

THE GOSPEL MAGAZINE

Editor:

HERBERT M. CARSON,
46 Moira Drive, Bangor, Co. Down, BT20 4RW.

Incorporating the Protestant Beacon and The British Protestant

"JESUS CHRIST, THE SAME YESTERDAY, AND TODAY, AND FOR EVER."
"ENDEAVOURING TO KEEP THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT IN THE BOND
OF PEACE."

"COMFORT YE, COMFORT YE MY PEOPLE, SAITH YOUR GOD."

New Series
No. 1453

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1974

Old Series
No. 2453

EDITORIAL

A reader wrote recently to enquire about the version of the Bible used in quotations in one of my editorials. Because the query may represent a wider questioning I am dealing with the matter at greater length—considering the whole issue of new translations of the Scriptures and in particular of the one used in the editorial, namely the Revised Standard Version. Since the whole debate has been so distorted by emotional considerations and by ignoring facts of history, I must begin with Paul's plea to Agrippa, 'I beseech thee to hear me patiently'. In other words, before reaching for your pen please read the whole editorial!

Let me say at the outset that I have not the slightest difficulty in paying tribute to the A.V. as one of the truly great translations of Christian history. We can thank God for the profound impact it has made through the centuries on the English-speaking peoples. It is still the version which with its familiar language is deeply preferred by very many Christians. But it is not the original and it does not carry the stamp of infallibility which belongs essentially to the writings as they were originally given by the Spirit to prophet and apostle.

A good starting point for the discussion is one of the basic principles of the Reformation. The sixteenth-century Reformers made a fundamental tenet of their theology the perspicuity, that is the plainness of Holy Scripture. They would have gladly endorsed the Psalmist's confidence, 'Thy word is a lamp unto

my feet and a light unto my path'. The Bible was a plain book for plain people, and while there were many difficulties, as the Apostle Peter himself acknowledged (2 Peter 3 : 16), the book set forth plainly the way of salvation.

It was this conviction which lay behind the spate of translations in the sixteenth century. Whether it was Luther working away in the Wartburg or Tyndale in his years of enforced exile, the aim was always the same. To quote Tyndale's own words to an ignorant priest, 'If God spare my life, ere many years pass, I will cause a boy that driveth the plough shall know more of the Scriptures than thou dost'. Had Tyndale refused to see, as many today refuse to see, that the English language changes, he might have clung to Wycliffe's Bible as the Roman Church clung to the Vulgate and he would never have translated the Scriptures into what was then modern English. Had Tyndale's successors made his translation as final as some today would want to make the A.V. there would have been no further translations in the sixteenth century—there would indeed never have been an A.V.!

These men faced the fact that language is a living and therefore a changing instrument. So what was intelligible three centuries ago can become obscure or misleading. Those who have been nurtured in the language of the A.V. often fail to appreciate that for the ordinary man (the equivalent of Tyndale's plough boy) it is no longer the language he uses. When he reads the word 'prevent' he does not give it its Jacobean meaning of 'go before'. When he wants to inform his friends, he does not write 'We do you to wit'. A 'publican' is for him the man who serves beer in the local. 'Charity' is what old age pensioners associate with national assistance. 'Ghost' and 'Spirit' have exactly reversed their roles, so that 'ghost' for Shakespeare means 'spirit' for us and 'spirit' for him is 'ghost' today!

So we might go on. But really we might sum it up by pointing out that to cling indefinitely to one language form is to follow the Roman attitude to the Vulgate. As its title proclaims, it was originally the translation for the vulgus, i.e. the common people. But gradually over the centuries the Latin of the common people became the language only of the educated. Still the Vulgate was the only permitted translation, even though the Bible as a result became to very many a closed book. It was against this traditionalism that the great translators reacted and in resistance to it Tyndale gave his life.

The arguments mustered against any version other than the A.V. usually follow three main lines. It is contended that the

Greek text behind the R.V. or R.S.V. is defective. Then again the mixed character theologically of the translators is noted. Finally, the actual translations themselves are criticised. Clearly these charges cover such a wide range that a book would be required to deal with them, so only some general observations can be made within the limits of a short article.

Take the question of the Greek text of the New Testament. The A.V. was based on a few late manuscripts collated by Erasmus, the great opponent of Luther and the great protagonist of free will! Subsequently much more ancient manuscripts were discovered, dating right back to the fourth century. These, together with a multitude of other discoveries, form the basis of the R.V. and the R.S.V.

Now the assessment of ancient manuscripts is a field for the expert and I do not profess to be an expert in this subject. Indeed, I marvel that those who share my lack of expertise are yet so ready to pontificate and to give the impression of authoritative pronouncements to an uninformed public! What I am prepared to do in this difficult area is to listen to the verdict of some of the great evangelical and reformed men of the last century who are also qualified to speak. To me the opinions of such men as B. B. Warfield or Professor John Murray are a solid endorsement of what I can ascertain from my own studies as to the reliability of the text behind the R.S.V. And lest anyone should be in trouble about such variations in text, let it be stressed that the variations are on secondary issues by and large and do not affect the gospel content.

What about the translators? Well, one might ask the same about the A.V. group. How many readers of this magazine would be happy with an advocacy of prayers for the dead? Well, one such advocate, namely Lancelot Andrewes, was one of the A.V. translators. Let me hasten to add that I do not find this a deterrent to appreciating the A.V. I simply mention it to show that querying translators' pedigree is a two-edged argument!

But some will say that the translators' standpoint is reflected in their work. This is true, but one must be careful or the argument will boomerang. Because a translation seems to conflict at some point with biblical doctrine we must not assume at once translator's prejudice. When the A.V. translates in Romans 8 16 the Spirit *itself*, instead of 'himself', I do not assume that it is a subtle attempt to deny the personality of the Holy Spirit, I simply say it is a bad translation. When the A.V. translates 'there shall be one fold and one shepherd'

(John 10 : 6), I do not judge it as an attempt to introduce Roman views of the Church, I simply say the original word is 'flock' and so flock it shall be as in the R.S.V.

Of course the R.S.V. is far from perfect. It is my whole contention that no translation ever will be such. Like Paul in another context, the translator will always admit 'Not as though I had already attained; I press on'. There are obvious blemishes, like the use of 'expiation' instead of 'propitiation'. There is the tendency in the Old Testament to appeal to some of the ancient versions, but even here it needs to be said that the Hebrew is given in the margin, and it must also be acknowledged that if you have struggled with the Hebrew text of, e.g., Proverbs, you will not be so quick to dismiss the help which comes from such translations as the Greek Septuagint.

In my own use of the R.S.V. over the years I have found it very accurate. I have been very interested recently in reading Dr. Lloyd-Jones' sermons on Romans to find how many times he has to say that the A.V. is misleading or inadequate. But then, judging by the way that Warfield, Spurgeon, Machen and others have been castigated, he too may be lumped together with them!

There is an assumption that the A.V. is the only version for a true Calvinist. Well, our Puritan forebears would have raised their eyebrows at that assertion. Not all of them would have accused the A.V., as one of them did, of being 'full of atheism and popery'. But by and large they ignored it in favour of their Geneva Bible. The A.V. was published in 1611, but as late as the 1640's Cromwell's soldiers had as their pocket New Testament, not the A.V., but the Genevan.

Why their hesitation? Doubtless there were many factors similar to today's reluctance to countenance anything new. There was their attachment to the familiar English of the Genevan Bible—why did they need another? Further, this new Bible was the King James version, produced at the instigation of the king who threatened to drive the Puritans out of the country. Then again, like critics today, they saw translations which to them undermined the reformed faith. Why did the A.V. translators use the word 'church'? Tyndale had translated it 'congregation', which was a much better rendering. But this had been dropped in what looked like a concession to the Anglican high church party. It was a change, incidentally, which was to have serious doctrinal implications for a long time to come. Indeed, it remains a blemish of the R.S.V. that it still continues the A.V. tradition and does not go back to Tyndale!

One sad feature in the whole debate has been the continuing suggestion that anyone who uses the R.S.V. is in some way undermining the reformed faith and opening the way to liberalism. This is simply to confuse the people of God and to mislead them. Not only so, it is to capitulate to the old Roman view of tradition as being binding on the church. Traditionalism forges strong chains and the results are always bad, for it stultifies activity and paralyses thought.

The call of Christ to His people is to go and make disciples of all the nations. This means that a primary task is to put the Bible into the languages of the nations. Why should we have the Bible in our mother tongue and deny it to others? Thank God such translation work is going ahead apace, and, as always, it is evangelical missionaries who are in the van. But alas, because they do not endorse the traditional views of one limited area of evangelicalism, they have to turn to other agencies to see their translations through the press. If half the energy spent in attacking fellow evangelicals and confusing God's people was expended in the task of pioneering badly needed translations of the Scriptures across the world, how much cause we would have to praise God.

Let me end with one further observation. The R.S.V., as its title indicates, is not a new translation, and so is quite distinct from the many new versions which have appeared in recent years. It is a revision of the American Standard Bible. But this version, like its sister, the English Revised Version, was a revision of the Authorized Version. That is why the familiar cadence and phraseology of the A.V. is so firmly embedded in the R.S.V. To me it carries on the great tradition of the A.V.; but it deals with the problem of changing language and it utilises fresh discoveries of the meaning of the original languages to improve on its great ancestor. Sometimes the A.V. may be a better translation and I will quote it; at other times the R.S.V. is an improvement and I will quote it. But the liberty of the Spirit demands that I shall not be shackled. Faithfulness to the infallible Word of God requires me to render as faithfully as is possible for fallible humans, that Word which is able to make men wise unto salvation.

H. M. CARSON.

In Search of God

H. M. CARSON

A sermon preached on Acts 8 : 26-40 on Sunday morning, 13th December, 1970, in Hamilton Road Baptist Church, Bangor, Co. Down.

We turn again to the Acts of the Apostles, and to the 8th chapter, the story of Philip and his contact with the Ethiopian eunuch, which led this man to a living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Now what we have been seeing, as we have been going through the Acts of the Apostles, is really the outworking of the commission which the Lord Jesus Christ gave to His disciples at the outset on the Mount of Olives. You remember how He commissioned them to go with the good news of salvation. He spoke to them of the increasingly wide spheres into which they were to go with that message. He said, 'You shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth'. So from the receiving of the commission, and particularly with the coming of the Holy Spirit upon them, they began to fulfil the task. We saw them first preaching in Jerusalem, in the very place where the Lord Jesus Christ had been crucified, and there by God's grace a great number turned to the Lord. Then we saw the gospel moving beyond Jerusalem. The persecution that arose as a result of the martyrdom of Stephen drove the church out from Jerusalem and wherever they went, they went preaching the Word, telling men and women of the Christ whom they had come to know. One result of this scattering was that Philip came down to Samaria, where men and women in great numbers came to the Lord. Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria—but now the commission is beginning to reach out further afield, and although in this case it was not in terms of a disciple going to another land with the message, it was none the less a sending of that message to another land through the medium of one who was visiting Jerusalem, this Ethiopian court official.

But this morning we are looking particularly at the man himself and at the experience of Christ into which he came. He was quite obviously a man who was already seeking. He was clearly a man engaged in a spiritual quest, he wanted to know the truth. You can see that in the very way in which he had come to Jerusalem. Nowadays, of course, it would be no very startling journey to come from Ethiopia to Jerusalem, but

in the first century it was certainly no easy one. It was a very long journey, and one which inevitably brought with it hazards. But this man was concerned to find the object of his heart's desire; he wanted to know the living God, and so you find him making this long journey. When a man is really stirred in his heart, he wants to know, he wants to find, he wants to discover the truth.

So this man went to Jerusalem, and you say—why particularly Jerusalem? Well, for the simple reason that it was in Jerusalem that God had made Himself known. Jerusalem was the place where God had revealed Himself. It was in Jerusalem that God had established a witness and a testimony to His glory and to His grace. Jerusalem was the place where the temple was, and the temple was not simply a convenient meeting place for those who worshipped; it was that, of course, and in the extensive courts in the temple the worshippers came with their sacrifices and their offerings. But the temple was intended to be something more than that. It was intended to be a symbolic building. It spoke, by its very magnificence, of the glory of the God who had made Himself known in Israel. So when men came to Jerusalem, and when they visited the temple and when they saw the magnificence of that structure, well they were to learn that God had revealed Himself. God had made Himself known in this place through the law which He had given, through the writings of the prophets which He had inspired, through His living presence in Israel. God had spoken to men, He had not left them groping in the darkness, He had not left them in uncertainty and guesswork and speculation. He had given them His Word.

So the Ethiopian comes to Jerusalem because in Jerusalem he trusts he will find the answer to his quest. He comes to worship God—that is what brought him. Here was a man who was obviously in a position of great authority. He was a state official and a state official at a very high level, and therefore, knowing the average oriental court, he would be a man of tremendous power and influence. And not only that, state officials were not normally impoverished; he was probably a man of great wealth. But wealth and power and position and eminence and all the rest, these were not enough to satisfy him. He was wanting to know the living God. When a man has got this desire in his heart, you may present any position in the world to him, and you may load him with wealth and fame and popularity, but none of these things will satisfy, because, as Augustine put it so many centuries ago, 'Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our souls are restless until they find their

rest in Thee'. There is a restlessness in the human heart. There is something which is like a void waiting to be filled and only the living God can fill that void. So he comes to Jerusalem, comes to the temple, comes to the place where God has made His Name known, in order that he might worship, that he might come into fellowship and communion with the living God.

The temple—well, of course, it has long since passed. The temple perished when the Roman troops invaded Jerusalem in 70 AD and no temple has stood on the site since then. Yet the temple *does* abide—the temple still stands wherever God's people are gathered. You remember how the apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians, and he wrote to a group of Christians who certainly did not have any eminence as far as the world was concerned. They were by and large a group of nonentities; so the apostle writes of the kind of people they were, judged by the world's estimate: 'not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise . . . and things which are not (the nonentities) to bring to nought things that are'. But to this group of very ordinary people in Corinth he says, 'You are the temple of the Holy Spirit'. When you are gathered for worship, the living God is among you. You are the very dwelling place of God's Spirit. Even the magnificence of the temple in Jerusalem is utterly eclipsed by the surpassing glory of a company of ordinary Christians gathered in the name of Christ to worship their heavenly Father.

So when we see the seeker coming to the temple in Jerusalem, we are not looking at something which is rather remote from our situation, we are not looking at a man in a particular historical context. We are looking at a man coming to the place where God's glory is made known. We may be looking at a man who is simply coming to a church service on a Sunday morning. Certainly there is not the architectural magnificence of the temple in Jerusalem, certainly not the wonderful accompaniment of the services in that temple. It is just a company of ordinary people, a company of Christians gathered in the Lord's name, yet this place becomes the temple of the Spirit. The seeker comes to a service like this because this is where God's people meet, this is where the Lord has promised to set His name, this is where the Lord makes Himself known.

The man who is truly seeking the Lord persists in his quest, and you see that with the Ethiopian. He had come to Jerusalem to worship, come to hear the Word of God. Now he was

going back to his own country, but as he goes he is obviously still searching, and so, sitting in his chariot, he is reading from the prophet Isaiah. But you only have to reflect for a moment to realise that the particular place where he was doing his reading was not exactly a place conducive to serious study. He was not going down a tarmacadam motorway; he would be going down a desert road, a dusty track. And he was not going down in a vehicle fitted with pneumatic tyres. He was in his chariot, which sounds very imposing until you analyse what a chariot was like, with rough wheels and no springs. It would be like going down a rutted track in the old farm carts that they used to have before the days of tractors. If you have ever been to a farm as a child and ridden in an old farm cart with a horse, well, you know what a bumpy kind of progress it is—not exactly the kind of place that you would think of sitting down to engage in serious reflection upon the Word of God. But this man was so concerned to find the truth that even as he is jolted along in his chariot down this desert road, he had the scroll of Isaiah open and he is reading the Scripture.

This is a man who is in dead earnest. He isn't trifling, he isn't simply going through some formality. This is not a pilgrimage he has made just for the sake of making it. This is a man who is so much in earnest that he still seeks, he is still searching, he is still wanting to find; and yet in spite of it all he still hasn't discovered the answer. There is still an element of perplexity in spite of the long journey, in spite of the fact that he has been in Jerusalem and walked the courts of the temple. He has been in the city of Zion, he has doubtless seen the sacrifices offered, he has heard the law read and the prophets proclaimed, and here, with the roll of the prophet in his hand, he is still reading, still searching, and yet still perplexed, for he still has not found. But the Lord does not leave the seeker permanently in a state of uncertainty. The Lord had clearly postponed this man's finding so that when the finding came it might be a very wonderful experience, and one can understand this, because this man was going back to a very testing situation. He was going to be one man alone. It would be no easy thing to stand in that situation back in Ethiopia, and more particularly because of the position which he occupied—a government position, a position of great prominence. He would be the only Christian in that situation, the only one committed to this peculiar foreign creed which he had brought back from another land. It was important that his experience should be such a real one, that when times of test-

ing came he would be able to say, 'This one thing I know that, whereas I was blind, now I see'.

But at this stage, when Philip met him, the truth had not fully dawned. He knew a great deal about it, obviously, he knew his way around the prophecy of Isaiah, but the truth had not made its inner impact upon his soul. He is still perplexed, he is still searching, still desperately longing to know. Back in Jeremiah, Jeremiah spoke of the searching soul and he says, speaking in the Lord's name, 'If you truly seek me, you will surely find me'. If you truly seek, you *will* find. The Lord Jesus Christ echoed that very word when in the Sermon on the Mount He said, 'Ask and it shall be given you, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you'. But you must set that saying in the context of the stories which Jesus told. He does not refer to the knock which is given, and then if there is no answer, off you go and say, 'Well, there is no reply'. It is the knock of the man whose friend comes to him at midnight, and so he goes to another friend or neighbour to look for some bread because he is short of supply, and he wants to provide some hospitality for the unexpected guest. But the neighbour to whom he goes is reluctant, he is warm in bed on a cold night and he doesn't want to get up. But the man at the door hammers persistently, he refuses to take 'No' for an answer, he *will* be heard, he must have bread in order to provide hospitality. So his reluctant neighbour, driven from his slumbers and his warm bed, comes and gives him what he needs. Now of course the story is not to be misinterpreted as if God is reluctant to act and reluctant to bless. He delights to bless, but sometimes He defers His coming that He might test us whether we really are in earnest, whether we really are seeking with all our hearts. The true seeker continues to knock, and at times when the burden of the whole thing becomes so great, it is as if he hammers insistently on the door of heaven, he must have an answer, he must know. He is like the psalmist, 'As the hart panteth after the waterbrooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God'.

So here is this man, sitting in his chariot, bumping along the desert road, reading the Scripture, longing to know the truth and to find God as a reality. But of course God was not absent from the situation. Indeed, I am sure that, looking back later, the Ethiopian would have acknowledged quite freely, 'I was looking for Him because He was first looking for me. I was seeking for Him because already He had sought me'. In this situation, you see not simply a seeking sinner, but you see a seeking Saviour. The Spirit of God had indeed been seeking

for the Ethiopian long before he went down that desert road back from Jerusalem. I believe the Spirit of God had been seeking him centuries before when He moved a prophet in Israel to write the prophecy of Isaiah. And when Isaiah wrote what we know as chapter 53, he would never, I am sure, have known of an Ethiopian who would live eight centuries later. But God knew of that man, and knew that that man would one day need a word that would guide him to the truth.

So as God moved Isaiah to write, it was not simply for Isaiah's benefit, it was for those to whom he addressed himself, and not only to the men of his own generation but to the men as yet unborn, and to the generations right down history until the final consummation of the purposes of God when Christ would return. Isaiah was being moved to pen a message concerning the Messiah, concerning the Saviour, which the Spirit would use again and again down the years to bring light to men's minds and hearts. But the marvellous thing about it is this. The Spirit seeks through that prophetic word, not in terms of a vague general speaking to men in a mass, but there is something intensely personal about it. So when a man really understands the truth about God's Word, when the message really comes home, it is almost as if this Book were written specifically for him. Indeed, when the light really dawns, it is rather like a letter sent from heaven with your name and address on it. It is as if the living God personally addresses Himself to you. I say, the Spirit was seeking for this man long before he began his quest, indeed long before he was born; the Spirit had prepared the answer, giving it to the prophet.

But the message had to be explained, and so the Spirit intervenes in the situation. God's time has come, God's time to make Himself known to this seeker. He has waited long, he has searched with all his heart, and now in God's grace and mercy the moment of revelation is coming. And it comes, as so often it comes, through human lips. God says to Philip, 'Go down to the desert road that leads to Gaza'. To Philip it must have seemed in some ways an extraordinary command. After all, he was involved in Samaria and great things were happening in Samaria—there were crowds of people turning to Christ and they were showing evidence of the work of the Spirit in that town. The obvious thing surely was to consolidate the work, to build these new converts up in the faith, to establish them and to teach them how to reach out in Samaria. God says, 'No, Philip, I want you down the desert road'. So Philip goes unquestioningly. He submits, he obeys. It may have seemed utterly pointless; who are you likely to meet down a

desert road? You might not even meet a soul, the whole thing might be pointless. But God has His purpose. God is directing His servant to the man whom God has been preparing; because the hunger in this man's heart, the great longing to know the living God, has been planted there by God Himself, and Philip is being sent as God's answer to that man's need.

Now God does not always work in precisely that way; He does not always commission the Christian, as it were, by a direct word to go to a particular individual, although sometimes that still happens. God sometimes lays it on a Christian's heart to write a letter to some friend, to speak a word to some neighbour. But often it results from what the world would term 'chance' but what we call 'providence'. In other words, your paths seem to cross, and you come into contact with someone. It may be that someone moves into the next house and it would seem to be pure chance that you selected that house to live in and that other person selected the one next door, and then the acquaintanceship is started and you begin to know that person. But you find that all this was in the providence of God. Those two people moved into that neighbourhood, and got to know each other, because God was purposing through this Christian to reach his next-door neighbour. And the seeker discovers that God in His providence makes the roads converge, so that he is meeting with someone who is able to explain to him the Word of Life.

So we listen to Philip as he joins the Ethiopian and he asks the first obvious question, 'Do you understand what you are reading?' Here is a man, sitting in a chariot, reading through his Old Testament prophecy, but, 'do you understand it?' says Philip. Because that is where the heart experience of the gospel begins, when we understand it, when we know what it is all about. And the Ethiopian, who has searched long, says, 'How can I, except some man should guide me?' What a wonderful opportunity for a Christian who is wanting to share the good news. This is not a case of trying to find an opportunity, trying to find some avenue of approach. Here is a man who is open to the Word of God. And when you find a man in that condition, it is a sheer delight to speak to him about Jesus Christ.

So Philip begins and he preaches the good news of Jesus. Where does he begin? Well, exactly where the man was. There he is, reading the 53rd chapter of Isaiah, and what more appropriate place in the Old Testament to begin than that! So Philip begins to speak to him about the Christ to whom Isaiah pointed eight centuries before. What kind of a Christ

does he speak about? He speaks about the One who was utterly obedient to His Father's commands. This is the One who was in fellowship with the Father from all eternity, and yet gladly He turned His back on the very glory of heaven and went at His Father's bidding that He might save men from their sin. Isaiah spoke, and doubtless Philip expounded it, of One who offered Himself as a sacrifice. It was not of One who was caught up by the current of events and was unable to extricate Himself; not One who became the victim of a plot and of the jealousy and envy of the High Priest; not One who, as a result of the cowardice of Pilate, was forced to a scaffold. It was One who willingly and gladly and in complete obedience to His Father's will, offered Himself as a sacrifice.

But there is more to it than that. Why was He going thus to Calvary? Why was He dying? This is what the Ethiopian is asking—'Of whom is the prophet speaking, of himself or of someone else?' And Philip is able to say, 'He is speaking of the Son of God; of the One who, although He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, though He was holy yet for our sakes came and bore our sins in His own body on the tree'. You can imagine how Philip must have thrilled as again he turned with the Ethiopian to this very prophecy of Isaiah 53, and spoke of the One who was 'wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon Him and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all'. It was the heart of the gospel. It was the message of a suffering, bleeding, dying Saviour, of a sin-bearer, and so of the answer to his need. Here is a man who is wanting to know the living God, a man who is wanting to experience the forgiveness of sins, and Philip responds—Here is the answer. Isaiah pointed to it, but it is now a reality, for it has happened. He has come. He has died. He has risen again, He is alive, He is able to save.

Philip had one further word to speak. Quite obviously, as he was presenting this message, he must have spoken to the Ethiopian about this New Testament ordinance of baptism, otherwise the question would have been completely extraordinary, because if a man is talking about Isaiah 53, about the Christ who died, why did the man suddenly say, 'Here is water, what does hinder me from being baptised?' If Philip had not mentioned it, well, presumably the Ethiopian would not have known about it, unless he had seen and heard something of what was happening in Jerusalem. I would say that Philip did what all these preachers do right through the Acts,

when they preach the gospel, when they call men to repentance, they call them to take the first and obvious step which indicates repentance, namely that they should be baptised. Philip had quite clearly done what Peter had done in Acts 2. When the men in Jerusalem say to Peter, 'What are we to do? We have heard this gospel, it has spoken to our hearts, what do we do about it?' Well, Peter had a simple answer, 'Repent and be baptised every one of you, for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Spirit'. Now Philip, I believe, is saying precisely the same thing, so much so that the Ethiopian is saying—I have heard the gospel, I understand it now; I see that Isaiah was speaking of Christ, and I see that Christ died for my sins; look, here is a pool of water, what doth hinder me to be baptised? And they went down into the water and he was baptised.

It was a great sequel to a long quest. Here was a man who had heard the message and he shows you what repentance means. It means simply to turn and to respond to the message of the gospel. Why do I say that it is clear that he was exhibiting repentance? It is because of his very question. Peter had said on the day of Pentecost, 'Repent and be baptised'. Philip, I believe, would have been saying the same thing. So if the Ethiopian is saying, 'What does hinder me to be baptised?' he is quite clearly saying—I am repenting, I have turned from my sin, I have turned to the Lord, shouldn't I be baptised now? And of course Philip gladly complied, and they both went down into the water—this symbolic act of plunging this young convert in water to bring home to him the glorious reality of the experience through which he was going, the experience of the new birth; down, buried, and risen to newness of life. He could appreciate it. He would not have appreciated it so much, I suggest, if Philip had said, 'Now you are going down the desert road, you will not be travelling without a water bottle; all we need is about a tablespoonful of water and I will sprinkle a few drops on you and it will bring it all home to you'. Of course it wouldn't have brought very much home to him, and if that was all that was required, well, the facilities were available. But it was a providential fact that there was a pool of water which indicated to the Ethiopian that now was the moment when he should submit to the ordinance.

The full meaning of it all was there. They both of them go right down into the pool. Here is an Ethiopian State official, a man in a very lordly position in an oriental court. The retinue that would accompany him would stand and see their master stepping down from his chariot and, together with this extra-

ordinary preacher who had suddenly appeared on the scene, stripping and going down into the pool of water at the side of the road. This was surely a humiliating experience indeed. And it is a humbling experience to be baptised. But what a precious experience it was to that man that day. Back in Ethiopia, back to the temptations, back to the testings, but he would never forget that day and that vivid experience, that symbolic plunge into the pool by the side of a desert road, when openly he had acknowledged Jesus Christ as Lord, when openly he had declared his break with the old life and his turning in simple trust like a child to Jesus Christ, when he declared that the great end to his quest had come.

The end of his quest? Well, in a sense, it was just beginning. He had come to the end of one decisive point, and a new life opened before him. So, says Luke in the narrative, he went on his way rejoicing. And no wonder! Here is a man who had laboured to find an answer, had longed to know the truth, and now he had come in simple trust. His hand was in the hand of the crucified Saviour. His whole trust was in the One who died for him and rose again. He had confessed it openly, he had been baptised, he had said 'Jesus is Lord', and so he came up from the water as one who had risen from an old life which had been put away once and for all, risen to newness of life. He goes on rejoicing in Christ.

If with all your heart you truly seek Him, you will surely find Him. Our God is gracious. Our God delights to welcome the seeking soul. The man who is hungry for God will find that the Lord satisfies the hunger of the heart. He uses various ways. Sometimes the quest is short and sometimes it is long, but if a man is truly seeking Christ, this is the Christ who says, 'Him who cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out'. It may be that this morning the Lord may bring someone to the end of the quest, may bring someone to that point of seeing what the New Testament is all about, about a sin-bearing Saviour who graciously meets the seeking sinner and gladly and fully forgives him. Maybe the word of the apostolic preaching may ring out this morning in reply to the question, 'What are we to do?' What then is the answer? 'Repent and be baptised every one of you for the remission of sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.' And although the way ahead may be difficult, although there may be tests, you will go rejoicing, rejoicing in God, rejoicing in the Lord your Saviour.

J. C. Ryle — The Country Parson

M. J. SMOUT

(Series continued from last month)

In March 1850 Ryle married a second time. His bride was Jessy Walker, the eldest daughter of John Walker, of Crawfordton, Dumfriesshire. Ryle had known her for some time previously for she had been a friend of the first Mrs. Ryle and had been a god-mother to Georgina. The marriage took place at Torquay in March 1850. Ryle might well have thought that by now life had brought him more than enough troubles. But there was still more to come. The years of testing were not yet over. After six months of marriage, Mrs. Ryle began to complain of feeling unwell. From that time until her death ten years later, she was never well for more than three months at a time. Her five pregnancies were so difficult that, accompanied by her husband, she had to go to London for observation on each occasion. For one period Ryle was away from his parish for six months and none of the other times was less than two months. In March 1860 it was diagnosed that Mrs. Ryle was suffering with Bright's disease, and she died two months later. She was buried in Helmingham churchyard. Ryle's eldest son, Herbert, then four years old, remembered being held up at an attic window by a nurse to see his mother's funeral.

The strain of these years took their toll on Ryle. 'Few can have any idea how much wear and tear and anxiety of mind and body I had to go through for at least five years before my wife died. I very rarely ever slept out of my own house, in order that I might be in the way if my wife wanted anything. I have frequently in the depth of winter driven distances of 12, 15, 20 or even 30 miles in an open carriage to speak or preach, and then returned home the same distance immediately afterwards, rather than sleep away from my own house. As to holidays, rest or recreations in the year, I never had any at all, while the whole business of entertaining and amusing the three little boys in an evening devolved entirely upon me. In fact, the whole state of things was a heavy strain upon me both in body and mind, and I often wondered how I lived through it.'

So Ryle found himself left with five children between the ages of two and fourteen. What he later wrote concerning the death of the wife of Henry Venn, the eighteenth century vicar of Huddersfield, applied as much to his own circumstances. 'She was, in fact, her husband's right hand. When she died such a load of care and anxiety was accumulated on his head that his health gradually gave way. People who have not been placed in similar circumstances may probably not understand all this. Those who have had this cross to carry can testify that there is no position in this world so trying to body and soul as that of the minister who is left a widower, with a young family and large congregation. There are anxieties in such cases which no one knows but he who has gone through them; anxieties which can crush the strongest spirit, and wear out the strongest constitution.'

In spite of all the problems he had to face at Helmingham, both in respect to his own family and with John Tollemache, it was the 17 years here that laid the foundation of his preaching and writing ministry.

By the end of his stay at Helmingham, he was known throughout Suffolk and the surrounding counties as an outstanding preacher. Those were the days when the people crowded in to the lectures given by clergymen mid-week on various aspects of Christianity. The lecture 'season' ran from autumn to spring. In Ipswich Ryle used to speak at least once a fortnight at different meetings. In 1858, for example, he spoke at meetings of the Church of England Young Men's Society, the Colonial Church and School Society, the Church Pastoral Aid Society, and the Church Missionary Society. All these meetings were in Ipswich, but the same year found him speaking at Stowmarket on behalf of the National and Sunday Schools to such an effect that it was commented 'We could not help wishing that such sermons were oftener heard in Stowmarket Church'.

But his fame was spreading even further. Even though he was a country vicar, Ryle was intensely interested in getting the Gospel to the working-classes. Along with other leading Evangelicals, he took part in special services for working-men held throughout the country. The largest meetings for working-men were at the Exeter Hall in London. At one of the meetings in June 1858 there was an audience of 4,000 with 1,000 who could not get in. Ryle spoke 'with a force and earnestness which have rarely been equalled, and which riveted the attention of the vast audience from commencement to finish'. At a later meeting he was said to have been listened to

with 'breathless attention'. Curiously enough, Ryle became known in London because of the frequent visits he had to make during the time of his second wife's illness. During this time he preached in at least 60 different London churches and thus got to know many of the leading Evangelicals. Although he received half a dozen offers of livings in the capital city, he did not go there because of his dislike of London.

An observer visiting Helmingham Church was very impressed to see a congregation of 160 out of the small population of Helmingham, although he concluded that some must have come in from the surrounding villages to hear the great preacher. Ryle believed very much in visual aids, for he had about 40 texts painted on the walls of the church. Over the entrance appropriately enough was the text, 'I am the door', while over the pulpit was his motto, 'Woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel'. The size of Ryle was re-emphasised by the small church and the tiny pulpit from which he preached. The reporter noted that he spoke without notes and at great length. None-the-less his hearers were sorry when the sermon ended, that is if they did not have a pudding spoiling in the oven.

Ryle's major work of writing was the production of his 'Expository Thoughts on the Gospels'. At Helmingham he completed the volumes on Matthew, Mark and Luke (two volumes). These grew out of Bible-studies he gave in the parish and had the object of being suitable for use by ordinary people rather than being deep theological works. Besides this he produced innumerable tracts. He had printed by William Hunt, of Ipswich, the first sermon he ever gave at Helmingham, entitled 'I have somewhat to say unto thee', and he is said to have driven through the countryside distributing it to anyone who would take it. By 1860 six volumes of Home Truths, collected tracts and addresses were in print, plus 80 or more separate tracts and nearly 50 handbills. In addition, Ryle produced eight editions of 'Spiritual Songs', being one hundred hymns not to be found in the hymn books most commonly used, and in 1860 the first edition of 'Hymns for the Church on Earth'. He also wrote a number of addresses for children. Already one tract had been translated into French and German, and another into French only.

In July 1858 Ryle spoke at a Church Missionary Society meeting at a village called Stradbroke, some 20 miles from Helmingham. He little thought then that in three years' time he was to become its Rector. Relations between Ryle and John Tollemache were becoming unbearable, so much so that it led

to what Ryle himself called 'a complete suspension of all friendly relations'. A glimpse of what feelings were like can be seen from part of a sermon Ryle preached in Helmingham Church in March 1858. He said, 'People will not accept that which is best; that which is most enduring. What God promises endures through eternity. This cannot be said of riches and the good things of this life. Will Mr. Tollemache take Peckferton Castle or Helmingham Hall, or his fine house in St. James, when he dies?' When it was possible for Ryle to make personal references like this in public, it was obviously best for both people concerned for Ryle to move to another parish as soon as possible. So when Bishop Pelham offered him the living of Stradbroke in 1861, it was accepted without hesitation. At last were about to begin some of the happiest years of Ryle's life.

It was fitting for a future bishop to come to Stradbroke, for it was already famous as being the birthplace of Robert Grosseteste, the notorious Bishop of Lincoln, who was born in the Old Town House in 1168. The village was situated in typical Suffolk scenery, amidst flat farming land. The countryside was intersected with narrow winding lanes, which twisted and turned so much that they sometimes threatened to meet themselves coming back. The nearest railway station was seven miles away, so the parish was quite isolated. The village itself was one of the largest in the county, with a population of 1,300. In contrast to the closed village of Helmingham, it was an open village with no single resident landlord. It was going through a time of depression and, on the whole, the people were poor. Because of economic troubles, 200 people were sent to the United States of America from the local workhouse. The parish being large by the standards of those days, Ryle always had a curate to assist him. During his nineteen years at Stradbroke he had eight successive curates, the most outstanding of whom was C. O. Moules, who became Bishop of Nelson, New Zealand, in 1892. Ryle seemed to have little trouble in acquiring assistants, even though he had previously complained of the shortage of curates even after writing to friends and putting adverts in the *Record*. The stipend was double that of Helmingham, and for this Ryle had a previous incumbent to thank. The Rev. William White, who was Vicar of Stradbroke up till 1841, had won a long legal battle with the Bishop of Ely to recover endowments which had lapsed far back in the time of Charles II. In doing so, he had immediately made Stradbroke into one of the wealthiest livings in the

diocese, so much so that during Ryle's incumbency no collections were ever taken in church.

The church itself was a flint-stoned building. Of the appearance from the outside Herbert Ryle thought there were 'few fairer specimens of a village church', while in the interior, with its five bays of perpendicular arches and lofty roof, he found 'a wonderful sense of space combined with singular beauty of proportion'. Ryle found no difficulty in gathering a large congregation. To make room for them he completely renovated the church. He removed all the old box pews, and packed as many new ones in as he possibly could. He moved the font from the centre of the nave to the side, probably because it interfered with his seating plans. Choir stalls and organ were installed. He even went so far as to move the church windows around and put in a new one at the east end depicting, from Ephesians chapter six, the whole armour of God. He had the old Jacobean pulpit replaced by one to his own liking, and written round the top so that no preacher entering it could miss it was the Ryle motto, 'Woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel'. The story goes that as the workmen were completing its erection, Ryle took a chisel and underlined the word 'not'. As a finishing touch to the whole enterprise, he had sentences from the Prayer Book painted on all the beams in the roof. Towards the end of his Stradbroke ministry he had the chancel completely rebuilt and dedicated the enterprise to his father. The whole work of restoration was completed between 1871 and 1879, and cost in the region of £4,000. Besides the parish church there was a large Baptist Chapel in the village which, according to Ryle, 'was planted in the parish in the days when clergymen did nothing'. He struck up good relations from the start. The young Baptist minister had to give a lecture on poetry and so came to Ryle to borrow a copy of Chaucer's works to help in his preparation. The vicar was glad to oblige and invited him to make use of his library whenever he wanted. From that time the two men became great friends.

Free from the domination of Squire Tollemache, Ryle was soon organising the education of the village children. Within two years of his coming to Stradbroke, Ryle had built a National School at a cost of £1,300. It is probable that some of the money came out of his own pocket, but he also received substantial donations from local benefactors, such as Sir Edward Kerrison. Within the National School Ryle included a private or Middle School, which catered more for the sons of the local farmers and tradesmen. A trust was formed to run

the Middle School, which actually rented a classroom in the National School building. In the playground an iron fence divided the area used by the Middle, which was boys only, from the National. For many years after the Council took over the School, £1 a year ground rent was paid to the Trust in return for taking over the Middle School. It would be easy to criticise Ryle for the division he made, and the class distinction he preserved. There are two things to be said in his defence in this particular matter. Firstly, his whole social background would have made it very surprising if he had done anything else. He never made any claims to be an advanced thinker in education. In fact there is little evidence that he ever gave much thought to the matter at all. Secondly, even if he had believed in abolishing the class-distinction in education, it is doubtful if the upper classes of the village would have agreed to send their children to sit in the same classroom as the children of the labouring classes. So in practice Ryle could have done no other, even if he had wished to do so. At least, some credit must be given to him for starting some sort of reasonable education, where previously there had been little.

For most of his almost 20 years in Stradbroke, Ryle was the undisputed leader of village life in all its aspects, and it is difficult to believe that he did not enjoy his position, especially after all the frustrations of his years at Helmingham. But he must have noticed that life in the village was beginning to change, as it was in all villages during the second half of the nineteenth century. The labouring classes were becoming more and more discontented with their lot in life. For long enough they had lived in pitiable conditions. The impetus to do something about it came from the example set to them by their town counterparts of what could be done by organised labour. All that they needed was a leader, and he appeared in the shape of Joseph Arch. Arch was a Warwickshire man and a Primitive Methodist lay preacher. In March 1872 he founded the Agricultural Labourers Union, which within two years had a membership of 86,000. A few clergy, notably C. L. Manning, supported the movement. A few clergy were violently opposed. Bishop Ellicott of Gloucester advised farmers when they met union agents to remember the old saying, 'Don't nail their ears to the pump, and don't duck them in the horse pond'.

Ryle reacted in Stradbroke very much like the majority of clergy. He was proud that when the movement reached Suffolk in 1875, the peace of Stradbroke was not disturbed at all. Although it had many members in the county, there were few in the village. He adopted a policy of strict neutrality and tried

to be friends with everyone, claiming that he knew little about agricultural matters anyway. But this was only an excuse, for at root Ryle was very much a member of the Establishment, a defender of the status quo. When asked for his views, he would tell the farmers 'Do unto others as you would they do unto you', and the labourers he would inform that there would always be rich and poor. Even if all wealth was divided equally, the equality would not last for long. He felt that sorrow and pain would always be 'the common inheritance of humanity'. Death would be the great leveller, for 'six feet of silent earth' would cover even the greatest person. His doctrine of social justice was that 'the minister of Christ must never interfere between class and class, masters and servants in temporal matters'. This conclusion he based on the saying of Christ, 'Man who made me a judge or a divider over you'.

The only Anglican bishop to support Arch was Dr. Frazer of Manchester. When a country parson, he had stated before a Royal Commission in the 1860's that 'in many a country village the condition of the labourer and his family was but little removed from that of the cattle they tended'. He stood by this view at the Leeds Church Congress of 1872 and in numerous letters to the *Times*. After one of his letters, Ryle wrote to him personally, defying him to prove that the labourers of Manchester were any better off than those who worked in Stradbroke. In spite of what Ryle might have thought, it is tempting to believe that the fact that there were no strikes or lock-outs in the village was due more to the dominance of Ryle than to the superior condition of its labourers.

As village squire and vicar all rolled into one, Ryle was at his happiest. He was as wealthy as he had ever been in his life. His coachmen were noted in the village for the expensive brocade they wore round their hats. He was a man of constant action, not just content with Sunday services, but having meetings in three different houses during the week, besides many open-air services. He was often seen walking round the village streets, his imposing figure made to seem even more so by the tall top hat he invariably wore. Although his natural shyness made him appear rather haughty, he was always ready to stop and chat with anyone he met on his travels. If he came across any youngsters standing around on the street corner, he was likely to say 'Don't stand there idle. It would be even better if you went and got into mischief!' His concern was for the social welfare of the people as well as the spiritual. For instance, if he noticed that any of the drains were blocked, he

would make it his business to see to it that they were put right immediately.

If some people found him haughty and likely to administer a public rebuke if anyone smiled in church on a Sunday, his family knew best of all that beneath the cold exterior he was a man with a loving heart. In October 1861 Ryle had married his third wife, Henrietta, the daughter of Lieutenant-Colonel Clowes, of Broughton Old Hall, Lancashire. She was a talented woman, with a deep interest in the then fairly new art of photography. She was also a good organist and played for the services at the church, besides being a constant visitor of the sick. She was always ready to help anyone in need. Her husband owed much to her nursing ability during a serious illness he had in 1874 and testified that 'if it had not been for Mrs. Ryle, I should not be alive now'. Although he reckoned to hold the doctrine that a man's wife is his better half, he had no doubt in his own mind that on the whole a woman should be seen and not heard. When a presentation was made to Mrs. Ryle on their leaving the village for Liverpool, her husband calmly rose to his feet and informed the expectant assembly that since they would not expect his wife to make a speech, he would speak for her.

Life in the large rambling vicarage just down the road from the church was busy, but happy. Although, of course, the atmosphere was a Christian one, this did not mean that it was miserable and gloomy. The children looked up to their father as 'every inch a man. His tall robust frame was matched with a strength of purpose and directness of speech which was pre-eminently bracing. No one could doubt he was one whose religion was intensely real'. This view was backed up by an independent witness in Archdeacon S. R. James, who once visited the Ryle home when he was at Harrow with the two elder Ryle boys. He recorded that 'Mr. Ryle with his gigantic figure and stentorian voice was perhaps rather a formidable figure to a youthful visitor, but very kind and hearty and I soon felt at home. The boys, each in his way, were delightful companions. The atmosphere of the house was, like that of my own, devotional, daily Bible readings, somewhat lengthy family prayers and a good deal of religious talk. But all was quite wholesome and unpretentious, and I don't think any of us were bored, much less inclined to cavil at the regime, at any rate at the time'. Here we get close to the greatness of Ryle. He saw Christianity as a manly faith. To follow Christ did not mean becoming effeminate, rather it made manhood complete. He made evident in the way he lived that being a Christian was

not in any sense restricting or inhibiting. On the contrary, it brought a fullness and freedom to living which could only be found in Christ.

Of all the children, the eldest son, Herbert, was his father's favourite. The feeling was mutual, for Herbert thought the world of his father. This was a relationship which continued over the years, even when, as we shall see later, Herbert deviated from the evangelical faith of his father. They hated to be separated. When in April 1866 Ryle took Herbert and Reginald back to Wadhurst private school, he wrote to his wife, 'Poor little Herbert cried most bitterly at parting . . . he had been so accustomed to look up to me and be always with me, ever since he can remember anything, that separation strikes him more. It is sad work and nothing but the sense of parental duty and the wisdom of it would make me go through it'. It sounded as if Ryle himself was near to tears when he wrote this.

When Herbert moved on in due course to Eton, Ryle often visited him, but, as he wrote to his wife, found that 'there are ten times as many shaggy-looking furry-faced boys as there were in my time'. Of course, the rose-coloured spectacles of time had the same effect on Ryle as it has had on people before and since. Herbert valiantly tried to stand for the evangelical beliefs of his father, even when it meant that refusing to turn for the creed during chapel services found him staring into the faces of the rest of the school. He was very shaken by his father's serious illness in 1874 and revealed his feelings by writing 'the idea of dear father being in bed ill is the very least that I can conceive. However, I suppose it is all "good for us" and will make us love and prize him more'.

A visit by the American evangelists Moody and Sankey to Eton prompted Herbert to write to his step-mother in June 1875, 'I do not know that I was very much struck by either "Soody" or "Mankey". "Soody" preached not much differently from what father would have done, except with slightly more coarseness, without heads and with rather longer stories and illustrations'. But if he was not enamoured with Moody and Sankey, neither did he have much time for his high-church school-fellows. One of them asked him if he thought it right to marry more than once, with obvious implications about his father's three marriages. Herbert was not amused, demanded an apology, which he got, and exploded, 'Really, these ritualist people are almost past enduring'—words similar to which he had probably heard from his father on many occasions.

Ryle was delighted when his son gained entrance to King's College, Cambridge, in October 1875, but was a little disappointed when he failed the Bell scholarship at the end of his first year. But he hid his feelings and wrote to Herbert, 'I am glad you have written so fully. If anything like coolness or want of confidence ever rose between us, it would break my heart. No-one can ever love you or care for you more than I do. Dismiss from your mind all idea that I was annoyed by your failure for "the Bell". Of course, my dear fellow, I would have been pleased if you had got it. But I have had too many failures in my own life and seen too many to dwell on failures long. It is no use crying over spilt milk. Go ahead'. The last two sentences revealed Ryle's approach to failure. It was to try to forget the past and look to the future. It was a philosophy he had fought through to after years of dwelling on his failings, and which he was now passing on to his son. Ryle was made happier by the fact that in the following year Herbert carried off the divinity prize, but was disappointed again when he missed a certain first class degree because of getting hurt in a football match. During one of the summer vacations the Ryles had fixed a holiday at Keswick, in the Lake District, but Herbert decided to join a reading-party nearby. His father was rather angry about this arrangement and wrote to his son, 'We all like to see as much as we can of you, and we should think it rather hard if we were at Keswick and you were not in the same house with us. I for one should hardly care to go'. To this veiled threat he added, rather comically in view of the fact that he lived for another 25 years, 'At your age you can have little idea how much an old fellow like me, whose contemporaries and schoolfellows are all dead, counts on seeing all he can of his children'. It was not recorded what effect this fatherly admonition had on Herbert.

Holiday times had always been especially dear to Ryle, for it was then that he had the complete family with him. As the previous incident showed, he found it hard to reconcile himself that his children were growing up and wanting to go their own ways. When the boys were younger he used to be so keen to have them with him that he allowed them to have a carpenter's bench in his study, on the rather contradictory understanding that they made no noise. They were only allowed to speak when they cut their fingers and had to beg blotting paper off their father to stem the flow of blood. The nostalgia of country life in boyhood days was summed up by Herbert's biographer when he wrote of Herbert's 'recollection of long summer evenings, when the laden wagons swaying with their

burden of fragrant hay could scarcely make passage through the narrow lanes, or of walks along these lanes . . . when their father set a group of children on the way home from school to jump and run races for prizes of sweets'. Ryle used to say jokingly that he ruled the parish through the sweets he carried about with him.

As the years passed by, Ryle grew to love Stradbroke more and more. Even after becoming Bishop of Liverpool he still looked back with longing to the village 'with its grand old Gothic church, and its little cluster of cottages round it and its two or three humble shops, with its total absence of urban temptations—with its few hundreds of people within easy walk of the parsonage—with seats in the church for almost every inhabitant and places in the school for almost every child'.

For the man of normal strength and ability, there would have been enough work to do without taking on much outside of the parish. But Ryle received more and more requests to preach all over the country, a task which was facilitated by the growth of the railway system, making it possible to get to London in two and a half hours. Since the nearest railway station to Stradbroke was either Diss or Harleston, eight or nine miles away, Ryle's coach was often to be seen dashing through the village streets at a tremendous gallop. Ryle would call to the coachman, 'Garnham, we shall lose the train'. Garnham would reply, 'I can't go faster, Sir, unless the horses gallop'. Whereupon the vicar would shout, 'Then make them gallop'. His departure would bring the people to their doors, saying to each other, 'It's old Ryle late again'.

More and more he was being looked to as the leading Evangelical spokesman. He became in the clerical sphere what Lord Shaftesbury was in the lay sphere—a person who was asked to speak at innumerable meetings. It was very rare that he did not appear on the platform of one of the major evangelical societies during the 'May season' at the Exeter Hall. The endurance of the crowded audiences at these meetings was quite considerable, for they would often have to listen to at least three speakers in succession, who would speak for around three-quarters of an hour each.

1861 found Ryle on the platform speaking on behalf of the Colonial and Continental Church Society. This society had originated in 1851 under the name of the Colonial Church and School Society from an amalgamation of the Colonial Church Society, which worked in Australia, and the Society for Educating the Poor in Newfoundland. It then became the Colonial and Continental Church Society, and in the year Ryle

spoke had become the Commonwealth and Continental Church Society. He had come straight to the meeting after preaching for an hour at Bow Church, and was glad that he was only called upon to second a resolution. Besides congratulating the society on its change of meeting place from the Freemasons' Hall to the more spacious Exeter Hall, he also approved of the second change of name from Colonial Church and School Society. This was because it so often got mixed up with the Colonial Training Institute. He remembered how years before, when he was speaking at a meeting in the North of England on behalf of the former, the chairman, who was an M.P., had thought that he was chairing a meeting of the latter. Ryle had to stop him during his speech and explain that he was getting the two societies mixed up, but the M.P. took some convincing of his mistake. Then after some derogatory references to the United, 'or I suppose some call the Disunited States', Ryle urged the audience to take note of the importance of 'leavening' the colonies with 'Evangelical Church of England Christianity'. Ryle had supported the society for about fifteen years and again spoke on its behalf at the Exeter Hall the following year.

From then on his contacts with the Commonwealth and Continental Society seemed to have faded somewhat, and he appeared more frequently on the platform of the Church Missionary Society (starting in 1864) and of his other major interest, the Church Pastoral Aid Society (from 1867).

He was also in frequent demand at the Islington Clerical Meeting which took place in January every year. Whilst still at Helmingham, he spoke at the 1860 meeting on the subject, 'How may a revival of spiritual religion be promoted among the clergy and greater effectiveness be given to pulpit administration'. In 1870 he was pleading for more evangelicals to read church newspapers and magazines. The following year he tackled the subject of finding unity amongst the different schools of thought within the church. 1877 was the Jubilee Meetings and his subject was a paper on 'A comparative estimate of the condition of the Church of England in 1827 and 1877 in respect of its spiritual life and the balance of parties existing at the two periods'. In spite of the typically turgid titles of the period, at all these meetings, Ryle spoke in his usual terse and vivid style. He continued, too, his close interest in the work of the Church Missionary Society. He was delighted when Samuel Crowther was appointed the first African Bishop in 1864, and at the May meeting of the society recalled the early missionaries who went 'weeping, bearing

precious seed' and who had 'come again with rejoicing, bringing their sheaves with them'. He went on to challenge the Broad Church party, with all their 'Essays and Reviews' to produce a 'sheaf' like Crowther.

The Church Association was founded in 1865 and Ryle immediately became a member. It was started to counter the High Church militant action group, the English Church Union, which had been formed in 1859. Although in the late 1870's and early 1880's it lost the support of many evangelicals through its prosecution of Ritualists, during its first ten years it was supported by most of the leading members of that school. Little knowing how unhappy his future relationships with it were going to be, Ryle spoke at a number of its conferences. At the 1870 meeting he said he could not envisage how some people saw the Association as just a prosecuting society whose sole purpose in life was to pay lawyers fat fees. All that it was really doing was to uphold the law of the land. But by 1878 he was finding himself under pressure from the Association and feeling it necessary at the Conference to defend his attendances at the Church Congresses from those members who accused him of compromise. On his appointment as Dean of Salisbury he resigned his position as vice-president of the Association. In asking for his name to be removed from the list of members, he wrote, 'I have altered no opinions I have felt or expressed about Ritualism and have nothing to regret in having worked with your association. But I cannot be a judge and a member of the Church Association'. One cannot help but feel that perhaps Ryle was also relieved to have a good reason for resigning, and it may have been a little with tongue in cheek that the Association passed a resolution commending Ryle's 'sound judgment and the consistent and able advocacy which he rendered to the objects and work of the association'.

(To be continued)

'In the volume of the Book it is written of Me.' Martin Luther asks, *'What book and what person?'* *'There is only one Book,'* is his reply—*'Scripture; and only one Person—Jesus Christ.'*—ADOLPH SAPHIR.

The Holy Scriptures are to believing souls what the meadow is to the ox, what the home is to the man, what the nest is to the bird, the stream to the fish and the cleft of the rock to the sea-fowl.—MARTIN LUTHER.

The Lamentations of Jesus

C. H. SPURGEON

*A sermon delivered on Lord's Day Morning,
28th November, 1880, at the Metropolitan
Tabernacle.*

'When he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it.' (Luke 19 : 41).

On three occasions we are told that Jesus wept. You know them well, but it may be worth while to refresh your memories. The first was when our Lord was about to raise Lazarus from the dead. He saw the sorrow of the sisters, He meditated upon the fruit of sin in the death and corruption of the body, and He groaned in spirit, and it is written that 'Jesus wept'. Those who divided the chapters did well to make a separate verse of that simple sentence. It stands alone, the smallest and yet in some respects the greatest verse in the whole Bible. It shines as a diamond of the first water. It contains a world of healing balm condensed into a drop. Here we have much in little: a wealth of meaning in two words. The second occasion we have before us, and we will make it the theme of our discourse: at the sight of the beloved but rebellious city Jesus wept. The third occasion is mentioned by the apostle Paul in the fifth chapter of his epistle to the Hebrews, where he tells us what else we might not have known, that the Saviour 'In the days of his flesh, offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared'. That passage relates to the Gethsemane agony, in which a shower of bitter tears was mingled with the bloody sweat. The strength of His love strove with anguish of His soul, and in the process forced forth the sacred waters of His eyes.

THE GREAT BURDEN OF HUMAN GUILT

Thus our Saviour wept in *sympathy with domestic sorrow, and sanctified the tears of the bereaved*. We, too, may weep when brothers and friends lie dead, for Jesus wept. There need not be rebellion in our mourning, for Jesus fully consented to the divine will, and yet He wept. We may weep at the graves

of those we love, and yet be guiltless of unbelief as to their resurrection, for Jesus knew that Lazarus would rise again, and yet He wept. Our Lord, in weeping over Jerusalem, showed His *sympathy with national troubles*, His distress at the evils which awaited his countrymen. Men should not cease to be patriots when they become believers; saints should bemoan the ills which come upon the guilty people among whom they are numbered, and do so all the more because they are saints. Our Lord's third weeping was induced by *the great burden of human guilt* which pressed upon Him. This shows us how we, too, should look upon the guilt of men and mourn over it before God; but yet in this special weeping Jesus is alone, there was a something in the tears of Gethsemane to which we cannot reach, for He who shed them was then beginning to suffer as our substitute, and in that case He must needs tread the winepress alone, and of the people there must be none with Him. Behold beneath the olive trees a solitary weeper, enduring a grief which, blessed be His name, is now impossible to us, seeing He has taken away the transgressions which called for it.

SOBBINGS AND CRIES

We will now turn to this second instance of our Saviour's weeping, and here we find when we look at the original word that it is not exactly expressed by the word used in our admirable English version. We there read, 'He beheld the city, and *wept* over it'; but the Greek means a great deal more than tears, and includes sobbings and cries. Perhaps it may be best to read it, 'He lamented over it'. He suffered a deep inward anguish, and He expressed it by signs of woe, and by words which showed how bitter was His grief. Our subject will not be the lamentations of Jeremiah, but the lamentations of Jesus, the lamentations of Him who could more truly say than the weeping prophet, 'I am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of his wrath. Mine eye runneth down with rivers of water for the destruction of the daughter of my people. Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow which is done unto me'. Jesus is here a king by general acclamation, but king of grief by personal lamentation. He is the sovereign of sorrow, weeping while riding in triumph in the midst of His followers. Looked He ever more kingly than when He showed the tenderness of His heart towards His rebellious subjects? The city which had been the metropolis of the house of David never saw so truly royal a man before, for He is fittest to rule who is readiest to sympathise.

We shall this morning, as God shall help us, first, consider *our Lord's inward grief*; and then, secondly, *His verbal lamentation*. Oh for the power of the Spirit to bless the meditation to the melting of all our hearts. O Lord, speak to the rock and bid the waters flow, or, if it please Thee better, strike it with Thy rod and make it gush with rivers: only in some way make us answer to the mourning of our Saviour.

'Did Christ o'er sinners weep,
And shall our cheeks be dry?
Let floods of penitential grief
Burst forth from every eye.'

OUR LORD'S INWARD GRIEF

1. First, we are to contemplate OUR LORD'S INWARD GRIEF.

We note concerning it that it was so intense that *it could not be restrained by the occasion*. The occasion was one entirely by itself: a brief gleam of sunlight in a cloudy day, a glimpse of summer amid a cruel winter. His disciples had brought the colt and had placed Him thereon, and He was riding to the city which was altogether moved at His coming. The multitudes were eager to do Him homage with waving boughs and loud hosannahs, while His disciples in the inner circle were exulting in songs of praise which almost emulated the angelic chorales of His birthnight. 'Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, goodwill toward men' found its echo when the disciples said, 'Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest'. Yet amidst the hosannahs of the multitude, while the palm branches were yet in many hands, the Saviour stopped to weep; on the very spot where David had gone centuries before weeping, the Son of David stayed awhile to look upon the city, and to pour out His lamentation. That must have been deep grief which ran counter to all the demands of the season, and violated, as it were, all the decorum of the occasion, turning a festival into a mourning, a triumph into a lament. Ah! He knew the hollowness of all the praises which were ringing in His ears; He knew that they who shouted hosannah today would, ere many suns had risen, cry, 'Crucify him! crucify him!' He knew that His joyous entrance into Jerusalem would be followed by a mournful procession out of it, when they would take Him to the cross that He might die. He saw amid all the effervescence of the moment the small residuum of sincerity that there was in it, and He accepted it; but He lamented the abundance of mere outward excitement, which would disappear like the froth of the sea, and so He stood and wept.

It was a great sorrow, surely, which turned such a day of hopefulness into a season of anguish. It strikes me that all that day the Saviour fasted, and, if so, it is singular that He should have purposely kept for Himself a fast while others on His account held a festival. The reason why He did so, I think, is this: Mark says, 'And now the eventide was come, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve. And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry: and seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find anything thereon'. Such hunger had not come upon Him if it had not been preceded by a fast the day before. See, then, your Lord surrounded, as it were, with billows of praise, in the midst of a tumultuous sea of exultation, Himself standing as a lone rock, unmoved by all the excitement around Him. Deep was the grief which could not be concealed or controlled on such a day, when the sincere congratulations of His disciples, the happy songs of children, and the loud hosannas of the multitude everywhere welcomed Him.

HIS GRIEF—GREAT

The greatness of His grief may be seen, again, by the fact that *it overmastered other very natural feelings* which might have been, and perhaps were, excited by the occasion. Our Lord stood on the brow of the hill where He could see Jerusalem before Him in all its beauty. What thoughts it awakened in Him! His memory was stronger and quicker than ours, for His mental powers were unimpaired by sin, and He could remember all the great and glorious things which had been spoken of Zion, the city of God. Yet, as He remembered them all, no joy came into His soul because of the victories of David or the pomp of Solomon; temple and tower had lost all charm for Him; 'the joy of the earth' brought no joy to Him, but at the sight of the venerable city and its holy and beautiful house He wept. Modern travellers who have any soul in them are always moved by the sublimity of the spectacle from the Mount of Olives. Dean Stanley wrote, 'Nothing at Rome, Memphis, Thebes, Constantinople or Athens can approach it in beauty or interest'; and yet this is the poor, mean Jerusalem of modern times, by no means to be compared with the Jerusalem of our Saviour's day. Yet the Lord Jesus says nothing about this city, 'Beautiful for situation', except to lament over it. If He counts the towers thereof, and marks well her bulwarks, it is only to bemoan their total overthrow. All the memories of the past did but swell the torrent of His anguish in the foresight of her doom.

Something of admiration may have entered the Saviour's holy breast; for before Him stood His Father's house, of which He still thought so much, that even though He knew it would be left desolate, yet He took pains to purge it once again of the buyers and sellers who polluted it. That temple was built of white marble; much of it, the roof especially, covered with slabs of gold. It must have been one of the fairest objects that ever human eye rested upon as it glittered in the sun before Him. But what were those great and costly stones? what were those curious carvings to Him? His heart was saying within itself, 'There shall not be one stone left upon another that shall not be thrown down'. His sadness at the foresight of the city's desolation mastered His natural feeling of admiration for its present glory. His sorrow found no alleviation either in the past or the present of the city's history; the dreadful future threw a pall over all.

It mastered, too, the sympathy which He usually felt for those who were about Him. He would not stop His disciples from rejoicing, though the Pharisees asked Him, but He, Himself, took no share in the joy. Usually He was the most sensitive of men to all who were around Him, sorrowing with their sorrow, and joying in their joy. But on this occasion they may wave their palms, and cut down branches of trees and strew them in the way, and the children may shout Hosanna, but He who was the centre of it all did not enter into the feeling of the hour: they triumph, but He weeps.

GRIEF FOR OTHERS

More striking still is the fact that His grief for others prevented all apprehension for Himself. As He beheld that city, knowing that within a week He would die outside its gates, He might naturally have begun to feel the shadow of His sufferings, but no trace of such emotion is discoverable. You and I in such a case, with the certainty of a speedy and ignominious death before us, would have been heavy about it: but Jesus was not. In all that flood of tears there was not one for His own death; the tears were all for Jerusalem's doom, even as He said afterwards, 'Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but for yourselves and for your children'. It is not 'Woe is me, the holy city will become an Aceldama, a field of blood by my slaughter', but 'Oh, if thou hadst known, even thou, in this thy day'. He grieves for others, not for Himself; yet it must have been a very intense emotion which thus swept away, as with a torrent, everything else, so that He had neither joy for joy, nor sorrow for sorrow, but His whole strength of

feeling was poured forth from one sluice, and ran in one channel towards the devoted city which had rejected Him, and was about to put Him to death.

GOD LAMENTS

This great sorrow of His reveals to us the nature of our Lord. How complex is the person of Christ! He foresaw that the city would be destroyed, and though He was divine He wept. He knew every single event and detail of the dreadful tragedy, and used words about it of special historical accuracy which bring out His prophetic character, and yet the eye so clear in seeing the future was almost blinded with tears. He speaks of Himself as willing and able to have averted this doom by gathering the guilty ones under His wing, and thus He intimates His Godhead. While His nature on the one side of it sees the certainty of the doom, the same nature from another side laments the dread necessity. I will not say that His Godhead foresaw and His manhood lamented, for so mysteriously is the manhood joined to the Godhead that it makes but one Person, and it were better to assert that the entire nature of Christ lamented over Jerusalem. I have never been able to believe in an impassive God, though many theologians lay it down as an axiom that God cannot suffer. It seems to me that He can do or endure anything He wills to do or endure, and I for one cannot see that there is any special glorifying of God in the notion that He is incapable in any direction whatever. We can only speak of Him after the manner of men, and after that manner He speaks of Himself, and therefore there is no wrong in so doing. It brings the great Father nearer when we see Him lamenting the wanderings of His children, and joying in their penitent return. What but sorrow can be meant by such expressions as these? 'How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together.' 'Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.' Are these the utterances of an unfeeling God? I believe it is the Christ, the entire Christ, that both foretells the doom of Jerusalem and laments it. Some have even been staggered at the statement that Jesus wept. Certain of the early Christians, I am sorry to say, even went the length of striking the passage out of the gospel, because they thought that weeping would

dishonour their Lord. They ought to have had more reverence for the inspired word, and a truer knowledge of their Master, and never to have wished to obliterate a record which reflects the highest honour upon man's Redeemer.

A TENDER LORD

Our Lord's lament gives us an insight into the great tenderness of His character; He is so tender, that He not only weeps while weeping is of any avail, but He laments when lamentation must be fruitless. He reminds me of a judge who, having aforetime been a friend, warning, persuading, pleading with the prisoner, at last has the unutterable pain of condemning him: he puts on the black cap, and, with many a sigh and tear, pronounces sentence, feeling the dreadful nature of the occasion far more than the criminal at the bar. He is overcome with emotion while he declares that the condemned must be taken to the place from whence he came and there die a felon's death. Oh the tender heart of Christ, that when it comes to pronouncing the inevitable sentence, 'Your house is left unto you desolate' yet He cannot utter the righteous word without lamentation.

A PATIENT JUDGE

In this our Lord reveals the very heart of God. Did He not say, 'He that hath seen me hath seen the Father'? Here, then, you see the Father Himself, even He who said of old, 'As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live'. The doom *must be* pronounced, for infinite justice demands it, but mercy laments what she was not permitted to prevent. Tears fall amid the thunders, and though the doom be sealed by obstinate impenitence, yet judgment is evidently strange work to the patient Judge. This anguish showed how dreadful was the sentence; for what could stir the Saviour so if the doom of sinners be a small affair? If the doom of guilt be such a trifle as some dream, I understand not whence these tears. The whole nature of Christ is convulsed as He thinks first of Jerusalem ploughed as a field, and her children slaughtered till their blood runs in rivers of gore: and next, as He beholds the doom of the ungodly, who must be driven from His presence, and from the glory of His power, to be the awful witness of divine justice, and of God's hatred of evil. Thus standing on the brow of Olivet the weeping Son of man reveals to us the heart of God, slow to anger, of great mercy, waiting to be gracious, and tardy in executing His wrath.

WEEPING—AN ENCOURAGEMENT TO TRUST

For a practical lesson, we may remark that *this weeping of the Saviour should much encourage men to trust Him*. Those who desire His salvation may approach Him without hesitation, for His tears prove His hearty desires for our good. When a man who is not given to sentimental tears, as some effeminate beings are, is seen to weep, we are convinced of his sincerity. When a strong man is passionately convulsed from head to foot, and pours out lamentations, you feel that he is in downright earnest, and if that earnestness be manifested on your behalf you can commit yourself to him. Oh, weeping sinner, fear not to come to a weeping Saviour! If you will not come to Jesus it grieves Him; that you have not come long ago has wrung His heart; that you are still away from Him is His daily sorrow: come, then, to Him without delay. Let His tears banish your fears; yea, He gives you better encouragement than tears, for He has shed for sinners, not drops from His eyes alone, but from His heart. He died that sinners who believe in Him might live. His whole body was covered with bloody sweat when He agonised for you; how can you doubt His readiness to receive you? The five scars that still remain upon His blessed Person, up there at the Father's right hand, all invite you to approach Him. These dumb mouths most eloquently entreat you to draw near and trust in Him whom God hath set forth as the propitiation for sin. How shall He that wept and bled and died for sinners repulse a sinner who comes to Him at His bidding? Oh, come, come, come, I pray you, even now, to the weeping Sinner's Friend.

INSTRUCTS US BY HIS EXAMPLE

This, too, I think is *an admonishment to Christian workers*. Some of us long ago came to Jesus, and we now occupy ourselves with endeavouring to bring others to Him; in this blessed work our Lord instructs us by His example. Brothers and sisters, if we would have others come to Jesus we must be like Jesus in tenderness; we must be meek, lowly, gentle, and sympathetic, and we must be moved to deep emotion at the thought that any should perish. Never let us speak of the doom of the wicked harshly, flippantly, or without holy grief: the loss of heaven and the endurance of hell must always be themes for tears. That men should live without Christ is grief enough; but that they should die without Christ is an overwhelming horror, which should grind our hearts to powder before God and make us fall on our faces and cry, 'O God, have mercy upon them, and save them, for thy grace and for

thy love's sake'. The deepest tenderness, it may be, some of us have yet to learn. Perhaps we are passing through a school in which we shall be taught it, and if we do but learn it we need not care how severe the instructive discipline may require to be. We ought not to look upon this city of London without tears, nor even upon a single sinner without sorrow. We must preach tenderly, and teach tenderly, if we would win souls. We are not to weep continually, for even Jesus did not do that, yet are we always to feel a tender love towards men, so that we would be ready to die for them if we might but save them from the wrath to come, and bring them into the haven of the Saviour's rest.

Let me add that I think the lament of Jesus should *instruct all those who would now come to Him as to the manner of their approach*. While I appealed to you just now were there any who said, 'I would fain come to Jesus, but how shall I come'? The answer is—come with sorrow and with prayer, even as it is written, 'they shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them'. As Jesus meets you, so meet Him. He shows you in what fashion to return, in what array to draw near, to your Redeemer, for He comes to you clothed in no robes but those of mourning, adorned with no jewels but the pearls of His tears. Come to Him in the garments of humiliation, mourning for your sin. 'Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.' Penitential sorrow worketh life in men. Only come to Jesus and tell Him you have sinned, and are ashamed, and fain would cease to do evil, and learn to do well. Come in all your misery and degradation, in all your consciousness of hell-desert. Come in sorrow to the Man of sorrows who is even now on the road to meet you. He hath said, 'Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out', and He will not forfeit His word.

God bless these feeble words concerning the inner emotions of my Lord, and may the Holy Spirit again rest upon us while we further pursue the subject into another field.

VERBAL LAMENTATIONS

II. We are now to consider OUR LORD'S VERBAL LAMENTATIONS. These are recorded in the following words: 'Oh that thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes'.

First, notice, He laments over *the fault by which they perished*—'Oh that thou hadst known'. Ignorance, wilful ignorance, was their ruin. 'Oh that thou hadst known.' They

did not know what they might have known, what they ought to have known: they did not know their God. 'The ox knoweth his owner and the ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.' They knew not God, they knew not God's only Son, they knew not Him who came in mercy to them with nothing but love upon His lips. Oh, but this is the pity, that light is come into the world and men will not have it, but love darkness rather than light. Alas, I fear that some of my hearers live in the light, and will not see. There are none so deaf as those that will not hear, and none so blind as those that will not see; and yet there are such in all Christian congregations, who do not know and will not know. God saith, 'Oh that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments, then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea'. Our Lord lamented over the inhabitants of Jerusalem for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord; they would have none of His counsel, they despised His reproof. Wilful ignorance led to obstinate unbelief; they chose to die in the dark rather than accept the light of the Son of God.

THE BLISS LOST

The Lord laments *the bliss which they had lost*, the peace which could not be theirs. 'Oh that thou hadst known the things that belong unto thy peace'. The name of that city was as we know Jerusalem, which being interpreted, signifies a vision of peace. They that looked upon it saw before them a vision of peace. But, alas, Jerusalem had lost its 'salem', or peace, and become a vision only, because she did not know and would not know her God. Oh men and women that know not God, you have lost peace; even now you are like the troubled sea that cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. 'There is no peace, saith my God, unto the wicked.' Oh what joys you might have had! The delights of pardoned sin, the bliss of conscious safety, the joy of communion with God, the rapture of fellowship with Christ Jesus, the heavenly expectation of infinite glory, all might have been yours; but you have put them away from you. The Lord saith of you, as of Israel of old, 'O that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways! I would soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand upon their adversaries'. God would have revealed to you by His Spirit brighter things than eye hath seen, and sweeter joys than ear hath heard: for if ye had been willing and obedient ye should have eaten the fat of the land of His promise. You are losers, you

are awful losers by not being reconciled to God, and you will be worse losers yet, for that false peace which now stands you in the stead of true peace, and beguiles and fascinates you, will depart like the mirage of the desert, and leave you on the arid sands of despair, to seek for rest and find it not. Soon shall a terrible sound be in your ears of the approaching vengeance of God, and there shall be for you no place of refuge.

HARDENED MEN

When the Lord thought of what they had lost, He cried, 'Oh that thou hadst known!' I feel ashamed to repeat His words, because I cannot repeat them in the tone He used. Oh, to hear Jesus say these words! Methinks it might melt a heart of stone! But no. I am mistaken, even that would not do it; for those who did hear Him were not melted nor reclaimed, but went on their way to their doom as they had done before. How hardened are the men who can trample on a Redeemer's tears! What wonder that they find a hell where not a drop of water can ever cool their parched tongues, tormented in the flame! If men are resolved to be damned, it is evident that the tears of the best, the most perfect of men, cannot stop them. Woe is me! This is deeper cause for tears than all else besides, that men should be so desperately set on mischief that nothing but Omnipotence will stay them from eternal suicide!

PEACE LOST

But our Lord also lamented over *the persons who had lost peace*. Observe that He says, 'Oh that *thou* hadst known, *even thou*. Thou art Jerusalem, the favoured city. It is little that Egypt did not know, that Tyre and Sidon did not know, but that *thou* shouldst not know!' Ah, friends, if Jesus were here this morning, He might weep over some of you and say, 'Oh that thou hadst known, *even thou*'. You were a lovely child! Even in your earliest days you were fond of everything good and gracious; you were taken to the place of worship, and sat on your mother's knee, pleased to be there. Do you remember the minister's name that you used to lisp with delight, the texts you repeated, and the hymns you sang? You grew up to be a lad right full of promise, and all felt sure that you would be a Christian. What exhortations your father, who is now in heaven, gave you! And she that bare you and loved you till she passed away, how she prayed and pleaded for you! Some of you have been sitting here, or in some other place where Christ is preached, for a very long time, and you have often been very near to the kingdom, and yet you are not in it. You

have come right up to the edge of the border-land, but you have not crossed the line. You are not far from the kingdom of God, but you lack one thing—the one essential point of decision for Christ. ‘Oh that thou hadst known, even *thou!*’ You are always ready to help the cause of God with your purse, for you take an interest in every good work, you cannot bear blasphemy or infidelity; and yet you are not saved. There are a thousand things that are hopeful about you, but there is one thing which damps our hope, for you always procrastinate, and know not how to use your present opportunity. Jesus bids you use ‘this thy day’, but you linger and delay. Today is God’s accepted time; postpone no longer the hour of decision. Alas, that thou shouldst perish! Shall the child of such a mother be lost? Shall the son of such a father be driven down to hell? I cannot bear it. God have mercy on you, sons and daughters of Christian parents! You that have been enriched with Christian privileges, why will ye die? Young man, so promising but yet so undecided, it makes the Saviour Himself weep that thou, even thou, shouldst still refuse to know the things that make for thy peace.

A DAY OF MIRACLES, MERCY AND GRACE

Our Lord wept because of *the opportunity which they had neglected*. He said, ‘At least in this thy day’. It was such a favoured day: they aforetime had been warned by holy men, but now they had the Son of God Himself to preach to them. It was a day of miracles of mercy, a day of the unveiling of gospel grace; and yet they would not have Christ though He had come so near to them, and it was a day of merciful visitation such as other nations had not known. Perhaps today also may be a day of visitation to some of you. Shall we have to lament, ‘Oh that thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day’—in this Sabbath-day, this day of power, this day of the Spirit. Oh now you weep, and I perceive you feel some tender touches of the Spirit’s power; do not resist Him and cause this day also to pass away unimproved. ‘The harvest is passed, the summer is ended, and you are not saved’; and has the autumn closed, and shall the winter come and go, and shall these days in which the Spirit visits men all depart till God shall declare that it does not become the dignity of His Spirit always to strive with flesh, and therefore He shall cease His operations and leave men to their own devices. Oh, souls, I pray you think of Christ weeping because revival days and Sabbath days are being wasted by you. Do not in these best of days commit the worst of sins by still refusing to receive the gospel of God.

OVERCOME BY BLINDNESS

The Lord Jesus mourned again because *He saw the blindness which had stolen over them*. They had shut their eyes so fast that now they could not see: their ears which they had stopped had become dull and heavy: their hearts which they had hardened had waxen gross; so that they could not see with their eyes, nor hear with their ears, nor feel in their hearts, nor be converted that He should heal them. Why, the truth was as plain as the sun in the heavens, and yet they could not see it; and so is the gospel at this hour to many of you, and yet you perceive it not. There is nothing plainer than the plan of salvation by looking unto Jesus, and yet many men have gone on so long resisting the sweetness and light of the Spirit of God that they cannot now see the Lord Jesus who is as the sun in the heavens. The kindest friends have put the gospel before them in a way that has enlightened others, but it has not affected them; they still say, 'I cannot see it!' O ye blind ones, take heed lest this has come upon you, 'Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish'. Christ groans because the things which belonged to the peace of Jerusalem were hid from their eyes as a punishment for refusing to see.

RUIN FORESEEN

Lastly, we know that the great flood-gates of Christ's grief were pulled up because of *the ruin which He foresaw*. It is worth any man's while to read the story of the destruction of Jerusalem as it is told by Josephus; it is the most harrowing of all records written by human pen; it remains the tragedy of tragedies; there never was and there never will be anything comparable to it: the people died of famine and of pestilence, and fell by thousands beneath the swords of their own countrymen. Women devoured the flesh of their own children, and men raged against each other with the fury of beasts. All ills seemed to meet in that doomed city, it was filled within with horrors and surrounded without by terrors. Portents amazed the sky both day and night. There was no escape, neither would the frenzied people accept of mercy. The city itself was the banqueting hall of death. Josephus says: 'All hope of escaping was now cut off from the Jews, together with their liberty of going out of the city. Then did the famine widen its progress, and devour the people by whole houses and families; the upper rooms were full of women and infants that were dying by famine, and the lanes of the city were full of the dead bodies of the aged; the children, also, and the young men wandered about the market places like shadows, all swelled

with the famine, and fell down dead wheresoever their misery seized them. For a time the dead were buried; but afterwards, when they could not do that, they had them cast down from the wall into the valleys beneath. When Titus, on going his rounds along these valleys, saw them full of dead bodies, and the thick putrefaction running about them, he gave a groan, and spreading out his hands to heaven, called God to witness this was not his doing.'

MOST HORRIBLE

There is nothing in history to exceed this horror. But even this is nothing compared with the destruction of a soul. A man might look with complacency upon a dying body if he knew that within it was a soul that would live eternally in bliss and cause the body to rise again to equal joy; but for a soul to die is a catastrophe so terrible that the heavens might be clothed with sackcloth for its funeral. There is a death which never ends, the separation of the soul from God, which is the completest of all deaths. The separation of the soul from the body is but, as it were, a prelude and type of the far more dreadful death, the separation of the soul from God. Banished from hope, existing but not living, and that for ever; what a condition must this be! I shall draw no picture: words fail; but, oh, my hearers, shall it be that any one among *you* shall ever know the meaning of the Saviour's words: 'These shall go away into everlasting punishment'? Will it ever be your lot to hear Him say—you who hear me this day, I mean—'Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire in hell, prepared for the devil and his angels'? If we could mark any here to whom this doom will happen, we might make a ring around them and bear them home, rending our garments and tearing our hair; for it would be a far greater grief than if we knew that they would die by the sword or by famine in a foreign land. All ills are trifles compared with the second death.

YE WOULD NOT BE GATHERED

Just a moment, while in conclusion I set forth our Saviour's grief, as it expressed itself in other words; for those other may help us to fresh light. You remember the passage in the twenty-third of Matthew, which I read in your hearing, where the Lord said, 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!' Do you see His grace and grief? These people killed the

prophets, and yet the Lord of prophets would have gathered them. His love had gone so far that even prophet-killers He would have gathered. Is not this wonderful that there should be grace enough in Christ to gather adulterers, thieves, liars, and to forgive and change them, and yet they will not be gathered? That He should be willing even to gather such base ones into a place of salvation, and yet should be refused? The pith of it lies in this—'How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not'. See, here, the case stands thus—I would, but ye would not. This is a grief to love. If it had been a fact that *Christ* would not, then I could not understand His tears; but when He says, 'I would, but ye would not', then I see the deep reason of His anguish. The failure of will is in you that perish, not in Christ who cries, 'I would, but ye would not'. Ay, and He adds, 'How often would I'. Not once was He in a merciful mood, and pitiful to sinners for that time alone, but He cries, 'How often would I have gathered'. Every prophet that had come to them had indicated an opportunity for their being gathered, and every time that Jesus preached there was a door set open for their salvation, but they would not be gathered, and so He foretells their fate in these words, 'Your house shall be left unto you desolate'. Here is a painful sentence. Set the two words in contrast—'Gathered', that is what you might have been; 'desolate', that is what you shall be; and Jesus weeps because of it. 'Gathered'—it is such a beautiful picture; you see the little chicks fleeing from danger, when they hear the cluck of the mother hen; they gather together, and they come under her wings. Did you ever hear that little, pretty cry they make when they are all together, with their heads buried in the feathers? How warm and comfortable they are! This is where you might have been, gathered under the warm breast of the eternal God, feeling His love with the rest of the people, joying and rejoicing in a communion of complete security; but inasmuch as you would not be gathered, see what you will be, 'desolate', without a friend, without a helper. Then you will call to the saints, but they shall not be able to help you. Say unto them, 'Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out': but they must refuse you. Unto which of the holy ones will you turn? What angel will have pity upon you? Each cherub waves his fiery sword to keep you from the gate of paradise. There is no help for you in God when once you die without Him; no help for you anywhere. Desolate! Desolate! Desolate! Because you would not be

gathered! Well doth the tender Saviour weep over men since they will perversely choose such a doom.

A BRIGHTER LIGHT

I do not feel as if you could close in gloom; I must flash before you a brighter light, though it be but for the last minute. The day hastens on when Christ will come a second time, and then He shall behold a new Jerusalem, a spiritual Jerusalem, builded by divine hands. The foundations thereof are of jewels and the gates thereof are of pearl. How He will rejoice over it! He shall rest in His love, He shall rejoice over it with singing. He will shed no tears then, but He will see in the Jerusalem from above the travail of His soul, and He shall be satisfied. When Zion shall be built up the Lord shall appear in His glory, and the marriage of the Lamb will have come. Meanwhile, if any one of you who are not yet saved will come to Jesus, He will rejoice over you, for He takes pleasure in the stones of Zion, and favoureth the dust thereof, and if you are as little as Zion's dust and as mean as her rubbish, He will rejoice over you. It is written that 'There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth'. Now, angels stand in the presence of the Lord Jesus, and there is joy in His heart over a single penitent. If only one sinner shall repent because of this sermon, my Lord will rejoice over him. I, His servant, am, in my measure, intensely glad when a soul repents, but He shall have the chief joy, for His is the chief love. Who will now come to Jesus? Would God it might be the beloved son of a godly mother! Would God it might be you, my long-hesitating hearer, for years a hearer but not a doer of the word. May the Holy Spirit decide you at this very moment.

The Holy Spirit is no Sceptic and the things He has written in our hearts are not doubts or opinions but assertions—surer and more certain than sense or life itself.—MARTIN LUTHER.

A concealed conversion is one that inevitably consents to loss of joy and power.—D. M. MCINTYRE.

We are saved by faith alone; but the faith that saves is not alone.—PHILIP MELANCHTHON.

Jesus is Alpha, and there is no letter before Alpha; Jesus is the Way, and there is no way to the Way; and if there be a door, Christ Himself is the Door and the Door is open.—ADOLPH SAPHIR.

Doctrinal Definitions

PAUL TUCKER

GOD'S WILL FOR THE BELIEVER

One way in which we need to become like the Lord Jesus Christ is in our obedience to the will of God the Father. See John 4 : 34; 5 : 30. Our Lord is here speaking as the Mediator in subordination to God the Father. Our Lord does not tell us that He did not possess a will, but His own will was always in subjection to and in harmony with the will of God. So in the Garden He could say, 'Nevertheless, not as I will but as Thou wilt', and the writer to the Hebrews quotes from Psalm 40 : 7, 8, and applies the reference to the Lord Jesus Christ. So our Lord has taught us to pray 'Thy will be done on earth as it is done in Heaven'. And in the Sermon on the Mount He speaks quite categorically about the importance of doing the Father's will. See Matthew 5 : 33; 7 : 21. And what our Lord taught concerning God's will for the believer is taught also by the apostles. See Romans 12 : 2; Ephesians 5 : 17; Colossians 1 : 9; 4 : 12.

I. A DEFINITION OF GOD'S WILL.

It is a phrase that is very often upon the lips of Christians. Sometimes they say the Lord led me to do that, the Lord has told me to do that, but what do we really mean by God's will? In the Scriptures there are various elements which go to make up the will of God.

1. *God's will may mean the whole moral nature of God.* That is the exercise of all His attributes, His love, His kindness, His holiness, His justice. Turn to Leviticus 10 : 3. See Psalm 46 : 10. How often we quote this in a passive way and say 'Be still'. But God is here addressing the raging tumultuous nations (verse 9). God is bent on magnifying Himself and in manifesting the qualities of His Being, all His great attributes.

2. *The will of God may mean the definite promise that God might make to a person.* Take the case of Abraham. God said, 'I will bless thee and thou shalt be a blessing'. If you turn to Genesis 22 : 17 you have yet another illustration of it. So in that case the will of God is a promise to do something.

3. *God's will can mean the faculty of self-determination.* That is, God's determination to carry out a definite plan, or definite course of action (see Exodus 3 : 19-21).

4. *The will of God can mean His good pleasure.* It can mean that which pleases God and brings pleasure and joy to God. See Ephesians 1 : 5, 9.

5. *The will of God very often means the rule of life God has laid down for His rational creatures.* That is, His programme and plan and purpose for mankind. He has a plan for Israel, a plan for the Church, a plan for the nations. 'He sits upon the circle of the earth, He holds the whole world in His hands. He takes up the isles as a very little thing.' And then He has a purpose and plan for the individual believer. But if you bring those five things together you see that to talk about God's will is something deeper than may appear on the surface.

II. THERE ARE DISTINCTIONS TO BE NOTICED WITHIN THE WILL OF GOD.

God has no problem with His own will. It is perfectly clear and simple to God. He does not need to analyse His own will nor to divide it up into these constituent elements. They are no problem to God, but then they can be a problem to us because we are limited in our understanding. So we must consider different aspects and different sides of truth as God shows them to us in His Word. Now there is mystery for us in the will of God. See Romans 11 : 33-34. Paul himself did not know how all the details of the final bringing in of Israel were to be fulfilled. The Bible does draw certain distinctions within the will of God for our help and for our edification.

1. *The Bible seems to make a difference between the hidden will of God and His revealed will.* See Deuteronomy 29 : 29. Things that are secret belong exclusively to God; things that are revealed belong to us for our enjoyment and our benefit. See Daniel 4 : 17. Daniel says, something is going to happen so that through what happens the will of God is going to become known. See verse 25 (latter part) and again in verse 35. In Ephesians 1 the Apostle Paul deals with the revealed will of God, see verse 9. Here the will of God is something that is known. The hidden things of God belong to His eternal decrees. Those purposes of God which are absolutely fixed, those hidden mysteries concerning election and the ultimate destiny of mankind, are known only to God. But the things that are revealed are the things that belong to the law in the Old Testament and the Gospel in the New Testament. Notice in Deuteronomy 29 : 29 '... that we may do all the words of this law'.

2. *We must distinguish between the will of purpose and the will of command.* That is, God in the exercise of His will

has purposed certain things. He has determined and nothing is going to stop Him, or prevent Him. Turn to Isaiah 14 : 24-27; 43 : 13 (the word 'let' means 'hinder'); Daniel 4 : 35. This is so in relation to the salvation of the believer. Or take the case of the Lord Jesus Christ, His death upon the cross, His resurrection. That was purposed by God before the foundation of the world. No-one could prevent or hinder that, and the early Church had a profound recognition that that was God's purpose. See Acts 2 : 23; 4 : 26-28. These men were responsible for their own actions, but their actions were over-ruled by the sovereign hand of God, so that that which God determined to be done from eternity was done. When you think of *the will of purpose*, then you say concerning that aspect of God's will, God cannot be defeated. He cannot be thwarted. But note *the will of command*. Now God has made His will known not only through purpose but through command. It is God's command that we should be sanctified and filled with the Spirit. 1 Thessalonians 4 : 3. It is God's will that we should not love the world. 1 John 2 : 15. It is God's will that we should preach the Gospel to every creature. Mark 16 : 15. You cannot thwart or defeat God's will of purpose, but you can disobey and ignore and violate and to a certain extent thwart God's will of command. Jonah and Balaam disobeyed God's command and tried to get God to change His mind.

3. *There is a difference between the will of performance and God's wish or desire.* Now His will of performance He always carries through. See James 1 : 18. We were born again through the instrumentality of the Word of Truth and it was God's sovereign will that we should be born again, and so, through that will of performance, we were regenerated. See also John 1 : 11-13. John traces back the originating cause of our salvation to God. There is a difference between the will of performance and wish or desire, e.g. in 2 Peter 3 : 9. Now there it is not the will of performance accomplishing something, it is the will of desire. See also Ezekiel 33 : 11.

4. *We must distinguish between the direct will of God, the permissive will of God, and the ultimate will of God.* God gave the will of command to Adam. God's direct will for Adam was that he should live in obedience and a state of sinlessness and innocence, but God's permissive will allowed Adam to be tempted by the devil, allowed Adam to sin. God did not direct that Adam should sin. If God had directed that Adam should sin, then God would be the Author of sin. He allowed Adam to fail. And then the ultimate will of God means that although things may appear to be out of hand as we look at them today,

we must ever keep our eye on the goal of the ultimate will of God, that finally God is so going to take hold of the situation, however awful and sinful it is, so as ultimately to bring about the final fulfilment of His eternal will. God's direct will for Joseph was that he should live in harmony with his brothers. God's permissive will came into operation and he permitted Joseph for some wise reason to be subject to scorn and hatred and jealousy, so that he was almost murdered. But then God's ultimate will was that through allowing those things to happen to Joseph, he became Egypt's deliverer and eventually was reunited to his brethren. See Genesis 45 : 5-8; 50 : 20.

Now take the whole doctrine of salvation. Man is created upright and innocent and perfect. That is the direct will of God for him. But then he makes this appalling blunder and mistake and you find him the wreck he is in sin. Yet God, through His Son and redeeming purposes, can take hold of that sinner and regenerate and cleanse him and prepare him for glory, so that at the last, that sinner will be more noble than if he had never sinned at all. Adam had innocence, but the redeemed sinner has the imputed righteousness of God in Christ, which is something even greater.

FROM THE PREFACE TO THE A.V.

'If . . . we shall be maligned by self-conceited Brethren, who run their own ways, and give liking unto nothing, but what is framed by themselves, and hammered on their own anvil; we may rest secure, supported within by the truth and innocency of a good conscience, having walked the ways of simplicity and integrity, as before the Lord, and sustained without by the powerful protection of your Majesty's grace and favour which will ever give countenance to honest and Christian endeavours against bitter censures and uncharitable imputations.'

It is faith indeed to believe without a pledge and to hold the heart constant at this work; and when we doubt, to run to the Law and to the Testimony and stay there. Madam, hold you here: here is your Father's testament—read it; in it He hath left to you remission of sins and life everlasting. . . . Believe, then, believe and be saved.—SAMUEL RUTHERFORD. (To Lady Kenmure).