

JANUARY–FEBRUARY 2015

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The Gospel Magazine

The angel's admonition to Lot • The life of the Rev Thomas Adam • Diotrephes Syndrome

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1766–2015

Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.
Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.
Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

These texts, which have been associated for so many years with *The Gospel Magazine*, give some indication of what this bi-monthly stands for. We seek to present the Lord Jesus as the only Saviour for a lost world: to edify the people of God; and to promote unity among believers, ‘the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace’.

The Gospel Magazine is believed to be the oldest religious periodical still being published. One distinguished former editor was the Rev. Augustus Toplady, whose famous hymn, ‘Rock of Ages cleft for me, Let me hide myself in Thee’, was first published in these pages.

The Trust Deed of *The Gospel Magazine* is defined in terms of the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion of the Church of England, but the magazine itself is non-denominational. We aim to provide variety in unity, publishing articles from a wide diversity of past and present writers committed to ‘the faith once delivered to the saints’.

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EDITORIAL

THE human spirit appears to be predisposed to run from trouble, to seek fresh beginnings, and to try to start all over again. Whether we take the example of Moses, who fled Egypt rather than face the consequences of killing the taskmaster, or Jonah, who ran away to sea rather than undertake the journey to Nineveh, or Onesimus, who ran from Philemon, we confess that there is in human nature a love of escaping problems in the hope of starting over.

We see this most prominently in the way in which new year’s resolutions are held up as a good thing. To be sure, most resolutions these days appear to arise from a tacit recognition that lifestyles are unhealthy. People resolve to quit drinking alcohol for a month, or to make a serious attempt to stop smoking, or to change their diet to something apparently more healthy. Such resolutions, no matter how faithfully carried out, will do very little for the individual concerned. Tinkering with the symptoms of wrong living is no substitute for addressing the root cause.

What is the root cause? In a word, sin. Many households around our land will be in possession of new items as a consequence of

the Christmas season. Many of these items will come with instructions, and with warranties. These warranties will declare that the manufacturer’s guarantee is rendered null and void through misuse of the item. Sin is, in one sense, the misuse of the creating work of our heavenly Father. Of course, on a more serious level, it is wicked rebellion against the goodness, love, holiness and majesty of God. Either way, only trouble can arise from sin. Sin cannot be changed by treating with some of its symptoms, even the more serious of them.

Instead, we need that work of grace in the heart, mind and will of sinners, that application of the saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ. We need to be humbled before the Lord, repenting of our sins, and confessing our unworthiness to receive any good thing from above, yet casting ourselves on Christ’s mercy.

And if we are, by grace, the children of God through faith, let us resolve, the Lord being our helper, to use the fresh beginning of a new year to forsake unprofitable ways, and instead to obey the Lord in sincerity and truth.

May you all enjoy a blessed new year. May it be an occasion of joy in the love of Christ. ¶

A NEW YEAR'S PROMISE

A SERMON BY THE EDITOR

'And the Lord, he it is that doth go before thee; he will be with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed.' Deuteronomy 31:8

WHEN Israel stood before Moses to hear that great sermon we know as Deuteronomy, they did so as a people who had reached a momentous point in their history. The forty years of wilderness wandering were at an end. The period of judgment for sin was almost over. The Promised Land stood before them, and their Angel, Moses, had reminded them of all that the Lord had commanded, threatened, promised, and done for them during that period. The days of manna from heaven, of water flowing from rocks, and of shoes that did not wear out nor clothing that did not perish were drawing to their close. They were standing before Moses, and were being prepared for the entry into Canaan.

The nation that would enter Canaan would be different from the one which had left Egypt forty years previously. Almost none of the original generation remained, at least of those who had been adults at the time of the exodus, for all had perished in the wilderness through sin. Their leader, Moses, was being taken away from them, and they were being left in the care of his right-hand man, Joshua. Much would be new, and the people would doubtless have looked upon the situation with nervousness and uncertainty. How could they be sure that the future would unfold as Moses had indicated? The Lord spoke, and gave them this glorious promise.

This glorious promise is made up of parts. First, we know who it is who makes the promise ('the Lord, he it is that doth go'). Secondly, we know what the Lord will do ('he ... doth go before thee; he will be with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee'). Thirdly, we have the response encouraged from the

Israelites ('fear not, neither be dismayed'). So we consider:

First, the one who promises

God made this promise as one who was known to Israel. The people were not being asked to put their trust in an unknown God. Moses had shown them, as had the Lord himself, the power of his name. By signs and wonders, by manna from heaven, water from rocks, fiery serpents, victories over enemies, and by the crossing of the Red Sea, the Lord had left his people in no doubt as to his power, nor about his good intentions toward them. The manna had come to feed them when they had no other food. The water was provided when the alternative was death by thirst. The Red Sea had been parted when the only other choice was surrender to the Egyptian army and return to slavery, or perish in an unwinnable battle. Time and again the Lord God proved himself to be the God of Israel.

So when he said, 'The Lord, he it is that doth go before thee', he was reminding the people that they knew him. He is, after all, the true and living God. He is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He had called Abraham from his home in Haran, had been with him in his wanderings in Canaan, had been with his son Isaac, and went with his son Jacob down to Egypt in the days of the famine. He had even gone with Jacob's son, Joseph, and had raised him up to such a degree of power and influence in the land that he was second only to Pharaoh himself. So the nation had no reason to doubt the extent of God's power, as well as the nature of his intentions toward them.

Furthermore, when he said, 'The Lord, he it is that doth go', he was speaking according to the terms of the covenant he had made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. God had said to Abraham, 'Get thee out ... unto a land I will shew thee ... and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed' (Genesis 12:1-3), which call and promise depends on God being continually present with Abraham. Had the Lord not gone with him, how could he have shown him the land, or been able to bless and curse according to the promise? And when the Lord repeats this promise to Abraham's descendants, as they prepare to enter the promised land, he does so as the God whose word is being fulfilled.

Are you in the same position as Israel? That is, do you know the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob? Has he been your God in the year now ended? If so, you can lay hold on such a promise with confidence, knowing who it is who makes the promise. You have tasted and seen that the Lord is gracious. You have walked with him, in the way of his gracious commandments. The valley of the shadow of death has been a place, not of fear and despair, but of quiet confidence and trust in Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd of the sheep. You have taken courage from the presence of his rod and his staff, by which he has led, defended, and corrected you. Be further encouraged as you hear how the Lord will keep this gracious promise.

Or perhaps you stand at the brink of a new year, knowing only one thing—that you do not know God as you ought. Yes, you know about him; you have attended services week after week, month after month, year after year. You make all the right noises. You can hold your own in a discussion about spiritual matters. You have a reasonable grasp of the Bible and its contents. Yet all the while your conscience bears testimony that you do not have the ground of hope in you. You are afraid of the Lord Jesus Christ. To you, he is not the Good Shepherd but the Judge of the quick and the

dead. You look forward to standing before the judgment throne—as you know you must—with fear and trepidation. You cast about in your mind for the form of words with which to answer in the great and terrible day of the Lord. What can you plead? You look to your works, to your acts of charity, your church attendance, your baptism, your giving, but all in vain. You know that none of these things will count with God in that day. You need Christ. You need to be shielded by his precious blood, but as yet you lack saving faith, and you know it. Pause, and listen to the word of God, as we discover how the Lord will keep this promise.

Secondly, what the Lord will do

We can divide this into a number of points, as follows:

i. **'He ... doth go before thee.'** This is a gracious *promise of preparation*. We sometimes speak about taking a leap of faith, or of going into the unknown. Israel was taking a leap of faith, and going into the unknown. No Israelite had visited Canaan for four hundred and thirty years, save the brief return, not many years after the move to Egypt, when they buried old Jacob. They were returning to a place about which they knew nothing. Witness the report of the spies, who, in Numbers 13:26ff, showed the enormous bunch of grapes, the pomegranates and figs, and who agreed that the land flowed with milk and honey. Then, v. 28, they said, 'Nevertheless the people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled and very great: and moreover we saw the children of Anak there.' The Anakim, Deuteronomy 2:10f, were a race of giants. The spies were saying that the Lord had told the truth regarding the fruitfulness of the land, but that he had refrained from telling them the whole story, that the land was populated with giants. The implication is clear; Israel could not defeat such an enemy. Yet here the Lord says, 'he doth go before thee.' That means Israel would not have to face the foe alone. Indeed, their recent history ought to teach them that they would not have to face the foe at all. Not a

sword, bow or spear had been raised against the Egyptian army, yet all the men and horses had perished. When they came, as they later did, to Jericho, the city would fall without a blow being struck. So when the Lord said, 'he ... doth go before thee', he was giving Israel a gracious promise that he would prepare the way before them. This was how the Lord had prepared for Abraham's servant in the matter of finding a wife for Isaac. Israel had no reason to doubt that the Lord would do as he said, since he had shown himself to act in this manner so often.

For those of us who have experienced the manner in which our God prepares the way before us, such a promise is merely a confirmation of what we know already to be true. We can face the future, the year ahead with all its uncertainties, confident that it is only uncertain to us, but not to our Father in heaven.

For those who do not know the Lord in this way, be encouraged. Do not consider that taking the leap of faith is too uncertain. The Lord goes before his people. He prepares the way in which they are to walk. So it becomes the right and good way. It leads to everlasting blessings, even if at times it takes us through trials. If that gives you pause to doubt, consider the next part of the promise.

ii. 'He will be with thee.' This is a gracious *promise of his presence*. When our Lord Jesus Christ, in the same night that he was betrayed, spoke with his disciples in that upper room, he told them that he must go away from them. He warned that they would be sad, and the world would rejoice. But then he said, 'Your sorrow shall be turned into joy' (John 16:20). He went on to define that joy a couple of verses later, adding, 'I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you' (v. 22). To what was he referring? It is true that the disciples saw the Lord several times after his resurrection, but that cannot be what he meant, since he was parted from them again. Rather, our Lord referred to the coming of the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, the

Comforter, which proceedeth from the Father. To have the Holy Spirit in us is to know the presence of the risen Lord Jesus Christ. Why? 'It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment' (John 16:7f). Therefore the presence of the Holy Spirit is not some mere influence, or feeling, within us. It is the very presence of God, who comes in power and might to sanctify his own.

This is a great comfort to all who know the love of God shed abroad in their hearts through the work of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Such carry within them the testimony to the faithfulness of God to his word. He had promised never to leave us nor forsake us, and by his Spirit he has been faithful to that word. So such can face the future in the certain knowledge that they do not face it alone. Yes, the Lord has gone before to prepare the way, but he is also present with us as we continue our pilgrimage into that future.

This ought to be an encouragement to those who lack saving faith. Trusting in the Lord is not an irrational act, nor even a difficult thing to justify to ourselves. The Lord has promised to be with us. We will therefore not be alone. Faith is not a lonely matter, but all who have faith have fellowship with one another through our common bond of fellowship in the Lord Jesus Christ.

But suppose, says one, that I take that leap of faith? For how long will the Lord be with me? Consider the third part of this promise.

iii. 'He will not fail thee.' This is a gracious *promise of trustworthiness*. There are few harder lessons to learn in life than this, that we cannot always believe what we are told. When a person makes a promise to do one thing or another, and we discover that the promise has been broken, we learn to take such promises with a pinch of salt. Like a father who, when in his cups, promises his children all kinds of good

things but who forgets them as soon as he has sobered up, loses the trust of his children, so would the Lord lose our trust if we discovered that we could not trust him. But that is not the case. There is never a time when we cannot trust the Lord. His word always accomplishes the thing which pleases him, prospering in the thing whereunto it is sent. None can oppose his will, nor cause him to fail in his endeavour. When the Lord declares his intention to do a thing, that thing will be done. This counts for good things as well as bad. When the Lord purposed to destroy all living, for the sake of man's sin, all living was destroyed. When the Lord purposed to save Jerusalem from the army of Sennacherib, Jerusalem was saved. When the Lord promised the salvation of sinners through the child of the woman, sinners were saved by the incarnation of that child.

The truth is that we are the ones who fail. It is we who do not keep our word to our heavenly Father. It is we who deny him, and never him who denies us. It is we who fall into sin, not him who leads us into temptation. If we know ourselves we know how easily we fail. Our love is wavering at best. Our faith is weak. Our hold on the Lord Jesus Christ has no strength by itself. We depend entirely on his grace. Does this mean that our failings are really failures of grace? By no means! It is not grace which fails us, but we who fail the Lord. We do not use the means of grace. We do not give place to Christ in all things. We allow our love for him to be compromised by an inordinate love for aspects of this present, passing world. How good it is, then, to know that he will not fail us. Though we fall a thousand times a day, his gracious love will restore us a thousand times plus one. If we are to forgive our brother who sins against us seventy times seven, how many times will our Lord and Saviour forgive us?

And if he will forgive all our sins, will he not also freely give us all things? Whatever is right for us will be ours. Whatever his perfect will declares should help us will be given for our aid. So we can take comfort, whoever

we are, from this, that it is not our holding on to him, but his holding on to us, which is the ground of our security. 'He is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand' (Psalm 95:7). The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep, while the hireling flees. Our God has sent us no hireling; he sent us his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life. He cannot fail us!

But how far may we provoke him by our rebellion? Consider the last part of this promise.

iv. 'Neither forsake thee.' This is a gracious *promise of constancy*. People can be very enthusiastic about something—a hobby or other activity, perhaps—but then lose interest in it when something else comes along. Israel was hardly the greatest nation on earth. Its people were not the bravest, most noble, wisest or richest in the world. Its kingdom was not the largest, its king not the most impressive there has ever been (although King Solomon was certainly the wisest man who ever sat upon a throne). Would the Lord lose interest in his people? Would they be superseded by another nation? The answer, from the very mouth of God himself, is, No! He would not forsake his people. They might forsake him; indeed, on many occasions they certainly did forsake him. He, in love, sent prophets to call them back. If they still refused to listen he sent plagues or other troubles, including invading armies, to bring them back to their senses, and cause them to cry to him for mercy.

This is why the Lord Jesus Christ, before ascending to heaven, made the same promise to the disciples. 'Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world' (Matthew 28:20). In Hebrews 13:5 Paul calls upon his readers to be content with what they have, and gives as a reason for this the promise of the Lord, 'I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me'. So much so that the Psalmist wrote, 'If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, now may

Israel say; if it had not been the Lord who was on our side, when men rose up against us: then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us' (Psalm 124:1–3).

The promise not to forsake Israel is one of the most wonderful promises. As we read their later history, especially in light of their earlier history, we can only wonder at the patience and grace of the Lord, in sparing such a rebellious people time and again. The patience of a man would have been exhausted long before. Only the love of God, according to his will and covenant, spared Israel. The same love spares us, and for the same reasons. The Lord has purposed to save sinners, and if we are numbered among the elect, then blessed and happy are we.

And if one asks, how may I know that I am among the elect? I reply, trust in the Lord. Cry out to him to forgive your sins, and to give you the gift of faith. Realise that only in Christ Jesus is there hope in this world, and security in the world to come. And when the Lord graciously answers your prayer, and gives you faith, you will receive the Holy Spirit, who will testify to your spirit that you are indeed a son of God. Then will you be enabled to cry, Abba, Father, and to know the depth and length and height and breadth of divine love. The Lord sets no obstacle in your path. The greatest obstacle is the one we erect—pride. Only when we humble ourselves before the Lord will we receive the glorious promises set out in Scripture. Israel was being called upon to trust in the Lord as she took a step of faith. If she would trust in the Lord, and in his word, she would find that she went in his presence, to enjoy the blessings of his grace. If we would also trust in him, we would enjoy the same blessings, and more beside for the sake of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Let us lay hold upon Christ, and trust that he will heal us, as that poor woman in Matthew 9:20ff.

We consider, finally, the required response

'Fear not, neither be dismayed.' What causes fear? The lack of perfect love, for perfect love casteth out fear, I John 4:18. Israel was being asked to love the Lord her God with all her heart, soul, mind and strength. She was being asked to give up trust in all earthly powers, and in all human wisdom, and instead to trust in the Lord God. But she was being asked to do so as a nation which had experienced the love of God time after time. He had shown them his goodwill toward them. He had been merciful, and as tender as a mother to her nursing child. He had given them food and drink, safety and protection, and his word. They were cared for spiritually, emotionally, and bodily. He had omitted nothing that was for their good, nor added anything that was to their hurt.

If we would be delivered from fear and dismay, we need to have such love for the Lord Jesus Christ as will overcome all doubts, and all siren voices that would lead us astray. We need to have such love for him as overcomes all the lesser loves the world sets before us, in a bid to divert us from our one true love. If we are to be kept pure in our love, we must understand the nature of Christ's love for us, and what it cost him to make that love known. It is only when we begin to understand the benefits which come to us through this love that we will begin to value it as we ought. Israel soon forgot her first love. Let us not forget ours.

And if one say, but I do not love the Lord, although I know I should, I reply that we are given in Scripture ample testimony of the nature, extent and purity of his love. We are given every encouragement to love the Lord Jesus Christ. This promise, which so graciously deals with our doubts and fears, is one we should take to heart, and build upon according to the grace given unto us. ¶

Such as know God's glorious holiness, and their own sorry righteousness, will despair of themselves, and never venture with their briars and thorns upon a consuming fire. *Benjamin Jenks*

FOR YOUNGER READERS

C MACKENZIE

WORDS OF TRUTH

THERE are hundreds of books in our home and probably in yours too. We also get a newspaper delivered. We buy magazines occasionally. Information comes to us on computer, tablet or smartphone. We take it all for granted.

A recent visit to a National Trust property in the south of Scotland made us think about the amazing privilege of having the printed page so readily available. The visit was to Robert Smail's printing works. This was a family business set up in 1866 to print stationery and newspapers. The typesetting room was fascinating with cases of lead letters in place; the upper case with the capital letters and the lower case for the smaller ones. Setting up the type for a simple four page newspaper used to take six men three days to complete. A line from a poster printed in the workshop caught my eye, 'From this place words fly abroad not to perish as waves of sound but fixed in type. Not corrupted by the hurrying hand but verified in proof.' This made me think about the amazing gift of the printed Bible, the Word of God. The first major book to be produced in this way was the Latin Bible printed by Johannes Gutenberg in Mainz, Germany in the 1450s. Some copies of this important book are still to be found in museums around the world.

This invention was a great advantage to the spread of the reformed faith. The Word of God could be produced in bulk rather than laboriously written out by hand.

What a blessing for us to have a copy of the Bible printed and easily read and relatively inexpensive. There are still some people who do not have this privilege. We should pray for them and support those working to translate

and produce the Bible for them.

God himself has communicated with man by the written word. He gave Moses two tables of stone with the ten commandments 'written with the finger of God' (Exodus 31:18). God instructed Moses to write down the words of the covenant that he had made with his people (Exodus 34:27).

God inspired men to write his Word. People like Isaiah, Jeremiah, the other prophets, the Gospel writers and the apostles. God's Word was written down for us by hand and then by printing and now by other modern techniques.

It is also good to have God's Word in our memory. If we have learned some of God's Word, the Holy Spirit can bring these words to our remembrance at a time of trial and difficulty or temptation (John 14:26). The Psalmist can say, 'Thy word have I hid in mine heart that I might not sin against thee' (Psalm 119:11).

When Paul wrote a letter to the church in Corinth, he described the Christians there as a letter from Christ, 'not written with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart' (2 Corinthians 3:3).

If we just have the Bible on our bookshelf, it will not make any difference to our lives, but the Word in our heart and mind will comfort, guide, instruct and correct us, and the Word lived out will be a witness to the world around us. Christ who was the Word made flesh (John 1:14) came to seek and to save the lost. Those who believe in him will not perish but have everlasting life.

WORD SEARCH

Find missing words from the following verses. The initials of the answers spell out the topic of this story.

1. The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpas, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the _____ (2 Timothy 4:13).
2. My tongue is the pen of a _____ writer (Psalm 45:1).
3. The sin of Judah is written with a pen of _____, and with the point of a diamond (Jeremiah 17:1).
4. Oh, that my words were _____ written. Oh, that they were printed in a book! (Job 19:23).
5. Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the _____ of thine heart (Proverbs 3:3).
6. I had many things to write, but I will not with _____ and pen write unto thee (3 John 13).
7. Write thou every man's _____ upon his rod (Numbers 17:2).
8. The Lord said unto me, Take thee a _____ roll and write in it with a man's pen (Isaiah 8:1)

The story is told of a hunter, who lived in the back woods of North America many years ago. He would go out hunting, and would become lost. Friends would have to go and look for him, and so, one day, one of them bought the man a present. It was a compass. The hunter was shown how to use it, and was told to carry it every time he went off into the woods. Off he went, and when he did not return his friends had, once again, to go and look for him. When they eventually found him, one asked, 'Why didn't you use the compass?' 'I did,' came the reply, 'but there must be something wrong with it. No matter how much I shook it, I could not get it to point north.'

The silly man was so convinced he knew which was the right way that he refused to believe the compass in his hand. This is often the way we respond to advice and instruction, especially when it concerns spiritual matters. All too often we are convinced we know the right way to behave, the right thing to do, and so we ignore anything we are told that does not fit with our own understanding. This is the reason why people stop reading the Bible, or never begin to read it in the first place. They are sure they know how to manage themselves, and assume that, because the Bible tells them to do something different, it must be wrong.

We must trust the Bible. It is, after all, the Word of God, and what reason do we have not to trust him?

Adapted from The Dictionary of Religious Anecdote

STUDIES IN EZEKIEL

P KING (Hailsham)

Chapter 34

JESUS CHRIST CAME INTO THE WORLD

THIS is perhaps the most unlikely place to find the gospel message, among the destruction and unbelief of the people, with rejection of both word and example. Yet this is just the place the Gospel is needed—in the world of ungodly people—where God's Word is ridiculed and opposed. Is it not amazing how little has changed down the generations, people's needs remaining the same in each age? Sin is still the enemy, and salvation through Christ still the remedy.

The chapter divides naturally into two sections, false shepherds, and the True Shepherd.

1. The false shepherds (vv. 1–10). It is important to note that the word 'shepherd' in the Old Testament is used to describe those who are rulers—kings and emperors. Saul, Israel's first king, was commanded to 'feed [be a pastor to] my people Israel' (2 Samuel 5:2). Likewise David came from the sheep to rule in Israel. Hence the picture here is of rulers who have served Israel down the years, but who have misled the people. The nation is not absolved from blame, but the rulers (or many of them) did not rebuke the people, bringing them back to Jehovah, but in many cases encouraged their wickedness. There was not faithful discipline to check the evil, but those who should have set

the example hastened the iniquity. So the people were scattered, v. 5, and they wandered, v. 6, while the 'shepherds' abused their position, v. 8, and now they stand at God's bar, v. 10.

- 2. The True Shepherd (vv. 11–31).** In contrast, the prophet describes the true Church of Jesus Christ. It sounds like the tenth chapter of John's Gospel rather than a prophecy for enslaved Jews in Babylon.
- a. *Election*; I will search for my sheep, v. 11
 - b. *Adoption*; I will gather them, v. 13
 - c. *Sanctification*; I will feed my flock, v. 15
 - d. *Salvation*; I will seek the lost, v. 16
 - e. *Justification*; I will judge, v. 17
 - f. *Covenant grace*; I will make a covenant, v. 25
 - g. *Daily provision*; showers of blessing, v. 26
 - h. *Fruitfulness*; yield their fruit, v. 27
 - i. *Safety* (protection); they shall dwell safely (v. 28)
 - j. *Spiritual food*; no longer hungry (v. 29)
 - k. *Personal acquaintance*; they shall know (v. 30)

Each one of these headings needs a separate study. Let each Christian rejoice that the Bible is the Word of God, to satisfy us that God never leaves his people.

Jesus said, I am the Good Shepherd

The saints are said, Revelation 7:15, to be clothed in white robes, not because they had merited or adorned themselves with good works, but because they had washed and made white their robes in the blood of the Lamb.

Thomas Brooks

THE ANGEL'S ADMONITION TO LOT

The Rev EDWARD COOPER (1770–1833)

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'Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain: escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.' Genesis 19:17

THESE words were spoken by the Angels to Lot, when they had brought him out of Sodom. Lot was the nephew of Abraham, and a partaker of his faith and piety. But in consequence of a dispute between their servants, he had inconsiderately left the Patriarch's family and then, in an inconsideration far more criminal, he had removed to Sodom (Genesis 13:5–13). Induced by the richness of the soil, and the plenty which the neighbouring country afforded, he forgot for the time his duty to himself, to his family, and to his God, and took up his abode in that idolatrous city.

Vexed

The consequences were such as might have been expected. His wife and children became infected with the wickedness of the place; and his own peace and happiness were entirely destroyed. For though, through the mercy of God, and the power of divine grace he was himself preserved amidst this general contagion, yet, in the words of the Apostle, he was 'vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked ... in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds' (2 Peter 2:7f). Such, my brethren, were the consequences of an undue, and unchastised attachment to the world. Wherever the love of the world reigns and rules in the soul, there is no real religion at all. Whenever it is allowed to prevail in the heart of a righteous man, we see what troubles and misery it entails.

But though the Lord chastened his servants, he did not forget them. When the wickedness of Sodom became so great that he resolved to spare it no longer, but to make it a dreadful example of his righteous vengeance, he yet remembered Lot and sent his angels to deliver him from the general destruction. By the Divine command they came to Sodom, announced to Lot the approaching judgment of the city, and warned him, without delay, to leave the place with all his family. Painful and sudden as the separation must have been from every earthly possession, yet he instantly prepared to obey the heavenly message. When the morning arose, and he still lingered, the angels, taking hold of his hand, and the hands of his wife and daughters, brought him forth, and set him outside the city. And then it was that they addressed him in the words of the text: 'Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain: escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.' The words contain a general admonition, with three particular directions attached to it.

Escape for thy life

This was the general admonition. It was not a small matter that was at stake. Fire would speedily fall from heaven, and consume the city and everything in it. No time was to be lost. The destruction was at hand; and it would be impossible to resist or elude it. Every living creature would be instantly consumed. Therefore, 'Escape for thy life.'

But to this general admonition there are three particular directions attached:

1. *Look not behind thee*

So great was to be his escape, that he was not even to turn round and take one parting look at the city. He was to give up every thought of it, and to be intent only on securing his own safety. There was also a merciful design in the prohibition. For had he looked at the city, the recollection of all that he had left in it might have excited a desire of returning, and so, in the end, might have brought about his destruction.

2. *Neither stay thou in all the plain*

To have come out of Sodom was not sufficient. He must not even stay in its neighbourhood. The ruin, which was coming on the city, would extend itself over the whole plain where the city stood. Those rich pastures and fertile lands, which had once proved to be such a temptation for him, would presently become a sea of liquid fire. Woe to all those who should be found within its boundaries! Therefore—

3. *Escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed*

There could be no safety until he was beyond reach of the devouring flame. The fire would not fall on the mountains which surrounded the plain. Here, then, was a place of safety. Once he had escaped to the mountain he would be out of danger. Once having gained this place of refuge he might, from thence, look back without fear and survey the tremendous destruction from afar, from which through mercy, he had been rescued. Thence he might view the blazing city, and the smoking country around, and feel a debt of gratitude to God who had mercifully intervened, and had plucked him as a brand out of the burning.

The relevance of the text

Such is the meaning of this admonition. But why have I chosen this passage as my text?

Are we exposed to the same danger as Lot? Is fire from heaven about to fall on our habitation, and consume it? What have we to do with these words, addressed to him?

My brethren, we have much, very much, to do with them. The Holy Spirit, in causing these words to be written, had doubtless a merciful intention, and designed them for our edification. For 'All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness' (2 Timothy 3:16).

The way of the world

The world itself is a Sodom, a place of sin and wickedness. 'We know', says John, 'that the whole world lieth in wickedness' (1 John 5:19). God made the world good, and man upright; but through the corruption of the one, the other is become evil. The world is now, in fact, the great rival of God. It has become the universal idol, which men naturally worship instead of God. The principles, the maxims, the practices of the world are all contrary to the will and law of God. What are the objects which men are renaturally pursuing, but to please themselves; to gratify their pride and vanity, their own selfish, sensual or covetous inclinations; to lay up for themselves treasures on earth, and to have their portion and happiness here? And what is the purpose of these objects, but idolatry and impiety?

To live as the world lives is to live without God, without any fear or love of him, without any dread of his anger, or any desire of his favour. It is to live as if there were no God; as if we had no soul; as if there were no world to come, no heaven or hell, in which we must abide for ever. And can the world expect to receive in the end a more favourable treatment than Sodom? Whatever its expectations may be, we know from the sure word of prophecy what will certainly happen. The world, and all things in it, will be burnt up; and those who cleave to it shall share a fate, resembling that of Sodom's inhabitants. O consider this, all ye that forget God. When the people of Sodom

arose in the morning of that day, little did they think that so dreadful a judgment was near at hand. Lot's sons-in-law, when he kindly forewarned them of their danger, treated his warnings as an idle tale; but they soon found to their cost how true it was. So it will be with the ungodly men of the world. When we say to them, 'Up, get you out of this place, for the Lord will destroy this city', we seem to them as those who mock (Genesis 19:14). They cannot believe our words; and so they despise and disregard our counsel. But they will assuredly find in the end how true our words have been, and how wise and salutary our counsel was. So surely as the Lord rained fire down upon Sodom, so surely he will rain down on the ungodly fire and brimstone, storm and tempest (see Psalm 11:6). This shall be their portion to drink.

A heartfelt plea

O! my brethren, that you would seriously consider these things, and lay them deeply to your heart! A worldly, sensual, ungodly state of heart is a Sodom; and if you are in this state, and continue in it, you will undoubtedly perish. So surely as God is in heaven, so surely will he destroy you both body and soul in hell. Only one thing can save you; a timely escape from this place of ruin, a timely separation from the world and sin: 'Up, get ye out of this place'. 'Come out from among them, and be ye separate' (2 Corinthians 6:17). 'Be not conformed to this world' (Romans 12:2). 'Flee from the wrath to come'. These are the solemn calls, the merciful admonitions of Scripture. May all who are yet in this spiritual Sodom obey the call! Be sure you linger not. Remain not another day in such a state, as, if you are found in it, it will ruin you for ever.

Now you may escape. Now you may flee from that dreadful vengeance which is reserved for the ungodly. Now there is a way opened, a place prepared, in which you may find safety, eternal safety; safety for your soul; nay, more, not safety only, but life, everlasting life; nay more, an eternal weight of glory, a

happiness surpassing all description, all conception, such as 'eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man' (1 Corinthians 2:9). Remember, then, it is for your life. Bless God that he has put it into your heart to escape from the spiritual Sodom, in which you have been living. Trifle not with the gracious convictions which he has impressed upon your heart. Make your calling sure. Let nothing turn you from your purpose. Lay hold on eternal life. Attend especially to the three directions attached to the general admonition.

1. 'Look not behind thee.'

Renounce for ever all thoughts of returning to that state of sin and death from which you are beginning to escape. Do not let your mind, even for a moment, reflect with complacency on those pursuits or pleasures from which you must for ever separate. Having once set your face towards heaven, O look not back to Sodom! 'Remember Lot's wife.' She, having once escaped, looked back in disobedience, and 'became a pillar of salt'. The ways of sin are so seducing in themselves, so pleasing to our nature, and by habit are made so familiar to us, that to break from them requires no small degree of resolution and decision. Eve allowed her eyes to gaze upon the forbidden fruit, till she was prevailed upon to eat it. Therefore look not on sin at all: especially on those sinful pleasures and practices from which you have once escaped.

2. 'Neither stay thou in all the plain.'

Do not think it enough to have escaped from Sodom, but remove to the greatest possible distance from everything connected with that place. Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. Do not allow yourself to remain within the forbidden regions of self-indulgence and worldly gratification. Do not think that you can needlessly associate with worldly or wicked people. You cannot find pleasure in their company, and conversation, in their amusements and pursuits, without

endangering your own soul. Do not imagine that you can allow yourself to proceed only so far, and no farther; that you can trifle with temptation, and can expose yourself without peril to the infectious contagion of sin. Your departure from Sodom must be complete. 'Touch not the unclean thing' (2 Corinthians 6:17). Put away from you whatever is evil and defiles. But especially —

3. 'Escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.'

If, brethren, there were no place of safety to which you could flee, and be at peace, then, indeed, your efforts to escape would be in vain, and my endeavours to assist you would be fruitless. But, blessed be God, there is a place of safety provided for you, where you may be secure from the impending ruin, and may delight yourself in the abundance of peace. You are directed not to a mountain, but to Jesus Christ. He is a Hiding-place from the storm, a Covert from the Tempest. Whosoever flees to Jesus Christ shall be delivered from the consequences of sin, from the punishment which it has incurred, and from the power which it has obtained in the heart.

My brethren, here is your safety, your only safety. Flee to Jesus Christ; for there is salvation in him, and no other. Till you have fled to him, you have, in fact, done nothing; nothing which will really profit and save your soul. It is not merely forsaking your sins that will save you: it must be your fleeing unto Christ. He is pointed out to you, as the mountain was pointed out to Lot.

Flee to him in Faith

Do you ask how you are to flee to Christ? You are to flee to him in your mind, with

your heart, with all the desires and affections of your soul. You are to flee to him in faith, believing his word and promises, and casting yourselves upon his mercy and power. You are to flee to Him by resigning yourself into his hands, to be saved by him, on his own terms; to be washed, justified, and sanctified by His blood and spirit, by his righteousness and grace. You are to flee to him by laying hold of his Covenant, and by joining yourselves to him for ever in the ties of love, duty and devotion.

And how can you thus join yourselves to him more effectually, more decidedly, than by drawing near to his Holy Table, and by there surrendering yourselves to his service? This Ordinance is designed for the strengthening and refreshing of the soul of every humble sinner, who is willing to join himself in Covenant with Jesus Christ. Here in this Ordinance the Saviour more especially says to every penitent and wearied soul: 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' He says to you, 'Eat of the bread, and drink of the wine which I have prepared for you. Receive these emblems of my body and blood; these proofs and expressions of my love and mercy; receive them in faith. Receive from me pardon and peace, strength and holiness. Receive from me the assurance of my loving-kindness to your soul, and the promise of eternal life and glory.'

My brethren, attend to these gracious words. Do not draw back, when he thus invites you to come nigh. Draw near with faith, and take this Holy Sacrament to your comfort. And may the blessing of the Lord accompany you. May his Spirit incline you to come, and shed abroad his love in your heart. May you be strengthened and refreshed, and go on your way rejoicing. ¶

A multitude of preventing mercies, in afflictions, in disappointments, in cross providences, there are with God; and what mercies are folded up in these afflicting mercies, in these disappointments, and in these merciful cross providences, must rest in the bosom of him to be revealed, who only is wonderful in council and excellent in working.

John Bunyan

A SHORT SKETCH OF THE LIFE AND CHARACTER OF THE REV THOMAS ADAM

JAMES STILLINGFLEET (1729–1817)

THE Rev Thomas Adam was born at Leeds, in the West-Riding of Yorkshire, February 25, 1701; his father, Mr. Henry Adam, was of the profession of the law, and town-clerk of that corporation. He married Elizabeth, daughter of Jasper Blythman, Esq¹, Recorder there, by whom he had six children, Jasper, Henry, Thomas, Katherine, Elizabeth, and Sibyl.

Thomas was first put to the public grammar school in that town, under the care of the pious and worthy Mr. Thomas Barnard², then head master of that school, and afterwards to the school at Wakefield; from whence, about the usual time of life, he went to Christ's College, Cambridge. But, after he had resided there about two years, he removed to Hart-Hall (now Hertford College) in Oxford, under the care of that famous disciplinarian, Dr. Newton, (head of that seminary, and its founder as a college,) for whose memory in that capacity he ever retained the highest respect.

He took the degree of Bachelor of Arts only, as he had imbibed the doctrine of the indefensible nature of pluralities from Dr. Newton, whose masterly treatise on that subject is well known; and, therefore, concluded it a needless expense for him to proceed any farther in academical degrees.

By the interest of an uncle, a person of 1. Elizabeth, the mother of Jasper Blythman, Esq., Recorder of Leeds, was one of the twenty children of Sir John Stanhope, which were born and baptized (besides two which were still-born) before either he or his lady were forty years of age. 2. Author of the *Life and Character of Lady Elizabeth Hastings*.

some eminence in his profession of the law, and who had been of singular service to the family of the patron, about the year 1724 he was presented to the living of Wintringham, in Lincolnshire, of which he continued Rector fifty-eight years; but not being of age to take possession, it was held for him by a friend for about a year.

Not long after he settled at Wintringham, his uncle, who seemed much set upon the advancement of so promising a nephew, urged him greatly to come up to London to show himself, as he termed it, concluding this to be the most likely way to recommend him to the favour of those who were most able to advance him in the world: but when Mr. Adam understood that his view was to put him in the way of more preferment, he was so far from embracing this advantageous proposal, that he thought it his duty to decline the invitation in as civil a manner as he could, at the same time returning for answer, that it was incumbent upon him to be with his flock at Wintringham; an answer which gave great offence to his uncle, as it frustrated all his well-meant schemes for his promotion and advancement in the church. Nor did he ever afterwards depart from the same disinterested determination to refuse all additional preferment.

When Dr. Thomas was promoted to the bishopric of Lincoln, our author, whose good behaviour at the University had gained him the esteem of his governors there, was strongly recommended by them to his peculiar notice, as one whom he would find more especially deserving, amongst his clergy, of his attention and regard. And it is very probable that we

find him, in consequence of this, appointed to preach before his lordship at Gainsborough, at his primary visitation there.

But how much soever the bishop might be at any time disposed to befriend him, he gave him to understand that he was perfectly satisfied with what he at present had, then not quite £200 per annum, nor ever meant to engage in any second charge.

Not many years after his coming to Wintringham, Mr. Adam thought proper to change his state of life, by marrying Susanna, the eldest daughter of the Rev. Mr. Cooke, vicar of the neighbouring parish of Roxby, by whom he had one only daughter, who died in her infancy; and, after having lived together with much comfort during thirty years or more, in the year 1760, he was called upon to resign this dearest earthly treasure into His hands from whom he had received her. How greatly he was affected by this loss, and the truly Christian manner in which he bore it, will be best shown by a meditation on the subject, found amongst his papers, in his own hand-writing, after his decease.

There is nothing in our author's history, after this period, which calls for particular notice. An uninteresting sameness of events must almost necessarily attend a life passed in the obscure shade of country retirement. We shall, therefore, dwell upon those parts of his character, as a minister and a Christian, which may furnish some considerations not unworthy of regard and imitation.

From the account which has been already given of Mr. Adam's faithful attachment to his parish at Wintringham, and his determined refusal of all additional preferment, it is natural for the reader to suppose that he was peculiarly diligent amongst his people, and instant in season and out of season for the conversion and salvation of their souls. But this does not by any means appear to have been the case at that time: for, though he was very exact and regular in the discharge of all the public parts of his office, and his sermons had even then a zeal and fervour in them beyond

the generality; yet, as he himself afterwards observed to a peculiar friend, 'Neither his life nor his doctrine could be of any peculiar use to them, for he lived in a conformity to the world, and his doctrine was contrary to the cross of Christ.'³

We find in his private reflections (which make a part of his works now submitted to the public) a remark of his own, which will fully show his judgment of the case on the review of it many years afterwards.

'Intrusion into the ministry for worldly ends, and absolute unfitness for it; in great ignorance of Christ; great unconcern for the salvation of souls; consequent sloth and remissness; squandering a large income in sensual pleasure; and when I was something awakened, doing what I did in self-dependence and self-seeking, how awful!'

How long it was after his entrance into the ministry, before it pleased God to give him a clearer insight into his own state, and the nature of his calling, we cannot exactly determine; though it seems probable that his conscience soon, began to be not fully satisfied. All that we can gather on this head with certainty, is, that he received his first impressions of a serious kind from the writings of the mystics, particularly from the works of Mr. Law, which appears to be farther confirmed by the peculiar intimacy which he is well known to have had for many years, in the middle part of his life, with some ministers of these sentiments.⁴

3. Lest this expression should appear in any degree obscure to some of our readers, we would observe, that what Mr. Adam meant by it, was, that he was not preaching Christ crucified as the foundation of man's hope for pardon and justification with God; but man's righteousness, thus making the cross of Christ of no effect.

4. The writings of Mr. Law seem to be principally useful in this respect. They are admirably calculated to awaken the conscience, and beget in the mind of the reader a conviction of the futility of nominal profession, and mere decency of conduct; and have in them such a strength of easy reasoning, level to every capacity, as almost irresistibly wins

In this state he continued several years, greatly harassed in mind and conscience; and though now more earnest respecting both his own soul and those of his people, yet a stranger to real peace, and full of continual doubts and fears. He saw indeed the law to be holy, just, and good; but found, after all his utmost care and endeavour to fulfil it, he fell so short of its demands, and was so sinful, that he was continually under its righteous condemnation.

It was not till about the year 1748 that his mind gained any effectual relief. While he continued a disciple of Mr. Law, though growing in a conviction of his sinfulness, and becoming more strict and serious, yet still he could gain no solid peace of conscience. All his strictest mortifications, or multiplied exact performance of duties, were overruled by the more strict law of God, whose divine spirituality he could not attain to perfectly, nor save himself from its just condemnation. In this situation, therefore, his soul was in great distress; and that which served to heighten it the more was, that he saw the word of God, instead of giving him any ground of comfort against his fears, was, on the contrary, in many places fully against him. Amongst the rest, the epistle to the Romans was particularly offensive and distressing to him in this view. He perceived that it evidently struck at and overthrew the very foundation of his hope, and (as he then supposed) made no account of a life of superior piety and godliness. As he was at this time ignorant of God's righteousness, and of any other way of salvation than by the merit of his own goodness, the levelling strain of the apostle was, in a very high degree, grating to his self-righteous pride. He could not bear to see those that were esteemed good men treated only as sinners, and all their best righteousness the reader's assent to the necessity of vital religion. I must beg leave, therefore, to differ from those who would utterly discard them; and to assert, that we have not, perhaps, in the language, a more masterly performance in its way, or a book better calculated to promote a concern about religion, than Mr. Law's *Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*.

passed by as of no account towards their justification. Hence he was sensible that St. Paul taught a very different doctrine from that which he held and preached; and that they were directly contrary to each other in the important article of man's justification and acceptance in the sight of God: for being possessed of much good sense and unfeigned honesty of heart, (a leading feature in his character all through life), and being truly desirous to know, and to teach his people the real truth of God's word, he would not suffer his conscience to be pacified and laid asleep with the too common way of persuading himself that both he and the apostle meant, in reality, the same thing, though they evidently appeared so opposite; neither could he bear the thoughts of being a teacher of false doctrine to the people committed to his charge, and that in a point of such essential consequence.

Like a worthy and diligent minister of God, therefore, and a faithful pastor of his flock, he was determined to take all possible pains to inform himself clearly on the subject: to this end he applied himself with all his power to every probable source of information. Hammond, Whitby, Grotius, with other of the most eminent commentators, were consulted with the utmost care and attention; but all in vain. These gave him no relief⁵. He found they understood the case no better than himself; and 5. From much experience and observation, it was the advice of Mr. Adam, to young divines especially, not to be too forward in taking their sense of the Scriptures from commentators: and we will venture to assert the justice of the caution. If it be asked, Where then can we go in cases of difficulty? It is answered, Where Mr. Adam went, i.e. to God in prayer; comparing one part of the word of God with another, and humbly looking to him for his teaching and direction. Let this be duly tried, and we doubt not its success will prove the soundness of the observation. A clear insight will then be often given into the true sense, by such a satisfactory solution as no comment can afford, and our faith stand not in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God; Psalm 119:18. John 6:45. James, 1.5.

was amazed to see men of sense and understanding take pains to impose upon themselves and others, by labouring to no purpose, with much expense of learning and argument, to reconcile things so diametrically opposite, and to unite two systems which it is the professed design and intention of the apostle to oppose to each other, and to show their necessary and irreconcilable contradiction. Romans 11:6.

In this situation of things he went on for some time, determined not to give up the point without obtaining full satisfaction, though to all appearance no nearer than when he first began, and even perplexed more and more.

He could not suppose, indeed, that St. Paul could be wrong, being persuaded of the divine inspiration which attended his writings, or that things which he had written were indeed unintelligible, much less that he would really inculcate or encourage licentiousness of life. Like a truly sensible man, he began to suspect that the fault must be in himself, and in the system which he had adopted, and that he had not properly considered the apostle's doctrine with all its connexions and relations: leaving, therefore, the bewildering guidance of commentators and expositors, he betook himself to the fountain of all knowledge, beseeching God himself to teach and direct him.⁶

6. While our Author's mind was thus affected, many of his friends and acquaintance feared lest he was going out of his senses, through too great study and care about religion. This is nothing uncommon. The little attention which most people give to their souls, and the slight views which they have of the evil of sin, together with their lamentable ignorance of the great truths of God's word, make them form that suspicion of all who begin seriously to consider the infinite importance of these things, and to feel their weight; whereas it is only the just and natural effect of a right conviction of sin.—What should call for our distressing grief, if sin against God does not? Or what should engage all our anxiety equally with a concern how we may obtain pardon, and recover the divine favour? Our Author was lost here. The means which he had tried were ineffectual. His own soul and his

One morning in his study, being much distressed on the subject, he fell down upon his knees before God in prayer, spread his case before the Divine Majesty and Goodness, implored him to pity his distress, and to guide him by his Holy Spirit into the right understanding of his own truth. When he arose from his supplication, he took the Greek Testament, and sat himself down to read the six first chapters of the epistle to the Romans, sincerely desirous to be taught of God, and to receive, in the simplicity of a child, the word of his revelation; when, to his unspeakable comfort and astonishment, his difficulties vanished;—a most clear and satisfactory light was given him into this great subject:—he saw the doctrine of justification by Jesus Christ alone through faith to be the great subject of the Gospel—the highest display of the divine perfections—the happiest relief for his burdened conscience—and the most powerful principle of all constant and unfeigned holiness of heart and life. He was rejoiced exceedingly; found peace and comfort spring up in his mind; his conscience was purged from guilt through the atoning blood of Christ, and his heart set at liberty to run the way of God's commandments without fear, in a spirit of filial love and holy delight; and from that hour he began to preach salvation through faith in Jesus Christ alone, to man, by nature and practice lost, and condemned under the law, and, as his own expression is, always a sinner.⁷ people's were at stake; and till this great difficulty was solved, it is no wonder that his mind could find no rest. Whoever consults the Scriptures will find that there is nothing new in such circumstances. Psalms 6, 32, 77, 130, with many other parts, will show a similar situation of things in the minds of the true servants of God in those times, nor has it been otherwise in any age of the church; and, we may venture to assert, that this madness (if such it be called) is far, wiser than the wisdom of the world. 7. In gratitude to God for his great mercy in opening his eyes, as well as to assist such of his fellow-creatures as might be in his case; he afterwards, in the year 1771, published a paraphrase

His sermons, though before animated by an honest zeal, were no longer mere lectures of morality, or filled only with legal condemnation. While all godliness in principle and practice was duly enforced, the enlivening display of that glorious Saviour, whose worth and excellence he had now tasted, and who was become all his salvation and all his desire, seasoned every discourse.

Those excellent and searching lectures on the church catechism, which have met with the general approbation of good men, and have passed through several editions, and which discover, in so eminent a manner, the able divine and the experienced Christian, were the early fruit of this alteration in his views of Christianity; a happy evidence of the great benefit which he had hereby received, and of his earnest zeal and ability to communicate it for the advantage of others.

About the time that this change took place, he stumbled (to use his own expression in the case) on some of the writings of that famous champion of the reformation, Martin Luther. If he had seen these in his former state, when he was well contented with his own righteousness, we may justly suppose he would at once have rejected them with the utmost disdain and abhorrence, as the very quintessence of Antinomianism; and however he might reverence St. Paul, as being an inspired apostle, would have made no hesitation to have spurned them from him, as contrary to the Gospel of Christ, and subversive of all true godliness. This many, doubtless, have done through want of the same divine teaching respecting their real state, of which Mr. Adam was now happily become the subject. But his mind being now brought down, and, by the discipline of the law, convincing him deeply of his sinfulness, even in his best state, he was so of the eleven first chapters of the epistle to the Romans, (in which all the doctrinal part is contained,) where the reader will find the whole scheme of our redemption laid open in a most clear and masterly manner, with many excellent improvements and observations.

far from being offended at the boldness of expression⁸ and freedom of sentiment which he there met with, that he perceived them to be the very thing which his soul wanted, and the doctrine of St. Paul; and that however many may affect to admire the one, who yet at the same time reject and make light of the other, they must, in reality, stand or fall together; since they both speak one and the same thing, and all the objections which are prudentially brought against the reformer, lie equally in all their force against the inspired apostle also, and against the doctrine which he so strenuously inculcates.

This celebrated writer, therefore, was always his peculiar favourite; and often would he, with much thankfulness to God, and 8. It will readily be allowed, that there are in the writings of Martin Luther some expressions which seem to savour of Antinomianism, and from which imputation it would be very difficult to defend them against a critical scrutiny; — but that they were never meant in that light is evident, not only from their admitting of a very different sense when candidly considered with their context, but from Luther's writings against the Anabaptists of his times on this very account.

The genius and temper of the writer must be considered, as well as the age in which he lived, and the fundamental errors which he combated. He was a plain blunt man, and had an aversion to those softenings which are so fashionable in the present day, and thought they would injure the force of what he said, and make it less pointed against those errors which he had it in his heart to demolish. And although such bold strokes may give offence to those that feel nothing of this real want of a Saviour; yet they that know the urgency of their case, like Mr. Adam, will find them the only remedy that can reach their disorder. And while the cold enervated exactness of the wise and prudent affords them no relief, this will be a balm to their wounded consciences, and the richest cordial to their fainting souls. And may we not add, that the divine blessing, which has in all ages attended Luther's works, is no inconsiderable argument in favour of their truth and soundness?

gratitude of heart, acknowledge to his friends the singular help which he found from his writings, particularly from his excellent comment on the epistle to the Galatians, highly recommending it to their serious perusal, for its admirable use and truly evangelical doctrine.⁹

In this blessed and happy faith of the Gospel he went on from this time to the very end of his days, growing in grace, and in the knowledge of his Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and adorning the doctrine of God his Saviour in all things by his truly Christian life and conversation : nor did increasing years, experience, and reading, give him any ground to alter the opinion which he had now espoused, or to depart from it in any degree; but, on the contrary, he was daily confirmed more and more both in the truth and in the necessity of these doctrines, while he found them, in 9. From the deficiency of our sources of information respecting Mr. Adam, in this part of his life, it is very difficult to know how to arrange the two last-mentioned circumstances. Of the facts themselves we are certain, but cannot positively affirm that we relate them in their exact order as to time; nor, indeed, is it very material.

TO BE CONCLUDED

The law is good if a man use it lawfully, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God; therefore in the work of the ministry it is to be explained in its extent, intent, and its spirituality is to be laid open, for the moral law is exceeding broad; therefore if a man is not convinced by the Holy Ghost, that life and happiness is unattainable by that law he will not stoop to, nor prize the grace of the gospel; and persons may say and think as they please, I am firmly persuaded, that in proportion to that acquaintance with and understanding of the doctrine of the law, will the sense of their sin and misery be; and by how much the greater that is, by so much the more will the sensible sinner value the gospel of the grace of God. *John Webster*

The work of Christ is an overthrowing, overturning work: the work of Christ is to slay, strip, and undo men; to strip them of all conceit of themselves, to lay them flat to the earth, to equal and level them with the worst of men. The work of the devil is to build up man in his own wisdom, in his own strength, to make him something, to cry peace, peace to him, when there is no peace; to put wrath far away, and to tell him he is thus and thus, he hath such love, and charity, and meekness, and conformity to the will of Christ, and therefore fear not, none of these things shall happen to thee. *John Webster*

sickness and in health, a sovereign cordial to his heart, and the alone, but all-sufficient, support of his soul. This testimony he fully bore to them in his last illness, frequently repeating to his friends around him, 'I find my foundation able to bear me'.

His departure was full of that serenity and peace which arise from a true acquaintance with Christ and his salvation. His body, worn out with the repeated attacks of his disorder, and with increasing years and infirmity, gradually sunk into the arms of death, while his soul winged its happy flight into the bosom of that blessed Redeemer, who had long been his portion and his all.

On 31 March 1784, and in the 84th year of his age, he departed without a groan, and sweetly fell asleep in Jesus.

Thus lived and died this eminent servant of Jesus Christ, full of days and full of grace; gathered as a shock of corn in its season into the garner of his heavenly Master. May we have grace to follow his good example; and may the Holy Spirit lead us on by the same way, to the same rest which remaineth for the people of God! ¶

DIOTREPHES SYNDROME

SAM SEMMENS (Edinburgh)

OF all the many obvious symptoms of Adam's fall, and the one that is so very prevalent today, is one that so readily takes the name 'Diotrephes Syndrome', for like its namesake, this particular Syndrome tends to manifest itself in an enlarged ego, one accompanied by the strong desire for power over others. It can prove to be such an obsession to have authority, and to have the pre-eminence, that when given but the opportunity to temporarily exercise control over others, those that have it prove that they are tyrants of the very worst kind. They will often resort to the character assassination of others in order to achieve their ends. John described this trend in Diotrephes as: 'Prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he (Diotrephes) himself receive the brethren, etc.' 3 John 10. Those who are smitten with this ugly personality disorder are generally recognised as being 'control freaks'. The Apostle John, in his third epistle, gives us an account of such a person; and we find a most vivid description of his dealings with some Christians, in that short personal letter addressed to someone called Gaius, who was a faithful lover of the truth. To all intents and purposes it would appear that John was anxious to assist this man Gaius, who, in his work of Christian charity, had brought certain Christians on their journey. They were a band of Christians who had been travelling on an evangelistic mission and were preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles, and so it was John's desire that the Churches that were on their route should receive these brethren in fellowship. For they were such Christian folk as were careful not to place any burden on the Gospel, and so they solicited nothing in the way of help, either for themselves, or for their work, from the Gentiles to whom they brought

the Gospel. Hence, John in his epistle complains of the lack of cooperation of one called Diotrephes, from whose name we get the title for this Syndrome that we have referred to here.

This man refused to comply with the apostle's request, or to receive these brethren that John speaks of; he even ejected from the assembly such as would have assisted them. John states: 'I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them, receiveth us not.' What a strange fellow this Diotrephes must have been, for who is there with any degree of godliness, or indeed the least sense of Christian fraternity, that would have had the audacity to reject the correspondence of such a gracious saint and most faithful Apostle that we know John to have been? John has presented himself as 'the disciple whom Jesus loved' and his writings go a long way in describing just what that love of Christ means; and we know from other scriptures just how it was manifested in John, both in terms of Christian behaviour, and Christian faith. Nevertheless, not all men have John's Christian faith. That faith is rare amongst men, and very often we find that they have no faith at all. As for men like Diotrephes, as we have observed already, it would seem that from the beginning there have always been those who have desired to exercise dominion over others, and like Diotrephes, they love to have the pre-eminence amongst those of their peers. Indeed it is symptomatic and characteristic of that lust for power that emerged due to the fall of man. Eve fell under the temptation of Satan, being taken in with his enticing words concerning the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; and he enticed her to defy God's prohibition by saying: 'Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that

in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.' Genesis 3:4–5. Ever since that time there have been those in whose heart has lodged that virus of the Diotrephes Syndrome; for in every man, at least to some degree, the lust for power and the desire to have the pre-eminence awaits the hour of opportunity to surface. How often do we see someone that we have considered to be the most humble of persons, when promoted to a position of authority, change in a short period of time to become a bully and a tyrant of the worst kind? After all, it is more or less an accepted axiom that power tends to corrupt, and that absolute power tends to corrupt absolutely; and indeed experience has proved that there are few who escape its corrupting influence—not so much the power, but indwelling sin working concupiscence in them.

It is not without significance then, that when our Lord and Saviour was about to return to his Father, and as he gave commandment to his eleven disciples, we read: 'And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power (authority) is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world' Matthew 28:18–20. It is worth noting that all authority was given unto Christ in heaven and earth. This must mean that there is no man on earth with his authority; nor can there be any other head of the Church on earth with his authority, nor can there be any other Church who holds authority equal with that Church that is built on Jesus Christ, nor has any other authority been given to teach any other doctrine save whatsoever he has commanded. This authority of Christ we have explained for us in a much fuller way in the Epistle to the Hebrews 1:1–13. There we read, and there we ought to learn, that we are now in the 'last days' and that in Jesus Christ, who

is God the Son, and whom God has appointed heir of all things, is the one in whom God has had his last and final word and on whose authority depends the salvation of mankind; in other words Christ alone is our Prophet, Priest and King, and beside him there are no further prophets, priests or kings, nor is there any other authority save that which has been committed to him. So now, dear reader, when a cult member comes to your door, knocks in order to obtain a hearing, and announces that he/she has come to inform you of the Prophet, as indeed such cult members as the Mormons (Smithites) are apt to do; it follows that since Jesus Christ has been appointed heir of all things you may now reply with scriptural authority: 'My Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ has been appointed heir of all things; tell me good Sir/Madam from whence then is your prophet?' It is a great weakness in modern Christians that they do not know the greatness of their Master; consequently they so often cause him to hold another man's stirrup.

As John saw him, and as he heard him speak, he was so great and glorious that John fell at his feet as one dead, hence Christ's own statement: 'I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty' Revelation 1:8. The Christ that John saw had the ministers of the churches in his right hand, and he walked in the midst of the candlesticks (churches that were represented by candlesticks, thus speaking to us of course that they were the means of holding a light in a dark place—see Revelation 1:20.) How then can the Roman Catholic Church claim to be the one and only true Church; and also claim that the scriptural view is that our Lord Jesus Christ founded a visible and hierarchical Church with those on whom he conferred his own divine teaching authority, and that this particular Church was specifically built upon the apostle Peter, to whom he gave power over the whole flock of God? Is this statement of theirs true? Let that same Peter speak: 'The elders which are among you I

exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; and not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock' 1 Peter 5:1-3. How do we reconcile the above words of the apostle Peter with those of Pope Boniface VIII (1294-1303) who, in his bull '*Unam Sanctam*' wrote: 'We declare, state, define and pronounce that for every human creature to be subject to the Roman pope is altogether necessary for salvation'. Even the Lord's apostles, who spoke with the authority of Christ's sent ones, in this respect were but ministers of the Gospel by whom men believed; they were not such as had dominion over men's faith. For example, Paul states in his Second Epistle to the Corinthians 1:23-24 the following: 'Moreover I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth. Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand.' These are the words of the great apostle Paul and he states: 'Not for that we have dominion over your faith, etc.' The personal pronoun 'we' being plural means that he includes all the apostles. If none of the apostles have dominion over the Christian's faith; how can it be that he must be subject to the Roman pope because this is altogether necessary for salvation? What we are seeing here is a king-size dose of the Diotrephes Syndrome.

We are told in the epistle to the Ephesians that when our Lord and Saviour ascended up

on high he gave gifts unto men. These gifts were in order that those who received them were to exercise them in order to benefit the whole body of Christ, which is the Church. There is no question of a hierarchical Church, especially one where certain men take charge after the manner of those smitten with the Diotrephes Syndrome. The truth of the matter is of course that all the sons and daughters of Adam suffer from the Diotrephes Syndrome to some degree, its intensity so often depending on the prevailing social, environmental and political conditions at any given time. History has many instances of those who were affected by it; and it can be said that the Christian Church has had more than her fair share of such men. There have been many of those who have delighted in being lords over God's heritage, despite the fact that such despotic rule is contrary to the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ. He taught his disciples after the following precept: 'Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many' Matthew 20:25-28. From the Christian point of view, Jesus would have us see that it is better to serve than being served. Yet no one wants to serve, rather all wish to be served, and be seen by others as one that reigns as pope of the party. ¶

TO BE CONCLUDED

As they shall have peculiar and proper revivings, so they shall have seasonable and expedient refreshings. When David was ready to faint, then his faith was excited to see the goodness of the Lord, Psalm 27:13. When Peter was sinking, then did Christ put forth his hand and save him. When Paul was almost despairing, then was he delivered from a great death, 2 Corinthians 1:8,10. When David was ready to slide, then did the hand of God hold him up. When Jehoshaphat knew not what to do, then the Lord undertook his safety: 'I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee' 2 Corinthians 6:2.

Obadiah Sedgwick

STUDIES IN IRISH CHURCH HISTORY

EDWARD MALCOLM (Reading)

The Coming of Reformation

THE story moves on to the reign of Henry VIII, whose break with Rome presented him with a practical problem regarding Ireland. He was Head of the Church of England, but if he did not lay claim to the Church of Ireland, it would become a place of refuge, and therefore of rebellion, for those who sided with the old order. Lacking a bishop in Ireland who supported reformation principles, the English Church consecrated one George Browne, an Augustinian monk of reforming tendencies, to the vacant see of Dublin, in 1534. Having been consecrated by English bishops after the break with Rome, he was not linked to the papacy.

Browne was not universally welcomed at first, but within two years the Irish parliament had accepted the principle of Henry's headship, and had passed Acts in Restraint of Appeals, and of First-Fruits (*Praemunire*) so bringing Ireland in line with England, and independent of the Pope. Newly-appointed ministers were, as far as possible, to be English rather than Irish, and preaching was to be carried out in English. Interestingly, Bishop Richard of Dundalk had translated the Bible into Irish, and was given to preaching in Irish, so that the otherwise untamed native population could receive the benefit of Gospel preaching. Under Henry both preaching and the Bible were to be available only in English, which had the unintended and highly undesirable effect of limiting the benefits of the Reformation to the English alone. The Irish were not evangelised with the new learning. On the positive side the Church of Ireland remained one body, containing both supporters and enemies of the papacy. It would not be until the reign of Elizabeth that a rival, Roman,

Church would be established in Ireland.

Under Edward VI the English Prayer Book was introduced, although only accepted in the south. New episcopal appointments were all of men of reformation principles. In 1551 an edict was issued ordering that parts of the Prayer Book services be translated into Irish, but this never happened. On Edward's death the work of reformation ended, and Dr Cole, Dean of St Paul's, was sent to Ireland with a commission to examine and punish any Protestants. It is recorded that, breaking his journey at Chester, the landlady of his inn discovered his purpose, and, determining to save her Protestant brother who lived in Dublin, swapped his letter of commission for a pack of playing cards, with the knave of Clubs uppermost. On reaching Ireland Cole presented his box contained the commission, and was more than astonished to find what it contained! A new commission was called for, but Mary died before it could be issued. The Irish Protestants were wonderfully saved.

When Elizabeth became queen she sought to reimpose the second prayer book of Edward VI. But there was a problem with the English liturgy as far as the Irish were concerned, as already indicated; the laity had little English, and there were few who could read, and none who could print, the Irish language. It was therefore further decreed that the services could be said in Latin! This was helpful neither to the English nor to the Irish.

Eleven Articles were passed in 1565, which brought the doctrine of the Church of Ireland fully in line with that of the Church of England. All traces of Romish doctrine and practice were removed, and a Protestant and Reformed understanding of Scripture,

the sacraments and the Gospel was imposed. Only two bishops dissented from these Articles, for which they were deprived of their Sees. Towards the middle part of Elizabeth's reign progress was made at last in manufacturing a typeface for printing the Irish language, and the Prayer Book and New Testament were the first projects undertaken. In 1590 the University of Dublin was founded, in order to educate the Irish. The latter part of Elizabeth's reign was marred, in Ireland, by rebellions fomented by the papal emissary. These continued until her death in 1603.

The accession of James I was soon greeted, in 1607, by rebellion. Its suppression gained for the Crown some half a million acres in the north. Into these lands came the Scots and English of the Great Plantation, and that poor backwater soon became the most industrious part of Ireland. Although the purpose was to establish a population loyal to the English crown, and capable of defending itself, an unintended consequence was the introduction of Presbyterianism into Ireland through the Scots settlers. A parliament was summoned, consisting of both English and Irish representatives, and all the old laws which had divided Irish from English were abolished. The Thirty-nine Articles had never been accepted by the Irish Church, and so new Articles were drawn up and accepted by a convocation of 1613. It was in the following year that, on papal orders, the Irish Roman Catholic Church was established, an admission of the Pope's failure to regain Ireland.

Under Charles I the Irish Church managed to accommodate men of Presbyterian principles, by the expedient of omitting certain clauses from the ordination service. In 1635 the Churches of England and Ireland were further united when the latter accepted the Thirty-nine Articles, not in place of her own, but alongside them. Since, however, the two sets differed from each other, the effect was that the Irish Articles were replaced by the English ones. Another group looking to extend its influence in Ireland was the Puritan

party. Between Puritans, Presbyterians, Anglicans, Irish Churchmen, and Papists, Ireland was in danger of succumbing to deep religious divide. The low-key way with which Elizabeth's Act of Uniformity had been imposed was in danger of being swept away as parties of more extreme positions felt themselves becoming stronger. An attempt to introduce the Scottish Covenant in the late 1630s resulted in the Irish being required to swear the 'black oath', confessing loyalty to the English Crown, and promising never to bear arms against the Crown, nor to undertake any form of rebellion. Many refused to swear it, and when Stafford, the then-Viceroy, attempted to use force to obtain submission, rebellion broke out. The year was 1641.

The rebellion, when it came, was of Romanists against, first, the Irish Churchmen, and later, against the Scots Presbyterians. It is said that no act was too wicked for the rebels, and much cruelty and horror was carried out by them. The Protestants were not free of similar charges when they managed to organise a defence. Charles could offer no support, embroiled as he was with his own crisis. When the Solemn League and Covenant was offered to Ireland it was rejected in the south, and readily accepted in the north. In 1647 Dublin fell, and the Church of Ireland was suppressed. Presbyterianism was in the ascendancy both in England, Scotland and Ireland. The Irish clergy were ordered to subscribe to the Solemn League or face ejection from their livings. As with their counterparts in England, the majority chose suffering for conscience' sake. Under Cromwell the Irish clergy suffered persecution, for he had labelled them 'the implacable enemies of his government'.

The Restoration

The return of monarchy in 1660 was greeted enthusiastically in Dublin. Only eight bishops had survived the Commonwealth, and of these Bishop Bramhall was the obvious leader. He became Archbishop of Armagh, the senior position. With regard to the Presbyterian

clergy, Bramhall adopted a wise course. Those who had been appointed under the Commonwealth regime were usually men of good character. Rather than alienate them he suggested that, if they would submit to episcopal ordination, they would be found livings. To the objection that they had already been ordained, he replied that he did not question this, but that, since the Church of Ireland is a national Church, it follows that one discipline must be had among her clergy. Therefore, without calling into question the validity of Presbyterian orders, and without passing judgment on those foreign jurisdictions under which others had been ordained, he offered ordination. He further pointed out that, unless the clergy were ordained, they would have no power under which to pursue any who refused to pay their tithes. The vast majority accepted this wise course of action.

In Down and Connor Bishop Jeremy Taylor did not fare so well. Despite having published a treatise on toleration in 1647, showing his intention to be as reasonable as possible to those of a Presbyterian position, it was they who weighed in against him. He met with them, was courteous and gentle, and in return they determined never again to meet him. Of their congregations, however, a different story can be told. Many, observing the bishop's godly and gentle demeanour, were moved to reject the Covenant and submit to episcopal rule. This took time, but gradually peace descended on the diocese.

Other bishops reported the ruined state of the churches in their diocese, a consequence of the Roman-led rebellion of 1641. Much effort was expended, and little expense spared, in rebuilding Ireland's churches, and in preaching the Gospel. And then James Duke of York came to the throne.

James II intended to re-establish the Roman religion. He saw that he would achieve this best by beginning in Ireland. In the south the Romanists were quietly promoted, until they had sufficient power to disarm and subdue the Protestants. When news that

a Romanist army under Lord Antrim was advancing on Derry, the civic leaders could not agree on a response. With the army in sight thirteen apprentice-boys took it upon themselves to close the gate and lower the portcullis, thus shutting out the troops.

Besieged Derry obtained no relief. The landing at Brixham of William of Orange resulted in James fleeing to Ireland. There he called a Parliament at Dublin, and passed two Acts confiscating Protestant lands and possessions, and condemning 2,445 men of all ranks to death for treason. After three and a half months of siege Derry was relieved; the following year William landed and faced James at the Battle of the Boyne. Protestant Ireland was saved.

The Latter Years

The restoration of Protestantism did not end Ireland's troubles. The penal code imposed huge burdens on Roman Catholics, who were viewed as being unworthy of evangelism. In any event, such attempts would surely have been rebuffed by a wounded and mistreated group. A further amendment of the penal code introduced a Test Act, requiring all holders of public office to take Holy Communion according to the Prayer Book rite. This barred Presbyterians from public office. An improvement was made under Queen Anne, whereby the tithes and first-fruits which used to come to the Crown were now directed, thanks to the labours of Dean Swift, to the education of the Irish clergy. Further attempts were made, through the actions of members of the Lower House of Convocation, to organise the printing of the Bible and Prayer Book in Irish, and for the appointment of mission preachers who were fluent in the language. Those in the Upper House, representing the Crown, resisted.

The greatest difficulty facing the Irish Church was how to find suitable candidates for the ordained ministry. The bishops were almost always Englishmen, the clergy houses and churches were few and dilapidated for the most part, and, apart from Queen Anne's

Bounty, there was little money to effect any changes. Where the Bounty was to be used for glebe lands, landowners refused to sell. The senior clergy ran a very efficient 'old boys' network', whereby being known to a bishop was the only sure route to preferment. Visitations revealed that among both Dissenters and Churchmen the laity were equally ignorant of Christian doctrine. Dean Swift appealed directly to Robert Walpole concerning the state of the Irish Church, and, gradually, changes were implemented. Parts of the penal code were rescinded. Test Acts were rolled back, and toleration was offered. For instance, a Roman Catholic in 1774 could obtain public office if he swore an oath to the effect that the Bishop of Rome has and should never have jurisdiction in the realm. The requirement to take the sacrament according to the Prayer Book was removed in 1780, and other obstacles to Dissenters and Roman Catholics alike were gradually removed, until, in 1829, a Romanist could stand as a member of Parliament.

In 1801 the Act of Union had brought England and Ireland into a new situation. The Church of Ireland was representative of only about 12% of the Irish population, yet all were expected to pay the tithe. It was not landowners who paid, but their tenants. The agents who collected the tax were not of a high moral character, and used any means necessary to extract payment. Unsurprisingly this caused great resentment, and occasional outbreaks of violence. Yet an attempt in 1833 to overhaul the system by rationalising the many small dioceses into fewer, larger ones (and thus both reflecting the reality of the situation and trying to reduce the rate of the tax) led in England to a High Church reaction, the Oxford Movement, which objected to what it saw as state interference in the national Church. In 1838 an Act was passed making the landlord, and not the tenant, responsible for paying the tithe.

Conclusion

In 1870 the English Parliament passed an Act disestablishing the Irish Church, with effect

from January 1 1871. The main ground for this was the undeniable fact that the Church of Ireland could hardly be called representative of her people, and nor had she ever been.

Why was it that the Church of Ireland failed to reach into all parts of society? The answer to this seems to be that it did, right up until the English invasion. Although she had sunk far from her earlier heights by then, the Church of Ireland had been able to say that she was truly a national church. Once she was anglicised she ceased to be, but was reduced to being the denomination of the English, and not of the Irish.

This is the attitude which worked itself out in the later reluctance to translate the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer into Irish, or to print them, or even to preach in Irish. Consequently the native Irish were generally unevangelised, ignorant, uneducated, and deeply unloved. The race which had produced St Columba and other faithful servants of Christ, which had continued to teach Greek into the twelfth century, and which had stood independent of Roman error for so long, was considered incapable of faith.

There is a lesson for the Church today. In our society there are some who are considered to be unapproachable, such as Muslims, Sikhs, Hindus, Buddhists, and even Roman Catholics. The present cause of reluctance is a mis-placed liberal attitude which claims that we have no right to condemn the religion of the sincere. But if the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the only revelation of salvation, then surely it must be to all people? We need to heed the warning of history, and not overlook any class where the Christian Gospel is concerned. This is what makes a truly national Church, that no part of society is out of bounds.

For all that, the Irish Church has a long and fine history, and we in England should give thanks to God for his servants in that land, who faced the same hardships common to all his people, and others beside, yet who sought, as far as they were able, to glorify God and to serve their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. ¶

STUDIES IN I PETER

EDWARD MALCOLM (Reading)

V Christian living in relation to others, 2:11–3:12 (continued)

The example of Christ our Redeemer

Verse 21 opens with a solemn reminder that Christians are called to suffering for the truth's sake, and Peter naturally sets before us the example of Jesus Christ. He states that Christ suffered for us, that he left us an example, and that we should follow in his steps. All of which he explains in the following verses.

- Christ did not sin, meaning that we, following his example, should commit no sin.
- Christ spoke no guile, no deceit, and nor should we.
- When our Lord was insulted, he did not trade insults with his accusers; nor should we.
- When our Lord suffered he did not respond by threatening his persecutors. Instead, he trusted in his Father.
- Christ bore our sins in his own body, and so has provided healing for us. We are to account ourselves dead to sin and alive to righteousness.
- As a good Shepherd our Lord has led us back, when we were going astray, into the right way.

If this language sounds familiar, it is because Peter has in mind Isaiah 53:4–9. He has not kept to Isaiah's order, but everything he says here refers to that Servant Song.

The effect is to remind us that we have been saved from disobedience and sin, by the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ, in whom we have complete healing. When we observe the manner of his self-offering we learn that we are to behave after his example. His example is not hard to understand, but fits exactly

with the pattern of what he came to do, to save sinners. The more clearly we view our Lord's death, the reasons for it, and the benefits we derive from it, and by faith in him, the more closely we will walk with him. Our avoiding of sin, 2:11–12, our submission to lawful authority, 2:13–17, and our obedience to employers, 3:18–21a, all gain their motivation from this one truth, that Christ suffered righteously for us. This is how he is our example; he did not merely complete the outward points of obedience, but his spirit, his heart, his mind, was one with the will of God. His obedience was therefore perfect in all things, as ours ought to be.

Having set out the foundation of our obedience, Peter returns to his theme.

The duties of wives and husbands

When we looked at the first part of this section, 2:13ff, we saw that human authority is to be obeyed because it is ordained of God. So too is the relationship between master and servant, or employer and employee, v 18ff. And so is the relationship between husbands and wives.

Likewise (3:1) reminds us that Peter is continuing his theme, begun in 2:13, and introduced by 2:11. He calls on wives to be subject to their own husbands, who may be disobedient to the word.

The effect of this is to say two things, first, that wives are not inferior to men generally, but are meant to acknowledge the particular headship of their husband; and, secondly, that believing wives have a particular responsibility toward unbelieving husbands in this respect. It may be hard in some cultures for a

wife to witness to her husband, but even here a man will notice the way his wife behaves. If she acts in a truly Christian manner she bears witness by action, if not by word.

The Christian wife has a higher duty even than of pleasing her husband; she must also please the Lord. So, v. 3f, her distinctive conduct is to mark her out, rather than dress or fashion. The Lord delights in godliness, and not in outward things. Remember that in 2:11-12 Peter spoke of negative things which are secret or inward, and positive things which are public or outward. Here he uses the same division, but the other way around; outward adorning of the body is public, and negative, whereas godly conduct is inward and positive. God sees the hidden things, and knows the difference between what is good and what is not.

Having given us the example of Jesus Christ, Peter now gives the example of Sarah in her obedience to Abraham. Sarah, and all godly wives, trusted in the Lord, v. 5, and they also obeyed their husbands. Sarah thus becomes the mother of the obedient, as Abraham is father of the faithful. It may have been hard for Sarah at times to obey her husband, who required her to leave home and family and become a nomad, who gave her a son then took him away, and who expected her to share in the promises of God, even of a child in her extreme old age. Peter shows that her submission and faith combined to produce a woman of great virtue. All who follow her example, whether in the family, or in society, or at work, fulfil the final thought of v 6, that we shall continue to obey without fear or terror; no threat will divert us, and none of our actions will be moved by fear.

Peter now turns to husbands. This is a Christian husband, and nothing is said of the status of his wife. Wives are co-inheritors of the blessings of faith, and so are equal to their husbands spiritually. Wives are physically frailer (usually!) than their husbands, and, it may be argued, emotionally as well. The husband has a duty to provide a steady-influence, but in a way which gives honour

to his wife. In truth, her emotional response to things combined with his more calculated response will combine to give a better response than either of them alone. But here, as in most things, the husband, being head, must have the final word. This is not permission to keep wives in subjection, but is rather part of that God-given order seen in society and employment, where obedience is the mark of faith. Where husbands and wives obey this injunction their spiritual life together will be helped and not hindered.

Principles of Christian living

Peter concludes this longer section with an exhortation. This applies to all his readers, married and single, slaves and free, masters and servants, rulers and citizens alike. None are excluded.

‘Finally’ means ‘to sum up’. ‘One mind’ does not mean ‘think the same’ in the sense of have no difference of opinion, but be sure that the things we put our minds to are wholesome and good. We allow our minds to be occupied with what interests us most. What does this reveal about what we really love or live for? If our minds are not taken up with spiritual things how real is our profession of faith?

We are to suffer together, meaning we are to feel the hurt of others who suffer for the Lord’s sake. Christ was touched with our infirmities, and we should be likewise touched with the trials of others.

We are one family, with the bonds of kinship, so we are to love as brethren, have compassion, and be friendly toward one another. But what of those outside the family?

Echoing what he has already said, v 22f, he calls on us to not repay our persecutors in kind, but rather to bless, Matthew 5:39, 44. We have been blessed of the Lord, and so should bless others; we did not deserve blessing, and if they do not seem to deserve it yet, who are we to deny them what God so freely gave us?

Why should we refrain from seeking retaliation against our persecutors? Because retaliation will not enhance life. Peter alludes to

Psalm 34:12ff, but adapts the intention of the psalmist, from a mere description of a long life, to one which aims at life worth loving, a life worth living. Compare Ecclesiastes 2:17, where boredom spoils life, with this, where a right understanding of ourselves in the Lord gives life meaning and value.

In v. 12 he alludes to Psalm 34:15f. The

Lord sees all, and so, as with the chaste heart of the good wife, we should be sure that our inner thoughts are always pleasing to him. The Lord is our God, and the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. It matters that we are acceptable to him. Let us therefore lay hold of this truth, and remember that he is over us at all times, and in all things. ¶

POETRY

‘Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee?’ Psalm 85:6

8 8 6 D

The American Musical Miscelaney



IN deep submission to Thy will,
But resting on Thy promise still,
‘Ask, and it shall be given;’

We dedicate this solemn hour
To ask Thee for the Spirit’s power,
Father! Thy gift from heaven.

We would not fix the way—the time—
The instrument—these all are Thine
To use as Thou seest best;

We only ask the Spirit’s fire
To kindle in our hearts desire,
And leave to Thee the rest.

We long to feel the heavenly glow
In our own hearts, that it may flow
In living streams around’

That we may each His love make known,
Who calls and claims us as His own,
Once lost, whom Jesus found.

Grant us, O Lord, that ardent zeal,
That ceaseless burns to do Thy will,
Thy Spirit richly given;

May perfect love each heart inflame
To magnify the great I AM,
’Til crowned by Christ in heaven.

Anonymous

BOOK REVIEWS

Editor's Note: We live, regretfully, in a day when most evangelicals, and most publishers, have abandoned the Authorised (King James) Version of the Bible. Rather, therefore, than ceasing to review most books, we try to warn readers by stating if the book uses other versions of the Bible. The position of The Gospel Magazine is that the AV is the best translation, from the true text, possessing beautiful and formative English, and has been a instrument of blessing to the English-speaking church for over four hundred years. That we name another translation does not mean we endorse it.

BE MY WITNESSES Christ's last words: our first concern

Kieran Beville

EP Books, 2013. 159 pp, £6.99 pbk ISBN 978-0-85234-926-7

This excellent book by a Baptist minister from Southern Ireland arises from the author's concern that Christians are failing to obey Christ's final command to be his witnesses 'to the end of the earth' and those few who do seek to witness are often ineffective. This message is challenging both to new Christians and to older believers who have perhaps 'gone off the boil' in this respect.

Writing from a thoroughly reformed position Mr Beville states that 'much of what is published today about evangelism is driven by an Arminian understanding of the importance and urgency of human responsibility'. The writer seeks, therefore, to provide a more balanced and biblical theology of mission. He argues that, while a person's salvation is God's choice, that does not excuse complacency about sharing the gospel, although it does 'remove the tyranny of the idea that salvation depends on our ability'.

Kieran Beville is particularly concerned with what he calls relational evangelism – reaching out to non-Christian friends and seeking gently and subtly to bring them to Christ. For this reason it is important in his view that we keep our non-Christian friends following our conversion, following the example of Our Lord who befriended sinners during his ministry. He offers a number of useful practical hints in this area, including how to deal with the 'bad habits' that some non-believers may exhibit.

JBD

CONFESSING THE FAITH A reader's guide to the Westminster Confession of Faith

Chad Van Dixhoorn

The Banner of Truth Trust, 2014. 484pp hdbk £17.50 ISBN 978-1-84871-404-5

Recent years have seen a steady stream of historical theology on the Westminster Assembly, indeed since the completion of Chad Van Dixhoorn's 7 volume PhD thesis in 2004, *Reforming the Reformation: Theological Debate at the Westminster Assembly 1643–1652*. Letham's *The Westminster Assembly: Reading its theology in historical context* (P&R, 2009) anticipated publication of Van Dixhoorn's work on *The Minutes and Papers of the Westminster Assembly 1643–1652* (OUP, 2012), 5 Vols, a superb scholarly resource. J.V. Fesko *The Theology of the Westminster Standards: Historical*

Context and Theological Insights (Crossway, 2014) has since emerged, and currently in press is a new edition (the first since 1648) of *The Westminster Assembly's Grand Debate* (Naphtali Press, 2014) on church government, and *The Confession of Faith: a Critical Text and Introduction* (Reformation Heritage Books, 2014), a critical edition of the text of the Westminster Confession by John Bower, said by Van Dixhoorn to be 'the best to date and unlikely to be surpassed'. These works are of great value for their historical context and theological insights, but for a comprehensive exposition of every part of the Confession's doctrine, elders and teachers would still likely turn to those excellent nineteenth century works by Robert Shaw and A.A. Hodge.

Carl Trueman was surely right when he wrote that Van Dixhoorn 'has spent more time and devoted more attention to the minutiae of the Confession than anyone else has ever done, excepting perhaps the Westminster delegates themselves'. It is therefore much to be welcomed that Van Dixhoorn has brought out *Confessing the Faith*, a work not targeted to academics, but to students, elders and deacons in training, and established church members. As a minister in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in a charge in Virginia (and sometime associate minister of Cambridge Presbyterian Church), Van Dixhoorn writes with a warmth and a pastoral heart, and with practical application. The work is unusual in combining a detailed commentary and exposition of every section of the Confession, accessible and readable like that of Robert Shaw, with many historical insights into the Assembly, its debates over wording, and individual contributions of its members.

The 'historic text' of 1646 is reproduced throughout, which is essentially that of Bower's critical edition with some concessions for the modern reader, except in punctuation. The Westminster Confession was revised by Presbyterians in the United States in 1788, 1887, 1903, and 1936, and the 1936 revision used by the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the Presbyterian Church in America is reproduced in a parallel column where it differs from the 'historic text'. As a subscriber to the 1936 version himself, it is unsurprising that Van Dixhoorn's doctrinal sympathies lie with that revision. Van Dixhoorn also produces a 'modern version' of the historic text in a parallel column throughout, but this version has no confessional status anywhere, and the present reviewer considers it unhelpful and unnecessary.

A much more helpful addition to this work would be a bibliography. There is a general index, and a Scripture index, but Van Dixhoorn throughout makes copious references to writings of the Puritan period, and whilst sufficient information to locate them is given in the footnotes on first mention, it cannot be assumed that a reader will read such a book consecutively from cover to cover, and so he will encounter references that he cannot easily trace. We are sure that both the author and the publisher are aware of the advantages of a bibliography, and we recommend that this deficiency be remedied in a subsequent edition.

There are a few blemishes that should also be corrected in a subsequent edition, including typographical errors on pages 253 and 247. On p. 23 there is reference to 'the Epistle of Clement', but there are first and second epistles so named. On p. 39 there is an infelicity in the expression 'members of the Trinity'. On p. 154 we fear that readers are liable to repeat Van Dixhoorn's quotation of A.A. Hodge, who 'unfortunately ... assumes' (according to Van Dixhoorn) that 'we have good reason to believe that *all* infants are elected'. The latter phrase is indeed Hodge's, but taken woefully out of context, and missing the preceding word 'although', which might suggest a subjunctive clause. Since all infants will either die or grow up, one could wrongly infer that Hodge believed in universal election, or that election can be lost after infancy. But Hodge (following the Confession) is dealing with persons *dying* in infancy, and his point is that the Confession is judicious in its use of the term 'elect infants', implying neither that all infants dying in infancy are elect, nor that only some such are elect. Chapter X, *Of Effectual Calling*, section III is not dealing

with the extent of election, but *how* 'all ... elect persons, who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the Word' can be saved. Hodge is very clear that 'It is not positively revealed that all infants are elect', so that belief that all who die in infancy are elect can never be more than a probable hope, such that the Confession's phraseology is, as Hodge correctly states, 'without the suggestion of a positive opinion upon one side or the other'.

In some cases Van Dixhoorn espouses views different from those of the Assembly, which he yet presents as facts, such as that Peter wrote his second epistle from Rome (p. 319), that New Testament references to antichrist 'do not refer to the institution of the papacy' (p. 321), and that Ephesians 2:20 'more likely ... refers to New Testament apostles and prophets' rather than NT and OT revelation.

The most problematical, and yet the most unnecessary, aspect of the work, is Van Dixhoorn's textual critical remarks on the proof texts chosen by the Assembly. In his introduction, Van Dixhoorn states that one of his aims is 'to enrich and inform the interpretation of the text of the confession by reflecting on the portions of Scripture cited by the Westminster assembly'. Yet, where reference is made by the Assembly to Mark 16, footnotes abound advising that the passage has 'weak manuscript evidence' (p. 373) or 'weak manuscript testimony' (pp. 100, 224), and the like, which is hardly the sort of reflection we had expected. Acts 8:37, 38 and 1 John 5:7 are handled similarly, and though we are accustomed to seeing modern Bible versions likewise peppered with such misleading comments, their effect is always deadening. But quite apart from the fact that the references to Mark 16 are found in over 99.9% of extant manuscripts, including some of the oldest uncials, a much more apposite comment (and a relevant historical one if textual comments are to be made at all) would be that the choice of proof texts demonstrates beyond doubt that the Westminster Assembly had complete confidence in the *Textus Receptus*.

These few critical review comments should not overshadow the usefulness of this work. Whilst we cannot go quite as far as Carl Trueman that 'There is no safer or more learned guide to the Confession', Chad Van Dixhoorn has nevertheless achieved what few academic historians could attain – to write at a level at which every serious student of God's Word can profit. Based as it is on the mature statements of Reformed doctrine of the Puritans, this is an accessible introduction to Reformed, confessional theology, with practical application. Reflecting on the searching questions that the author asks the reader throughout this work in the light of the doctrines expounded is itself of great value, and a spur towards genuine piety. Accordingly, this work is recommended for wide readership.

KMCG

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