 17:4, 'I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.' It had been his chief delight to do the will of his Father, and to bring glory to him. And when on the third day, God raised Jesus from the dead, the conquest over Satan and sin, death and hell was complete, and he was now ready to return to his own place of honour at the right hand of God, to enter into his glory.

But was his entry into glory the end of his active care and concern for his people? By no means—within days of his ascension he had fulfilled the promise made to the disciples in the last week of his life—John 14:16-17 'And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; his prayer was heard and on the Day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit the Comforter was sent, the one who was to guide his people into all truth, to reveal Jesus Christ to men and to glorify him. Furthermore, there in glory Jesus himself, 'ever liveth to make intercession for us.' At the right hand of God he is our Mediator and Advocate with the Father ever pleading his merits on behalf of his people. More than that he is making ready in his Father's house mansions for his people to dwell in; he himself is preparing for us our home in heaven, as he promised John 14:2-3 'In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.' And in due time he will come again to take us to be with him there.

'Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?' Yes indeed he ought, for this was what he had undertaken to do, this is what he had been sent to do, this is what he had accomplished—and his exaltation to glory confirmed that all was done according to his Father's holy and perfect will. **But How then does this affect you and me? How do you react as you hear these things? What is your response to the sufferings and glory of Christ?**

The Scriptures clearly teach us that just as Jesus suffered, so his people will suffer—not in the same manner and to the same extent perhaps as he did, but they will suffer nevertheless. Paul writing to Timothy in 2 Tim 3:12 said 'Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.' Paul himself was one who persecuted Christians, under the authority of the high priest in Jerusalem, but following his conversion he became the object of persecution for his faith, and he catalogues in 2 Cor 11 the perils and dangers through which he passed in his service for Jesus Christ. He also suffered from what he calls a thorn in the flesh, which so distressed him that three times he asked God to take it away. But instead of doing so, God gave him a word of comfort and strength 2 Cor 12:9 'My grace is sufficient

for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.’ Paul’s reaction was to rejoice ‘Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.’ The sufferings of God’s people are more than made up for by the blessings that abound toward them, as Paul shows at the very beginning of that same epistle 2 Cor 1:3-5 ‘Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation, [or our comfort,] also aboundeth by Christ.’ God’s people have suffered through the ages, and today are being persecuted with a new vigour and hatred.

Are you experiencing suffering in your Christian life and witness? It may be a physical infirmity causing distress; it may be a problem with friends or neighbours; it may be a spiritual problem that you are wrestling with; it may be a very real animosity which you are experiencing at work from one who has an antipathy towards Christians. Does it surprise you? If we are the children of God through the salvation which he has given to us in Jesus Christ, then are we the enemies of the prince of the power of the air, the Devil, and the nearer we draw to God the fiercer will be Satan’s efforts to buffet us and to cast us down. The world, the flesh and the devil are constantly at war with us—we struggle, we suffer, indeed we often fall, but the constant exhortation of the Scriptures is to look to Jesus Christ. Paul in those early verses of 2 Corinthians adds v6 ‘as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation.’ Suffering brings the consolation, or comfort, of God which abounds in Jesus Christ. Peter in his first epistle exhorts us to rejoice in our sufferings 1 Pet 4:13 ‘But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.’ Christians are increasingly under pressure in these days to conform to the ways of the world—safeguards and checks which for years have given us freedom to worship and to witness are being removed, and we are becoming more and more subject to persecution and intolerance. But we suffer that we may be glorified, we suffer that we may reign with Jesus in heaven. He has gone before us preparing the way, he is our great example as Peter points out 1 Pet 2:21 ‘For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.’ Are you following in Christ’s footsteps? Are you prepared to be different from the world? Are you ready to stand up and be counted when your faith is challenged? Are you willing to suffer for the sake of Jesus Christ? I believe that we are facing a greater challenge to our faith now than has been experienced in this country since perhaps the time of the Reformation. Let us be prepared and earnestly contend for the faith knowing that ‘our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;’ Amen.

# EXAMPLE IMITATED

*Mark 14:65*

by Edward Malcolm

This is St. Mark's day (April 25), and we take a word from his Gospel, which sheds a light on the sufferings of the Lord Jesus after his second trial. You remember that before he died he was given three trials, one before Annas in a private house, described in John's Gospel chapter 18, another here, before the Sanhedrin, described in Matthew, Mark and Luke, and then he was left in the hands of these underlings until the morning when they took him out to Pilate.

So he had three trials and this is the second. They had heard him witness a good confession, stating when asked that he was the Son of the Blessed, and, to put it beyond doubt, that they should see him coming in the clouds in power, the Son of Man from heaven. And they said, 'What need we any further witnesses? Ye have heard the blasphemy.' They thereupon condemned the prisoner to death and adjourn to wait for morning light to take the prisoner to the Roman Governor, as they were not permitted by the Romans to execute anyone.

So a wild triumphant uproar took place. They had him now in their power, and intend to exact vengeance for what he had said. He had said it with a majestic solemnity, a calm confidence, and 'witnessed a good confession' (1 Timothy 6:13), or as Peter in his first Epistle 2:23 put it 'who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously'. But they intended to have him for it, so put him into the hands of officers and spearmen of the Sanhedrin, to hold until taken next morning to Pontius Pilate. These treated him abominably

If you ask, 'Why did they do this?' that's where the nub of the question I want to face lies. You can say they did it because Satan entered into them, like Judas Iscariot. Or, you can say they did it because they hated him. Quite true! But the real reason they did it is *they imitated the example of their superiors*. You see, their superiors had 'outraged every principle of Jewish criminal law and procedure' (Edersheim). They had tried this Man in an irregular place, and no trial might begin in the afternoon, let alone at night, nor on a Sabbath or festival day, or even on the eve of them. They even used false witnesses. Then they handed him over to their officers. What did these men do? They **imitated**. That is what we consider here.

## The World's Uniformity

*We are all different.* There was a professor called Ole Hallesby, a Norwegian who wrote a book on Prayer and another on Conscience, well worth reading, and he

said about temperament that 'it strikes the key or chord to which our soul must vibrate'. Every one of us here has a totally different temperament to everyone else.

*Outside Christ diversity is not tolerated.* Do you see how the world deals with this? It simply hates anybody who is different, whether black, brown, anything else, or if they are different in customs, dress or character. You watch little children if they get a new child in school. Or a herd of cows if a new cow is introduced. The playground assistant and farmer each has to watch carefully, as sometimes they go further than standing around staring, and are very nasty to the newcomer. The government of Britain expends very much time and effort doing exactly the same thing over immigrants. Christian, have nothing to do with nastiness. We do not want our land flooded, but neither do we hate.

*The world oscillates violently.* Everywhere the spirit of the world enforces uniformity, demanding that people are the same. We live in the machine age, lines of workers doing strictly what they are told. Charlie Chaplin made a film about it, showing him, poor little man, as the slave of the machine he ran. There has been a rebellion against this with the rise of New Age thinking, a total swing to the opposite, demanding irresponsible individuality, and enforcing it just as the machines do.

*The Bible condemns the world for this.* That is the world's way, one extreme to another. Whatever you get out of the Bible, learn this: the Bible condemns the world for a very specific thing – for extremism, lack of balance, of self-control and of sobriety. That is what the Bible holds against the world. It accuses the world of being one thing one moment and another thing the next, going from one end of the pendulum swing to the other, and never managing to achieve moderation. Examples abound, in voters' swings, in medical and dietary advice, in unsaved men's theology. The whole lot of them have this inbuilt imbalance. What they need is something to keep them steady like the gyroscope in a great liner in a storm.

***Our Lord's trial is the supreme example.*** It is increasingly common in ecumenical circles to publish declarations, some of which are very good, most not, exculpating the Jews from responsibility for the death of Jesus. The Mel Gibson film has brought out this debate again. The Jews have gone even further than the ecumenists in absolving themselves of any blame. One Jewish legal expert argued that Annas and Caiaphas 'did all that they possibly and humanly could to save Jesus, whom they dearly loved and cherished as one of their own'. Indeed certain liberal scholars have argued that the only way for the Christian Church to remove the stigma from the Jews is to renounce the absolute reliability of the Gospels. They even say the fourth Gospel is anti-semitic, and that the Gospels are responsible for the troubles the Jews have suffered.

The fact is, here we have the Jews alone, completely the Jews, before they brought the Gentiles into it, handling the Lord Jesus abominably, and it is exactly how the world behaves over anyone differing from their norms. Do you not agree that the world we live in is very unpleasant to anybody who is perceived as different?

## God's Diversity

*God loves unity in diversity.* Paul the Apostle set out to build churches, meaning people, not buildings. He lays emphasis in his epistles on unity, perhaps most in Galatians and Corinthians, where in the first letter, chapter 12, verse 4 he says:

‘Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.’

Then in verse 11,

‘But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.’

*God loves and wants unity, but in diversity.* Now we read, beautifully, just now, Ezekiel chapter one, the description of the throne of God, and the living creatures and the way they went, the diversity in unity, the infolding fire, and their various faces, which nobody has ever been able to paint or copy properly. God is diverse, yet united. The living creatures all went one way, all looking their four different ways, yet each one went straight before him. How you do that except by God, with whom all things are possible, no one knows, but it is perfect diversity in voluntary unity.

*Our Lord taught diversity.* When our Lord Jesus Christ looked around Him, He took His examples from the birds, the flowers, the lake, the seashore and the fish, and the children playing. All reflected God's great diversity, in a thousand ways.

*God has a purpose in this,* and as Professor Hallesby said, one day  
“Our temperaments will also be perfected in a new heavens and a new earth that will reflect their Creator's glory, not as exact copies one of another, but an endless varied multitude, proclaiming God's rich creation throughout eternity. The Divine masterpiece will be completed, the chorus of the redeemed of all ages will blend in perfect harmony to the praise of His glory.”

We are all going to be a great orchestra, and millions upon millions of us, from all ages, are each going to vibrate to the chord of our own temperament. And as we are touched by that hand divine, we shall produce music such as never has been heard since the dawn of time. The West Indies and America both call themselves ‘the lands of song’, but better by far will it be as we all, in perfect unison, with one voice and one heart, praise the Lamb.

## A Balanced Example

These men held God's Christ, and they imitated the example of their spiritual superiors, those venomous trial judges. You remember the words of the Lord to

those same judges in Matthew 23:15 ‘Ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.’

This scene is described by Mark as ‘And some began to spit on him’, which Matthew 26:67 gives as ‘to spit in his face’, whilst Luke 22:63 adds ‘and the men that held Jesus mocked him’, meaning jeered at Him, and here, ‘to cover his face’, or as Luke 22:64 says, ‘blindfolded him’. ‘And to buffet him’ here, or as Luke 22:63 puts it, in a stronger word ‘smote him’. In all, five different words are used in the Gospels to describe the hitting of the bound and blindfolded prisoner with open hands, fists, anything they could. The object was to get him to prophesy which one had just hit him. Tyndale translated ‘and to bete him with fistes,’ Wycliff, ‘smite him with buffets’. The words are literally, ‘And received him with blows’, or ‘Took him and beat him’— beat him up. ‘Like master, like man’ says one commentator.

The High Priest and the Elders had degraded, despised and mistreated him, and their minions took that as licence to go further. When they had finished with him, ‘His visage was more marred than any man.’ That wonderful face must have been one great mass of bruises, as they hit him with full force till his teeth rattled in his head. It was for you and me he bore it.

### **Older Believer, Beware.**

None of us, pray God, will ever be like them. We love the Lord Jesus and would defend him with our own lives, God helping. No one will learn from our example to hit him.

*But we do tend to exaggerate the influence on us.* These men carried a bit further the example set before them. However, we are all Peters, capable of very base denials of our Saviour, very weak and much more fallible than we like to admit as followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

*I am speaking to the senior ones amongst us.* There is an unseen odour to our lives. What manner of persons ought ye to be in all godliness. We fall short, and although we cover our true inward thoughts and personalities as we will, the general tenor of our lives is like the smell of the ointment of our right hand, it bewrayeth us. We have a Christian character which we have cultivated, and young converts copy us. Now some of that character is deformed, it is exaggerated in various directions. And young Christians copy our imbalances, and then go further and exaggerate these bad tendencies.

I know a lady who was converted through her husband, a fine Christian of a very strong Protestant position. She became positively anti-Roman Catholic, to an alarming degree at first.

There is the old story of the tribal convert who was seen reading from the Bible by a visitor, and doing so by holding it out most oddly to the side. When asked why she read at such an awkward angle, she said, the lady missionary held

the only Bible and as we crowded round, that was the angle I learned to read it at.

I have witnessed many times that new Christians mirror the faults of those through whom they are converted. We can easily see this in others, but it is much harder to admit to it ourselves.

*This is true of whole churches.* The early church taught the converts to guard the Bible with their lives. The word 'traitor' is from the latin word 'to hand over' and if any Christian under fear of being killed, handed over the Bible to their persecutors the Roman officials, they were put out of the Church of God. I read of a lady in North Africa in the early days whose husband, an elder, was away when the officials came to the door and demanded the Scriptures. She handed them over. The persecuted church met, and expelled her, and told her she should have defended the Bible with her life. The Bible was so expensive, so rare, and difficult to obtain. So the authorities actually aimed their persecutions not only at Christians, but at hunting down the Bible and destroying the source of all the trouble. The result was that it became the mark of a Christian to stand, even if the cost was mangled limbs or loss of life, rather than hand over the Bible or deny their Lord. Those who stood firm, were real Christians, even if they were adulterers, quarrellers, power-seekers, and morally failed. It led to what was described as 'a circle under pressure, which goes out of true'. That is always one bad effect of the pressure we are under. In the end bad living and especially quarrelling became so bad, that the Muslim invaders were welcomed as better, and the Church died within an eighty year time span.

That being so, can you not see, that the way we pass on the Gospel is going to be exaggerated from year to year by our converts, children and spiritual children. So the tendency is, if a person is weak as a Christian, to go weaker. If a person is exclusive as a Christian, they go over-exclusive. We have to be balanced characters.

*Churches tend to have a weak side.* Groups of converts, even Christians in a nation tend to have a blind spot. A Jewish man who went to German churches after the war told how one German lady grew very angry with him when he spoke of the position God has given the Jews in the economy of grace, and stood up at the end and said, 'Well, I prefer the views of Herr Doctor Martin Luther, to yours'. Luther was certainly unbalanced in his attitude to the Jews, recommending their forcible conversion, burning of their books and suppression of their religion, and obliging them to live in poverty and hand over their children to Christians to educate. The Nazis applauded Luther's attitude to the Jews. The founding fathers of a church in a land seem to leave their stamp upon it, for better or for worse. It was not only the example of the Sanhedrin that was exaggeratedly copied. Every time we go out of true, we pass the deformity from generation to generation.

*This is not only true about churches, but of individual Christians, perhaps even more.* Thus one Minister said to me, the first thing he taught each new convert was to witness, and then to give their money. He asked me if I did, and when I admitted not doing so first, said that was why his church grew. I went to his church and

preached there several times, and it is perfectly true his church did grow. But there were some very odd sides to the church. They forced him out in the end as not charismatic enough. You see it comes down to it that whatever a convert does, as long as he or she witnesses and brings in others, they are held to be good Christians.

The same thing goes for teaching about giving. Many converts are not taught tithing as soon as they are converted, and never learn Biblical giving. The result is missionaries live in poverty, and so do church workers. If everybody, even in our little group, just gave a tenth of what they earned per week to the church, or even half that, shortages would be a thing of the past. We want this grace to flourish, but not at the expense of other graces, so that as long as people put plenty on the plate, all other graces matter little.

Dr. Kevan said in teaching us preaching, ‘if you have a good idea on the Monday morning when you are hoeing your cabbages, do not rush off to prepare a sermon on it, for if it differs from the teachings of the Church of God over the centuries, you are probably wrong. Check it against established doctrine. We are one with the Church over the ages. We want to learn together, do everything together, so we can keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.’

Beware, for you and I are evangelicals. We have strong views and we know we are right, and therefore we feel that others are very wrong and blind about things. The Lord Jesus said in Mark 9:40, ‘For he that is not against us, is on our part’. We have sin-dimmed eyes, and it is more than possible part of the fault lies with us. By all means hold fast, but beware, for attitudes rub off, and especially on converts. I have met and actually know some who wander from church to church, always feeling they are right and condemning the others. Well, perhaps they are, but when I have observed them closely I have noticed a certain exaggerated individualism about them, a refusal to mix, a desire to walk alone, a feeling they, and no one else, could be right before God. If you feel all the rest are wrong and only you right, take heed.

### **Think Soberly**

What then will save us from this trap? The New Testament in many places puts great emphasis on balance and sanity. The words used are ‘soberness,’ ‘sober minded,’ sobriety. Romans 12:3 ‘For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly’. The mark of the infilling of the Spirit given in Ephesians 5:18, is the opposite of excess. The mark is fitting in, in home and at work, the hardest places to do so.

Another word is ‘temperance’ in 2 Peter 1:6, add to your faith temperance, and Gal. 5:23 where one fruit of the Spirit is ‘temperance’. Self control, balance, sanity, is the idea. Whatever we exaggerate will become a deformity, and will be an outstanding feature of those who model themselves upon us. The convert becomes two-fold what we are, and goes one further. I remember a Punch joke of

many years ago, in which there was a proud top-hatted, monacled, black suited man with his gold-headed cane, and beside him his wee son, the spitting image cut smaller. It looked so ridiculous. Adam had a son after his own likeness, and so do we, especially spiritually. It is like the crab teaching her son to walk forwards instead of scuttling sideways like herself.

But what should younger Christians learn? Paul said, ‘be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ,’ 1 Corinthians 11:1. However much you admire those who taught you the way of salvation and led you to Christ, do not imitate their worst points, but their best. Spurgeon smoked to the point where his hand trembled as he hurried down the aisle at the end of service, to light up.

It is also possible to be unbalanced in following the best points of great Christians. That Dr. Lloyd Jones could hold a congregation spellbound for an hour, so it seemed only a few moments had passed, was due to a wonderful and unique ability from God. It attracted the largest congregation in Europe. But a sober appraisal of our own abilities leads inevitably to the conclusion that we drive away, not attract, if we do not harmonise our preaching with our talents.

We have a sinful tendency to go out of true, and do well to recognise it. We are responsible for ourselves, and make choices. In the exact proportion we like applause, and appreciation—and which of us does not?—we are open to manipulation. Grasp Truth and be ye followers of that which is good. Imitate Christ, not men. Pray ‘Lord, give me thy Holy Spirit’ often, like the founder of the Irish Church Missions.

Here are two examples: one, the Jewish guard hitting Christ; the other, Christ who kept silence, loved even those who hated him with an unreasonable and wicked hatred, and bore himself perfectly, proving thereby he was God Almighty—for none other could remain so balanced and self controlled under such provocation. Let us be like him.

#### CHANGE OF VENUE

The Ordination to the Presbyterate of  
the Rev. Peter Ratcliff

Will take place at 2 pm on Saturday 5 June 2004  
at St Mary the Virgin, Church Road, Ewelme, Oxon  
*by kind permission of the Rev. Martin Garner and the Wardens.*

Parking in lane. The Rectory garden will be open for picnics to be eaten before  
the service, and a cup of tea will be provided afterwards.

*Ewelme is near Benson, off the A4074, south of Oxford*

*Further details and full directions from 020 8417 0875*

# AN EASTER SERMON

*Revelation 1:17, 18.*

by David N. Samuel

'Fear not' were words that Jesus used often in his earthly ministry. He said to Jairus, the distraught father, whose twelve-year-old daughter lay dead, 'Fear not: believe only.' To the anxious disciples, 'Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.' And when they were afraid of persecution: 'Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul.' These words, 'Fear not', were familiar to them. They knew the tone of voice and the way in which he said them. They could not fail to recognize who it was who spoke to them.

The scene we have here before us now is of John the aged disciple, in exile on the island of Patmos, sent into isolation for his faith in Christ, and on that memorable Lord's Day hearing behind him a great voice, saying, 'I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last.' The voice and the vision that he sees are overwhelming. He falls to the ground as one dead, and then hears the familiar words, that he had heard so often before from the lips of Jesus, 'Fear not'. Did they not immediately bring reassurance and comfort? They are words which sum up and epitomize the Easter message. They are the words of the Risen Christ, not just to John, but to the church of God and the people of God in every generation.

There was a tendency to talk a little while ago as if fear were a thing of the past. This was back in the nineteen-sixties when a liberal elite were changing our society. It was said that 'man had come of age'. He was taking control of his life and his future, and leaving behind ignorance and fear. But now, forty years on, that view does not seem very credible. There is a great deal of fear about today. Men's hearts are failing them for fear of the things that are coming upon the earth. There is fear of terrorism, fear of disease, fear of the future and fear of life itself. And leaders and politicians seem to have little to say that can calm those fears. That is because they are not really in control of events. They wish to appear to be in control; they promise, but they cannot deliver.

If one studies history this becomes very clear. We see just how helpless politicians and statesmen have often been in the face of events. Harold Macmillan was once asked what a politician had most to fear. And his answer was one word, 'events'.

Now fear arises from two things: uncertainty and unpreparedness. Uncertainty, because we cannot know what the future holds; what will happen from day to day or hour to hour. And unpreparedness, because while we may make some provision for the future, we cannot cover all contingencies and

circumstances which might arise. This makes us all vulnerable and exposes us to fear. There is only one certain answer to this problem which is part of our human condition – it is to trust in the God who has revealed himself in Jesus Christ. He, the Lord Jesus Christ, is the summation of all things. He is the first and the last, the beginning and the ending. He is the Lord of life, and has the keys of hell and of death. He reigns over the seen and the unseen, all things in heaven and earth are subject to him. Therefore, trust in him, and do not be afraid. That is the great message of the Risen Christ.

***First, the Risen Christ takes away the fear of life***

This may be a strange thing to say, but life, as well as death, brings with it its fears and anxieties. Many people today do not know what they are living for, except perhaps the momentary pleasure or diversion. There seems to be no real purpose to human existence.

They hear what the savants, the scientists and philosophers have to say about life and the world—that this planet is like a speck of dust in the universe; that life arose on the earth by accident—and there seems to be no object or purpose to human existence. What is it all for? What does it matter in the end what you do with your life?

If people really want an answer, they must listen to the words of the Risen Christ. ‘Fear not, I am the first and the last.’ He is the One who was there in the beginning of all things, and will be there in the end. He embraces and embodies the whole meaning and purpose of life. ‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men.’ I defy anybody to read these words and not be moved by them. Here is a profound affirmation that life is not meaningless, cannot be meaningless, because Christ is the origin and meaning of it.

The ‘Word’ in this passage—‘In the beginning was the Word’—can equally well be translated ‘reason’. That is, Jesus Christ is the reason why all things were made. He is the one by whom and for whom all things were created. He is the source and centre of life. ‘In him was life; and the life was the light of men.’ Here is the light of life, the reason for life. And if people affirm that life has no meaning, it is because they do not look for it where it is to be found.

When there was gross darkness over all the land of Egypt, there was light in the homes of the Israelites. There may be gross darkness over the world today, and many may profess that they are in darkness, and can discern no meaning or purpose in life; that, indeed may be true of them, but it is not absolutely or universally true. ‘I am the light of the world,’ said Jesus, ‘he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life’ (John 8:12). We must follow him and believe in him if we are to have and experience the light and the true meaning of human life and existence.

Our Lord demonstrated in his whole life and ministry that he is the Lord of life. When he fed the multitudes in the wilderness, when he healed the sick, made the lame to walk, the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak. When he stilled the storm, and raised the dead. All were life-affirming acts demonstrating that he was the Lord of life.

For this reason the power of death and the grave could not hold him. ‘Whom God hath raised up,’ said Peter on the day of Pentecost, ‘having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.’ (Acts 2:24). Jesus Christ is the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the whole meaning and purpose of human life and existence is only found in him. We shall look in vain elsewhere for it. And therefore he takes away the fear of life. He gives us the power and the courage to be and to live. ‘I am come that they might have life, and have it more abundantly.’

That was why Paul was able to utter that memorable expression, ‘For me to live is Christ.’ And again, he declared, ‘The life that I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.’ True life, real life, is unthinkable apart from Jesus Christ.

“Thou of life the fountain art,  
Freely let me drink of thee:  
Well thou up within my heart,  
Rise to all eternity.”

### ***Secondly, Christ – the Risen Christ – takes away the fear of condemnation***

The Bible speaks very plainly of the Day of Judgment. Our Lord himself warned of it. ‘Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.’ (Luke 12:4, 5). Again in the Epistle to the Hebrews we read, ‘It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.’ And John in the Book of Revelation writes of the Great White Throne, and of the dead great and small, standing before God, and the books being opened. This is an awesome picture, and if men do not fear the Day of Judgment, as many appear not to do today, then they ought.

But for the believer, the Risen Christ banishes the fear of judgment and that awful day. How does he do this? By displaying the wounds in his hands and feet and side. These are the tokens of his sufferings for his people. He has suffered and died in their place, as their substitute. He has taken the place of his people and borne the wrath of God upon their sins. ‘There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus’ (Romans 8:1). ‘He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation.’ No wonder the first words of the Risen Christ to John on the Isle of Patmos were, ‘Fear not’.

The Resurrection does not mean that the cross is now forgotten and put

away. It is, on the contrary, still the great central, pivotal event in salvation history. 'We preach Christ crucified.' His death is 'the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.' (1 John 2:2). The resurrection of Christ sets the seal upon that, and shows that it is accepted by God the Father. 'He [Jesus Christ] was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.' (Romans 4:25).

Christ Jesus wears those marks of his sufferings in heaven now. He pleads his merits and atoning death for his people. 'If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father'. (1 John 2:1). When we come before God, we plead Christ's merits, his atoning death. When, eventually, we appear before the judgment seat of God we shall have the same invincible plea.

'While I draw this fleeting breath,  
When my eyelids close in death,  
When I soar through tracts unknown,  
See thee on thy judgment throne,  
Rock of Ages, cleft for me,  
Let me hide myself in thee.'

And, when the Lord Jesus Christ shall come again at the end of the world for judgment, he will wear those same marks of his passion. But then they will serve to condemn those who would not believe. 'Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.' (Revelation 1:7). The unbelieving will have their portion with those who despised him and set him at nought.

### ***Thirdly, he takes away the fear of death***

Death is the last enemy. It still bars the way, and shakes the self-confidence of modern, secular man. It checks his arrogance, and reduces all his boasts and pretensions to nothing. What happens after death? Nothing, people say. But how can they possibly know? There is the well-known story of Paulinus, who went from Kent to convert the tribes of Northumbria. He came to King Edwin and asked for an audience. The King consulted his counsellors. Should he hear this Christian or no? One of them said, 'To what shall I liken the life of man? It is like that bird which has just flown into this hall from the darkness. It is here for a brief moment, and then flies out again. If this Christian can tell us anything of what happens before and after this life, let us hear him.'

The Risen Christ gives us the word that we need, 'Fear not... I have the keys of hell [or Hades] and of death'. Hades is the place of the departed, the unseen world after death. The Lord Jesus Christ is in charge, has authority over all that region.

I remember many years ago an Any Questions programme. The question was, 'Who are the happiest people?' There was a man on the panel who said, 'The

happiest people are those who are not afraid of death, because they know what is going to happen afterwards.' It was a good answer, much needed in our times.

We have the words of the Risen Christ. We need not be in suspense. The invisible world is in his power and control. He says, 'All power in heaven and earth is given unto me.' Again he says, 'My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man [or thing or power] is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.' (John 10:27-29). When we die, we do not go out into the darkness.

Dylan Thomas wrote a very moving, but very sad and despairing poem about death. Its refrain was an exhortation to 'Rage, rage against the dying of the light. Do not go gentle into that good night.' I suppose that must be the only option open to those who reject the light of Christ, the only message about death from an unbeliever, to an unbelieving generation, such as ours now is.

But how different is the message of the New Testament, which rests upon the fact of our Lord's Resurrection. 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you' (1 Peter 1:3, 4). Or as Paul puts it, 'For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.' (Philippians 1:21).

### ***To conclude:***

The Risen Christ declared to John on the island of Patmos, 'Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.' Christ alone holds the keys to the meaning and purpose of life. They are found only in Him. 'In him was life; and the life was the light of men.' He takes away the fear of life, and through him we have 'life more abundant.'

He takes away the fear of condemnation. He shows us his wounded hands and side, which testify to the fact that he has suffered in our place. 'He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him.'

He takes away the fear of death and the unseen world, for he who once was dead is alive for evermore, and has the keys of hell and of death.

## BOOK REVIEWS

***John Kensit's Death and the Threat to Free Speech* Gordon Murray  
Protestant Truth Society 32pp bkt £1.50 incl. postage  
from PTS, 184 Fleet Street, London, EC4A 2HJ**

This well-presented booklet is an expanded and revised version of an address given by the Chairman of the Protestant Truth Society in 2002 to commemorate the centenary of the death of John Kensit. In the first part of the booklet, Mr Murray describes the circumstances leading up to and surrounding the death of Kensit on 8 October 1902, and reviews the murder trial which followed. Then he goes on to consider the situation today, when it seems that the right of freedom of speech is under threat, and the liberty to proclaim the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ may be restricted. Drawing on a number of examples both from this country and elsewhere, he shows that the warning signs are very much in evidence, and asks the question 'How are we...as Protestant Christians, to approach the use of free speech and the restrictions that may exist now and in the future?' Emphasising that we have a commission from the Lord Jesus Christ to make the gospel known, and that we must remain faithful to that commission, he points out that Christians must be responsible in their use of free speech, mindful that others of different persuasions and attitudes have a like freedom. He goes on to suggest ways in which we should, and should not, exercise that right, with due regard to the teaching of the Scriptures on these things. 'The Christian is to speak the truth in love. Ignorant, prejudiced, and inaccurate attacks on others do not meet that requirement, nor is that kind of free speech worth contending for,' he writes. This is a balanced and useful contribution to a subject which is likely to have an increasing influence upon the proclamation of the gospel in the coming days.

JPW

***Are You a Real Christian?* Peter M Simpson  
London; Serendipity 2004 71 pp pbk £5.95 ISBN 1 84394 096 5**

'Knowledge of Christ is the most priceless of all treasures, but to those who are happy in their unbelief, Christianity is also a very threatening message.' So writes the author, who is minister of Penn Free Methodist Chapel, in his Introduction. What follows are nine short chapters that set out, in easy stages, what being a Christian means, and by what signs true faith may be discerned. These are easy stages in that they are brief, clearly-presented, and well illustrated. There is nothing 'easy' about the doctrine taught, which is the ageless Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. The addresses are sermonic in form, and require the reader to follow through the chapter with an open Bible at hand. They take in a broad spectrum of Christian doctrine around the central theme, and readers will have to work hard to keep up with the argument. However, explanation is provided as required.

The author is only too well aware of the downgrade in Gospel presentation by

those who have lost confidence in the God-appointed means, and he makes no apology for his uncompromising stand in this respect. Yet his concern for his readers is evident, and no opportunity to drive home the urgency of the task is overlooked.

Unusually this book is aimed at those who might consider themselves Christians, of all ages, but who have no true or clear idea of what it means to be a Christian. It is not to be equated with a concern for social justice, nor a desire for world peace. Gospel work cannot be mistaken for generosity to charities or good causes. Finally only faith in the one true Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, is of moment, for nothing else is prescribed in the Word of God.

Those who know nominal believers—and most churches contain their fair share—will find this volume a helpful tool in sharing the Gospel. It is one to give to those we know.

EJM

***Sex Education, Sexual Immorality and the Bible* ES Williams**  
**Belmont House/Christian Watch 16pp bklt ISBN 0 9529939 4 5**

When a man with nine years' experience as Director of Public Health for an urban Health Authority puts pen to paper on an issue that relates directly to his field of expertise, it is worth while taking note. And when that man is also a believer, and the area with which he deals concerns morality, it is even more important that we take note. And when the morality—or immorality—is aimed at schoolchildren, in the form of explicit sexual advice which treats casual or recreational sex as the norm, provided it is made 'safe', then we must take urgent notice.

For in this booklet Dr Williams quotes from and summarises literature that is being used in our schools to corrupt our children. He argues that there can be no sex education without moral education, and that the basis for morality is not society but God's divine revelation in his Word. He shows how such behaviour is utterly incompatible for Christians, and harmful to everyone in the long-term. Parents, grandparents godparents, uncles, aunts, school governors, and all Christians need to read this booklet.

EJM

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Notice is hereby given of the

**Tenth General Assembly**

of the

**Church of England (Continuing)**

to be held on

**Saturday 3rd July 2004**

at

**The Parish Hall, Benson,  
Oxfordshire**

**10.30 am** Prayer Meeting.

**11.00 am** *Gather.* Coffee and biscuits.

**11.15 am** *Devotions and address,* the Rt Rev David N Samuel.

**11.45 am** *Address* by Dr Theodore P Letis—"How Did we get the Bible?" Question time will follow.

**1.00 pm** *Lunch.* Please bring your own, with a drink. Eat indoors or out, weather permitting. Childrens' games will take place after lunch.

**2.00 pm** Childrens' Prize-giving

**2.15 pm** *Business meeting.* (All matters to be notified in advance)

**2.30 pm** *Address* by Dr Theodore P Letis—"The History of The Papacy as the Antichrist"

**3.30 pm** *Closing devotions.* There will be a cup of tea, with a retiring collection.

*Directions from the Rev EJ Malcolm, 1 Downshire Square, Reading,  
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## MATERIAL FOR SEPTEMBER ISSUE OF *THE JOURNAL* AND *INTERCESSIONS* BY AUGUST 23 2004, 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.*

**Have you considered making a gift to the Central Fund, to assist with the ongoing costs of the Continuing Church? Please contact the Treasurer.**

## CHURCHES IN UK

**Nuffield Congregation** meeting with Nuffield Parish Church, near Henley-on-Thames, the Rev John F Shearer. Sunday Services: 11.00 am Morning Prayer, 6.30 pm Evening Prayer. Lord's Supper 8.00 am first Sunday, 6.30 pm third Sunday. Bible Study Wednesday 8.00 pm. *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 am Morning Prayer and 6.30 pm Evening Prayer. Midweek as intimated. *Enquiries* Rev Peter Ratcliff, 020 8417 0875.

**St. Mary's Castle Street, Reading.** Sunday Services: 11.00 am Morning Prayer (first Sunday Lord's Supper), 6.30 pm Evening Prayer (third Sunday Lord's Supper). Tuesday 8.00 pm Bible Study. *Enquiries* Rev EJ Malcolm 0118 959 5131.

**St. Silas, 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); 6.00 pm BST Evening Prayer (4.00 pm GMT) (3rd Sunday Holy Communion). Tuesdays in term time 7.00 pm Bible Study; 7.45 pm Prayer Meeting. On-street parking. *Enquiries* Rt Rev E Malcolm 01547 528815. Hon Curate Rev IR Budgen, 01902 656514.

**Holy Trinity Church, Frinton-on-Sea.** Sunday 11 a.m. Morning Prayer—Room 5, The Frinton Community Centre, Soken House, The Triangle, Frinton-on-Sea, Essex. Sunday 6.30 p.m. Evening Prayer, Tuesday 8.00 p.m. Bible Study and Prayer Meeting—1, Chaplins, Frinton-on-Sea, Essex. For more information please contact Mr Philip Lievesley Tel: (01255) 679572. <http://beehive.thisissessex.co.uk/holytrinitycofecfrinton>

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