

THE GOSPEL MAGAZINE

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Editorial

Have you ever noticed how the Scriptures stress the need for reality? The Apostle John, for instance says "let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:18). John is appealing here for reality. For him there is only light and darkness and no twilight; he sees only the true and the false, the real and the unreal and allows for no neutrality.

The Lord Jesus Christ used very strong language against unreality and make-believe. He denounced the Scribes and Pharisees in words of fearful severity and called them 'hypocrites'—those who only acted a part.

In the letters to the seven churches in the Book of the Revelation the bankruptcy of the church at Sardis is thoroughly exposed. It had a name to live and was dead (Rev. 3:1). This church had acquired a reputation as a progressive and prosperous church, it was furthermore a veritable hive of activity. There was no shortage of money or manpower. However, outward appearances proved to be very deceptive. It was as someone has aptly said, no more than an ecclesiastical corpse.

We must seek to recognise the difference between the outward appearance and the inward reality. The Bible devotes many pages to this fundamental theme. We should remember that the devil loves unreality and seeks to encourage it. We need to recall that there are such things as unreal repentance, as in the case of Saul in the Old Testament and Judas in the New Testament; and unreal faith, as in the case of Simon Magus. There is also such a thing as unreal love—the Apostle Paul says "let love be without dissimulation".

Nothing is so common today as unreality in religion and at the same time nothing so foolish. If we would not be put to shame at the last great day let us beware of unreality.

The Apostle Paul once gave some very practical advice to his readers—"examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith". He was urging them to be firm with themselves to see if their faith was just a matter of the head or of the heart. We could not do better than to follow his advice. Let us pray that God will graft His word inwardly in our hearts.

“Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you”

1 Peter 5:7

Here is a timely word, a text that is certainly relevant. In a strange and insecure world many are weighed down with care. Sometimes we have those days when everything seems to go wrong and we feel like saying with Jacob, “all these things are against me”.

Cares are a common experience and are not far to seek. They can take so many different forms, and like a dark cloud they blot out the sunshine. We need to beware of reacting wrongly to trouble, for sometimes we can indulge in self-pity and think we are the only ones with care.

It is helpful to recall that Peter wrote in time of persecution. Christians were spoken of as evil-doers, and the might of the civil power was launched against them. The Apostle wrote to comfort and encourage the oppressed, to strengthen faith and sweeten care.

The Apostle Paul, too, knew something of life's difficulties and problems, yet he knew something of a peace which passed all understanding. God's people are not immune from trouble, cares are part of our earthly lot. We should not allow such experiences to fill us with anxiety, or to divide and distract our minds, or to disturb our peace. God has His own way of lifting us above our circumstances—we have a God who cares.

THE CONDESCENSION OF GOD

How wonderful that He—the Lord of glory, the Creator of the world, the King of kings and Lord of lords—should take notice of us, the creatures of a day. The distance between God and man is incalculable, yet God has bridged it as only He could.

God's coming into the world in Christ is the supreme proof of His loving care. He cared to the extent of sending His only Son to seek and to save that which was lost.

“He careth”. God is vitally interested in us; He is not aloof from the world and its suffering. The Lord Jesus taught us to address Him as “Father”, such is the relationship to His people.

Our consolation is not to be found in our circumstances, but in God. He loves the world but He has a special love for His own.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

Can God really be concerned for the individual? The Bible unhesitatingly answers 'yes'. He is not only the Lord of hosts, but also the God of Jacob (Psalm 46:7).

He not only telleth the number of the stars, but also healeth the broken in heart and bindeth up their wounds (Psalm 147:3,4). He is not only concerned with things on a world-wide scale, but also with the individual.

He knows all about us; the very hairs of our head are all numbered and the Lord Jesus assures us that "your heavenly Father knoweth what things ye have need of"

"He careth for you"—what a difference it would make if we really grasped this truth. He not only knows about us, but also cares for us.

"I know not where His islands lift
Their fronded palms in air;
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond His love and care".

THE GENEROSITY OF GOD

He cares for us with a love of boundless width and wealth. Our care of others is often limited by our resources, but his resources know no restriction.

In the wilderness the Master's compassion found practical and adequate expression. The five thousand had their need supplied—there was no lack, indeed there was a considerable amount left over. When God fills our cup He makes it overflow.

The Lord Jesus bids us "take no thought for the morrow"—be not anxious, because God is well able to provide. He is unchanged, the refuge of His love is always open to us. When faith is tested and life brings things hard to bear and to understand—remember "He careth for you".

A LOVING INSTRUCTION

What are we to do about this gracious word? We shall be wise to act upon it and cast our care upon Him. It is not enough to have a theoretical confidence in God—we must know it in a personal way.

Take your alarms to Him, talk out your fears with Him. We are to throw off all our cares upon God in the simple and strong confidence that the God who cares will also sustain. Anxiety and fear take a terrible toll. Have no fretfulness as if you had to carry the burden alone. We can be sure of His ultimate relief—never think Him careless or indifferent.

"He careth for you"—here, then is a remarkable blending of

majesty and condescension. God stoops to be the burden-bearer of His people. In our weakness we may prove His strength and the all-sufficiency of His grace. We cannot cope in our own strength, but with Him we can be adequate for all that life may bring.

“Cast care aside, lean on Thy guide,
Lean, and His mercy will provide;
Trust, and thy trusting soul shall see
That Christ is all in all to thee”.

M.H.

Calvary

ERNEST ROE

In the past several very helpful contributions from Mr. Roe have appeared in our pages under the initials “E.R.” This sermon was preached in Luton in 1966.

“And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.” Luke 23:33.

The great mystery of the hidden wisdom of God is Jesus Christ and Him crucified. It was this theme that the great Apostle of the Gentiles was brought to a holy determination or decision to preach, namely nothing else but Christ and Him crucified.

The subject embraces everything that can be uttered, and more, by man. It will be the study and the praise of a blessed eternity to the beneficiaries of that atoning blood. Think of it, If you get there, as I trust you may, and I too, by the grace of God, we shall not be talking about one another; we shall not be finding fault with one another; we shall be occupied with one Person, One work, One Love, “the Lamb in the midst of the Throne,” Then, why should we not, God helping, be more that ever resolved every time you, brethren in the ministry, and I go into the pulpit, to take nothing else but that subject? If people are tired of it, we are sorry, but the living will be fed, and we have the promise that his dead elect shall be called thereby.

Now, first, at Calvary, this sacred place, we have the sovereignty of Jehovah in its greatest glory demonstrated. Sovereignty means God has the right to do just as He will. Now, there are many theories and many philosophies about what is termed the atonement of Jesus Christ, but, put all philosophies and theories on one side that do not touch the foundation point, namely, what is the existent occasion for the place called Calvary, or, in simpler terms, why did Christ die? Why was he

crucified at Calvary? Many will tell you—to display perfect humanity, the love of a human being even to those who were cruel to Him. Ah; He did all that and much more, but, let me ask you to contemplate this—a truth largely covered over and hardly ever touched upon in the religious press as it goes today, namely—sin. Why did God permit sin, the existent occasion for Calvary, to enter the world? I cannot tell you—no man can. There have been many theories suggested—they are but theories. Facts are what we want. There can be no fact given other than “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” Sin came into the world by the disobedience of one man, and, he being a federal, legal representative of the whole race, the whole race have sinned and are under the sentence of death and condemnation through their sin, and nothing can alter it; nothing can alleviate that condition.

But God (oh! the riches of His love, the riches of His grace), God, out of pure sovereignty, was pleased to arrange that One should come Who could deal with that problem of sin. Who would eliminate it as to its legal consequences upon His chosen people, and He has done it. He has not half done it. He has not done a part and left you and me to do the rest. He has finished it. How so? Why, by the place called Calvary where they crucified Him. There sin, that hideous monstrosity, sin, was imputed to him. “The Lord hath ‘caused to meet’ on Him” said the prophet Isaiah, having regard to the Jew and Gentile Church, “the iniquities of us all,” literally actually, legally laid upon His dear Son—no ‘ifs’ and ‘buts’—a fact—taken off or from the account of His people and laid upon His Holy Son. This explains Calvary, and nothing else can explain it. All the philosophies of modern wisdom so-called, religious or otherwise, could not—it is impossible they should-solve this great engima; if Christ did not at Calvary deal with sin, then the whole human race are going to hell, as sure as there is a God upon His throne. Strong language-not too strong; if you and I know our sinnership we will cordially agree to that.

Do you remember, can you ever lose sight of the period when God charged your sin on your conscience, when he made you say “The sorrows of hell got hold upon me?” And why was that? Because He charged, in some measure (for the measurement differs in different cases) He charged you with your sins and you could not get away from that charge. You tried to drown it. You tried to remove it by something or other, but, no, it stuck, it deepened. Now, could all the schemes that men devise ease your conscience but atoning blood? No, nothing but that. Why? Because I am a sinner and I want that which explains to me how sin, my sin can be dealt with properly, actually removed, blotted out by God. Calvary, the atonement, is the only answer. How sovereign was God to have this. Have you ever visited this place, friend? I do not

mean geographically; I mean spiritually. Can you, in any degree, say God the Spirit has made Calvary real to you? You may not be able to say, as some may perhaps say, that you have the full assurance, without doubt or fear at all that He did bear your sins there, but, somehow (you cannot explain how) your heart has a love to it, a drawing to it. It attracts you. You feel sure of one thing, that, if ever your case is dealt with rightly it must be dealt with rightly there. That alone can solve your great problem. Do you bless God for that, friend? It is nice to have the full assurance but it is not the full assurance that will save me, though I would love it, and everyone would who seeks God, it is what He did there that will do it and that alone. To have the soul attracted to it and sometimes to get, even though it may be a distant glimpse of that holy, happy place, as it now is, Calvary, oh; it is a blessed religion, and a religion without it is not worth having-no good to anyone, neither in life nor death.

It was Newton who said:

“In evil long I took delight,
Unawed by shame or fear,
Till a new Object struck my sight,
And stopped my wild career.
I saw One hanging on a tree,
In agonies and blood,
Who fixed His languid eyes on me,
As near His cross I stood.
Sure never till my latest breath,
Can I forget that look,
It seemed to charge me with His death,
Though not a word He spoke.”

Have you ever been there, friend? It is a solemn, profitable spot for you and me to be brought to visit. Then you will want the last verse:

A second look He gave, which said,
‘I freely all forgive
This blood is for thy ransom paid;
I die that thou mayst live.’

You will love Calvary. You will not want a slipshod, ministry if you know anything of that blessed experience, Calvary, in your soul.

Now, at this sacred place justification was wrought out and accomplished. And what is justification? Well, two things are embodied in that term. One is, we are made righteous. Our filthy rags of

righteousness which we may have worshipped, clung to, our religion, profession, good deeds (as we imagine) oh; when the Holy Ghost shines into your heart, you will say, "Away with it all; it is a bundle for the ragman to take and burn. Ah; what a blessing when God declares that all your filthy rags have been removed and you have been made righteous. Righteous—whatever does it mean, Well:

"So near, so very near to God
That nearer you cannot be,
For, in the Person of His Son
You are as near as He.

That takes some believing, but it is rich Gospel. It is a fact, and the weakest saint, the deepest, most hungry, most thirsty seeker after Christ is made that through the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

Then the second thing in regard to justification follows. Because you are made righteous through Calvary, God as a Judge proclaims you righteous. If you follow me for a moment (and I am anxious that you younger ones should particularly follow me because this is a very prime article of a standing or falling Church, as Luther termed it) God, as a righteous judge, in passing His verdict must not only do justice, but justice must be seen to be done.

Well, at Calvary, God judged His dear Son. How could He do that? Only on the ground that the Son of God legally became your Representative and the law beheld you in Him and He standing for you, with the result "Awake, O sword against My Shepherd, against the Man that is my Fellow, smite the Shepherd" and He was smitten, and He was righteous in smiting Him, not because He had done anything personally wrong but because He had, out of pure love to the sinner, voluntarily taken the sinner's place, and God was bound, having that in regard, to deal with Him as he would deal with the sinner, and He did.

"He hath made Him to be sin for us. Who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

And, who are they that are justified thus at Calvary? Some of you might say "Oh it is they who pray, who repent, who believe, who live a good life." Well, they do, but that is not the reason they are justified or made righteous before God. Listen to this will you? It is the word of God. "He justifieth the ungodly." Oh; it is lovely. Ah; take that word home, fellow believer, old or young, "ungodly". That is you; that is me-ungodly in thought now. You would not like your thoughts exposed as they have been perhaps today, nor what they have been while you have been in Chapel. God save us from our wicked thoughts. Words ungodly, deeds ungodly, ungodly from the moment we are born to the moment we die, and, as you live to get older (and I am sure my aged

friends will agree with me) we get more ungodly in our apprehension and feeling until, looking back, we cannot say we have spent a good life, profitably, usefully. We cannot say it. All that we can see is sin, iniquity, transgression in all that we have done, and that is not exaggerating, God knows it is not. He, justify a person like that? Well, that is what He says. In the Romans 4 you have it by inspiration of the Holy Ghost, "He justifieth the ungodly" and He justifies him without works, religious or otherwise. Without works—your bad works, your imaginary good works do not enter the question. Justified without works. What? God take a man who is ungodly in his apprehension and confession, to whom ungodliness is a grief and a burden, and a growing one, who has no religion, no prayer, no faith, no love, no humility, not anything spiritual? That is how he often feels. God knows he does. God take that man and justify him freely? That is just it, and this was wrought out at the place called Calvary.

Justice is seen to be done too, because the Apostle throws down the gauntlet and he says "Who shall lay anything to the charge of Gods elect?" Let him come along if he can; who shall do it? "It is God that justifieth. It is Christ that died." That is the ground of it, the only ground, and that is not all. "It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again." "He was delivered for our offences, and He was raised again for our justification." The two go together.

Blessed be God for Calvary. If you are made to seek justification before God, do not look at your experience, good or bad, though you will want a right one, that you will, but do not look at it as the basis of your justification before God. Look at Calvary, that did it. I am telling you what is true. You know it is true, but you are like me, you will say "I wish I could always do that," Yes, "The life that I now live in the flesh" said Paul—"I do not live in the pharisaical religion I once was in, but "I live in the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself for me."

At Calvary, one more thought, our old man was crucified with Him there. Our "old man". That is a Biblical expression to denote the corrupt nature that belongs to us each, and, as one Scotsman used to say when he was asked how he was, "I am an old man carrying an old man." How true; And the old man seems to get a bigger burden the older you get. You can see him in so many different lights and hues where you never did see him when you were younger, not that we are despising what we may see when we are younger—there has to be a beginning, bless God, yet the beginning grows. "The old man which is corrupt"—people do not like that word today. It is a bundle of corruption. There is nothing in it of holiness. It cannot be made holy, and God does not attempt to make it holy. He calls it "the old man

which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts" but it was crucified with Christ. Romans 6, "knowing this" ah; that is what we want to know "knowing this that our old man is crucified with Him." It is dead at Calvary, put to death there, legally, to all eternity; it will never breathe, never move, never trouble the child of God again, never. Now, if you and I could only be taught that beautiful word from 6th Romans "Knowing this", knowing it in our hearts, believing it in our hearts, that this which troubles me so much, that is my drawback, hindrance; when I pray it is there; when I read it is there; when we preach it is there; when you listen to the Gospel it is there. Yes, but it is crucified; its penal issue has been settled once for all, Paul, he was a very great and strong man in faith; Paul breaks out, "Do you know" he says, "I was crucified with Christ." Very bold language, Paul, but very, very true, for when the Lamb of God at this place called Calvary was crucified, His children were crucified in Him. You were there, fellow believer, all believers, all who get to heaven were there, in union with Him on the tree. Marvellous truth; lovely truth. Heaven is wrapped up in that truth. "I was crucified with Christ." And how can God, having dealt with your sin in Christ at Calvary ever throw you away at the last? Never. You may fear it; you may dread it. You may sometimes be under the temptation that He will, but it cannot be.

"Payment God cannot twice demand,
First at my bleeding Surety's hand.
And then again at mine."

Never.

At the place called Calvary the doorway to heaven was opened up, and nobody can shut it. No, the devil would if he could—that he would. Unbelief shuts it up in our experiences. Unbelief is a devil, a demon, an adversary to us. Well have we sympathy with that good man, "Lord I believe; help Thou mine unbelief." That is a beautiful word. He said it with tears, and you will say it with tears, in your heart, if not down your cheeks. "I believe; help Thou mine unbelief." You believe that you will get to heaven. Oh but unbelief says at once "No you will not; it was never for you, a person like you. You know what you have done. Outwardly you are fair; you are deceiving people—you are deceiving yourself—you, be such a fool as to think you will get through that door into heaven? Never," And something seems to say "Amen" to those suggestions and you do not seem far, at times, from despair, but Christ opened the door into heaven here and it shall never be shut, never.

May I say one word more and that is this, that, at Calvary when Christ was crucified two malefactors were crucified with Him, one on the right hand, one on the left. Here the sovereignty of King Jesus

appears just before He closes His eyes in death. One of them said "Lord remember me when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom," Now, why did not the other one say the same prayer? Ah; there is a lot in that, more that meets the ear at first. Why did he not? The plain, sober fact is that the other one had not an interest in the atoning work of Jesus Christ. You cannot get away from that. "He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied." Solemn it is to talk about it, but it is true, and it should be spoken. The other one had no interest in the atoning work of Christ, and why not? Ah; "Even so Father for so it seemed good in Thy sight," is the alone answer. If you are the thief that is crying "Lord, remember me" you have an interest; the cry the interest in what He did for you at Calvary, and remember this too, I reckon that the dying thief was the greatest illustration of the greatest faith in Christ that the whole Bible has. "Remember me when thou comest into Thy kingdom." He looks as if he had a kingdom, doesn't He? Look at Him; He is mocked, spat upon, the whole political power is against him, the whole religious world is against Him, His disciples have forsaken Him and fled. God has forsaken Him too. Hear that awful cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Yet, here is a man who, up to this moment, has lived in sin, can see He has a kingdom. You cannot find a better case, a stronger case of faith in the whole Bible than that. Every appearance was against him, "Lord, remember me; Thou hast a Kingdom, for Thou art a King, and Thou art coming into Thy kingdom and when Thou comest thither, Remember me." What a prayer. Ah; it was a prayer, and it was blessedly answered too, "Today shalt thou be with Me in Paradise" and it was so.

Now, friends, as I close the service, if anywhere, you have a clear demonstration of the fact that there are some people who are saved; there are some who are lost. The point, the point of all points is, to which class do I belong? As dear old John Warburton said on His dying bed when reference was made to this dying thief "He was my brother-my brother was that malefactor, who cried 'Remember me'." You do not feel it a disgrace, do you, a shame, no ignominy about it, to look upon that dying thief as your brother? Oh man, it is your honour. It is your honour to be able to say with him from your heart "Remember me, Lord; remember me. I am nothing but sin; I can do nothing to remedy my case; Thou canst. Think upon me, Lord, when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." And it was so, and all because of what Christ did for him at Calvary.

And the whole ransomed host will be in that kingdom of glory for the selfsame reason only. "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable Gift."

Amen.

What is everlasting Life?

A. V. McCANDLISH

Verily, verily I say unto you, he that believeth on Me hath everlasting life." Jn. 6.47. "Whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." Jn. 11.26.

We have only to look round and we see that believers do die as far as this world is concerned just as other people die.

1. Let us ask what is this natural life that is common to all of us?

We read that God made man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. Gen 2:7. Life is this God-given power that puts us into communion with the world about us. It is the power that animates the lungs so that we can breathe in the air about us. It is the power that enables us to eat and drink, and grow. It is the power that animates the eyes and the optic nerves and the brain, so that we see the things about us, and we are able to recognise them. It is the power that enables us to speak, and communicate our thoughts to others. A dead person may have all the organs of the body, but this power of communion with the world is removed by death. So this natural life is simply the God-given power of communion with the world.

2. What then is eternal life?

Jesus said, "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou hast sent." Jn. 17:3.

He also said, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Jn. 3:3. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again." Jn. 3:6,7. The Holy Spirit quickens our spirit, (not the body) so that we know God just as really as we know the things of this world. Everlasting life is this God-given power that puts us in communion with God. We receive the power to partake of the things of God. As we read the Bible, it ceases to become just a book, it becomes God's word to us. As I read it I begin to understand it, and as I receive it and put it into practice, my spiritual life is fed, and I grow spiritually. See 1 Pet. 2:2. As a living creature breathes in the air, and is invigorated, so when we have everlasting life, we have the power to

receive the Holy Spirit, and He invigorates the spiritual life so that we want to do God's will, and have the power to do it. He gives us the power to speak for Him, or to do whatever He commands. As a living person can communicate with others, so when we are born again we have real communion with God. We don't just say prayers, or ask God for things that we want, we pray in the Holy Ghost. We are taught to pray in the name of Jesus, that is, to ask for the things that are according to His will, and are for His glory. As living creatures of earth partake of the things of earth, so we receive from God forgiveness, cleansing, love, patience, strength and wisdom, and all the things we need, to do His will, and to walk with Him. We are in communion with God and with our Lord Jesus, and death cannot break that communion. When death comes to the body, Jesus is present. He simply takes us out of the body and removes us to live on with Him in heaven. There is no death, we are "absent from the body, at home with the Lord."

3. Everlasting life is the life of heaven.

This natural life that we all have is the life of earth, the power of communion with the things of earth, and the sentence of death is upon this earth because of sin. Every living thing we see around us, flowers, grass, trees, birds, beasts, and every other living thing of earth will surely die. It is a world of death. The life of heaven is everlasting, because it is all communion with God. God is eternal, and death cannot possibly sever communion with God. The life of heaven is *all* communion with God, we are told "we shall see His face," the thought is that we shall know Him far more intimately. "His servants shall serve Him, day and night," that is continually, and in this communion and service we shall experience perfect bliss. "In His presence is fulness of joy." Ps. 16:10. There He will open to us the treasures of His love and wisdom, and the wonders of His works. This life of heaven is everlasting life in all its fulness.

4. When do we receive everlasting life?

"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." Jn 3:36. It seems quite clear from this verse that there is no hope of receiving eternal life after death. "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." We receive everlasting life the moment we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. But what does it mean to believe? It is not enough to receive the truth that the Lord Jesus is the Son of God, and that He is the Saviour of sinners, and that His death was the atonement for our sins; as something that we accept in the mind. It must be

accompanied by the work of faith. Twice in James 2, we read, "faith without works is dead". The work of faith is acting on what we say we believe, that is, we are moved by the Holy Spirit to turn from our sin to Christ, to yield ourselves to Him, to be forgiven and cleansed, and to trust Him to save us. It means to yield to Him His place as Lord and God in our life. It is like the man with a parachute who not only believes in theory that the parachute will bring him safely to earth, but he leaps out of the plane trusting himself completely to it. Now may I address a word to those who say "I do believe on the Lord Jesus as my Saviour, and I have everlasting life". To be in communion with God is the greatest experience possible to any one. It is not only an experience that cannot be ended by death, but it is one that can be deepened and enriched by sorrow, by pain, or blindness or by any affliction that can possibly come to us. Again if we have this communion with God, we should have fulness of joy. 1 Jn. 1:1-4. This is the life of heaven that we begin to enjoy now. Satan will try to interrupt it, but we can be kept in conscious communion with God if only we keep on coming to our great High Priest as taught in Heb. 7:25. If we would live this life of heaven upon earth, let us learn to come to Him about everything we do or say in our daily life. This is why Paul wrote to Timothy when he was the Leader of the church in Ephesus, "Lay hold on eternal life." 1 Tim, 6:10.

The Importance of Doctrine

MALCOLM H. WATTS

"Doctrine" is not a popular word in Christian circles today. It is becoming increasingly common to hear even professing Evangelicals playing down its importance. Within our churches, voices are to be heard criticising "doctrinal preaching". Sermons with a pleasing variety of stories and illustrations are more than acceptable, but they are boring, if not insufferable, when full of doctrine. The discontented, by groans and murmurings, make their feelings known. Nor are they satisfied until others take up their anti-doctrinal stance. Things have come to such a sorry pass in certain places that the minister himself, from the pulpit, has been heard to speak disparagingly of doctrine.

All this is tragic, to say the least. We should not, however, be surprised. With certain forces at work it was inevitable. Modernism, ecumenism and neo-pentecostalism have all contributed to this general reaction against definitive beliefs. Evangelical churches have been more affected by these movements than they would like to admit. The present attitude to doctrine is irrefutable proof of it.

The English word "doctrine" is derived from the Latin "docere" which means "to teach". The word simply means teaching, the ordered arrangement of truths. To some it may come as rather a shock to learn that the Lord Jesus from the outset was a preacher of doctrine. To preach it was a vital part of His mission in this world. "My doctrine", He once said, "is not mine, but His that sent me". (John 7:16). The Gospels record for us the effects of His weighty sermons: "the people were astonished at his doctrine", (Mt. 7:28 cf 22:33). When we turn to the history of the early church, we read that the new converts, so eager to learn, "continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine". (Acts 2:42). As for the apostles, this was the accusation levelled at them: "Ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine". (Acts 5:28). Proceeding further through the New Testament, we come to the epistles. In these a quite amazing emphasis is given to doctrine. Paul's positive insistence on it demonstrates just how vital it is to the Christian ministry and to the Christian church. He writes: "Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine" (1 Timothy 4:13); "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine" (1 Timothy 4:16); "Let the elders which rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine" (1 Timothy 5:17); "All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine" (2 Timothy 3:16); "Reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Timothy 4:2). At the risk of saying the obvious, a Bible-believing Christian is the very last person who should speak a word against doctrine.

From doctrine we proceed quite naturally to creeds. Though not generally realised, it is nevertheless a fact that all Christians have a creed. The Latin word "credere", from which our word comes, means "to believe", so people who believe something have a creed. Such people should be more than willing to state what it is that they do believe. A church simply has to do that, not only because it is right to confess the truth to the unbelieving world, but also because the church's very existence is bound up with similarity of belief. It professes a common Faith. Therefore it is obliged to declare, in some authoritative way, what that common Faith is. This can best be done by putting down in black and white a summary of the truths believed.

Objections are sometimes raised to what is called rather derisively "the creed system". They need to be examined and answered.

a. The standard of the churches, it is argued, should be the Bible—not some human composition. While agreeing whole-heartedly that Scripture is the sole ground of faith, the argument carries no weight with us since the purpose of a doctrinal statement is simply to express and to explain, in a systematic form, truths found in the Word of God. It is difficult to see how anyone can legitimately disapprove of that. The practice of determining and then carefully interpreting what the Scripture says has been divinely approved: "They read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading". (Neh. 8:8).

b. Some reject all creeds on the ground that, containing the teaching of the Bible in a condensed form, they must inevitably be incomplete. The answer to this is that the inspired writers themselves sometimes bring together, in a few words, the main and salient points of an argument. We come across a verse like this: "Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum..." (Hebrews 8:1) and following those words is a very useful abridgement of teaching given earlier.

c. Acceptance of some kind of Confession, usually made a condition of membership, is a recognised way of maintaining orthodoxy in the church, but some maintain that a profession of faith, followed by believer's baptism, is more than sufficient as a safeguard. Certainly that might ensure a degree of spirituality, but it would not guarantee soundness. Besides, there is more to a profession of faith than these people seem to think. Saving faith involves knowledge and acceptance of what God has revealed to be believed—"belief of the truth" (2 Thess. 2:13)—so great care should be taken, not only to ascertain whether a person is converted, but also whether basic Christian doctrine has been believed. Every church should therefore have a list of fundamental doctrines which can be used as a touchstone.

d. It has been said that Statements of Faith give rise to an uncharitable dogmatism and can be divisive. Human nature being what it is, the very best things can be tragically misused. That credal statements are, however, in and of themselves, causes of sinful factions and dissensions, we resolutely deny. Clearly distinguishing, as they do, truth from error, they have the effect of separating believers from unbelievers, but (and let this be given proper emphasis), they have also the effect of drawing together those who accept the common Faith. Truth has always been responsible for that kind of separation and that kind of unity. The Lord Jesus actually prayed that this would be so:

"Sanctify (or, separate) them through the truth: thy Word is truth....That they all may be one". (Jn. 17:17,21).

e. Formal declarations of truth are said to set bounds to freedom of thought, denying the principle of the open Book and the open mind. This is usually a disguised plea for theological liberalism. By all means explore the mysteries of God's revelation and make progress in understanding eternal verities, but never lose sight of the well-defined limits of orthodoxy. To break through these time-honoured boundaries with the claim of advanced views is perilous in the extreme. "Whosoever transgresseth (literally "goeth forward") and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God." (2 John 9).

f. It is sometimes urged against Bases of Faith that they are highly impracticable, particularly in these days. The argument is that people with no Christian background when converted, have little hope of understanding one of these doctrinal statements, so to make agreement with it a condition of membership is impracticable, if not absurd. What are we to say to this? Well, we believe that all applying for membership should read the Statement and have it explained to them, with reference to relevant scriptures. They may not, even then, of course, understand every single thing, but providing they agree with that they do understand and do not oppose any doctrine, they should be admitted to church-fellowship. The guiding principle here is: "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations". (Romans 14:1).

g. The failure of creeds to secure the desired agreement and uniformity has also been used as an argument in the case against them. The fact is, however, that it is just not possible to tell how many damnable heresies have been avoided by means of our creeds. Without those landmarks, church-history might have described an apostasy more terrible than can be conceived. If errors have divided the Lord's people, the blame lies, not with the creeds, but with those who have failed in the business of "holding fast the faithful word". (Titus 1:9).

What New Testament authority have we for such exact and well-defined statements? There is, I believe, a great deal of evidence to show that from earliest times the fundamental doctrines of Christianity were collected together in creed-like forms.

(i) The Jews, of course, were familiar with summaries. The Law of Moses was itself the outline, as Paul tells us, of divine things: "the form (or, "rough-sketch") of knowledge and of truth in the law". (Rom. 2:20). Within those sacred books there were other valuable summaries, like "the ten commandments" (Exod. 34:28) which neatly summed up the whole Moral Law. Finding such compendiums invaluable, they

made up others and used them when teaching. A system of instruction developed among them involving questions and answers, and known as "catechising". This was most effective and meant that revealed truth could be reduced to an elementary form and then taught point by point until the whole Faith was understood. This Jewish practice may throw light on that well-known incident in Christ's childhood when "they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions." (Lk. 2:46). The Lord Jesus may have presented Himself to those teachers in order to be catechised, but in the end He was actually instructing them!

A similar teaching method appears to have been adopted by the early Christians. Luke makes allusion to the basic knowledge Theophilus had received ("those things which are most surely believed among us") and says: "thou hast been instructed (or, more literally, "catechised")" (Lk. 1:4). Dean Alford translates it "catechetically taught" and Dr. van Oosterzee, in Lange's Commentary, described this as "one of the earliest historical traces of ancient Christian catechising." There was nothing exceptional about the case of Theophilus. Apollos took a similar course of instruction (Acts 18:25) and, judging by the use Paul makes of the same word, this way of educating people in spiritual matters was a feature of early-church life (Gal. 6:6). All this suggests definite forms and patterns of instruction even in New Testament days.

(ii) In his epistles, Paul sometimes uses technical words associated with the passing on of traditions and he uses them when he wants to stress the importance of what is about to be written. The way he begins his account of the institution of the Lord's Supper is a case in point. He wants them to mark his words carefully and strictly to adhere to them, so he writes: "I received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you..." (1 Cor. 11:23). As Professor Ralph Martin observes: "The verbs he employs, 'I received...I delivered unto you' are the equivalent to some Rabbinic expressions for the receiving and transmitting of a piece of authoritative teaching, and it is important to recall that the former term implies 'the direct reception of specific words'." Interestingly enough, these are the words used by Paul a little later when he refers to the Gospel. "I delivered unto you", he says, "that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the scriptures." (1 Cor. 15:3,4). Thus he reminds them of the very words which he built his sermons around when at Corinth. Those simple words he wants remembered. "Keep in memory", he tells them, "what I preached (more literally, "by what word I preached") unto you." (v.2). They were important because they were, to quote Dr Robert Candlish, "the articles of this apostolic creed."

(iii) There are other allusions to formal teaching solemnly entrusted to those early believers. Paul tells Timothy to be a faithful guardian of it: "Keep that which is committed to thy trust (literally, "the deposit")". (1 Tim 6:20; cf also 2 Tim 2:14). This is the word to describe what is "received" and "delivered"—it is the trust itself, the deposit of truth. Certain fundamentals of Christian doctrine elsewhere called "the traditions" (2 Thess 2:15), were passed on to others in some definite form, in order to preserve the church from error.

(iv) In connection with the "deposit", Paul speaks of "the form of sound words" (2 Tim 1:13) and clearly means by it the same thing. This word "form" denotes, as Dr. Bloomfield argues in his notes on the Greek text, "the sketch, delineation or outline of sound doctrine." Timothy as an Evangelist, would need a rough plan of truth when preaching Paul reminds him of that basic draft already in his possession and tells him to hold on to it. This surely is as near to mentioning a creed as one can come without actually using the word.

(v) Another expression, similar but not identical, is to be found in the Roman epistle: "Ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you." (Rom. 6:17) It is a word, I think, best explained by the way it is used in other contexts. In Acts 7:43 it describes a "model" or "image" of something considered much greater. In Acts 23:25 it has the meaning of the "sense" or "summary outline" of a letter. Then in Hebrews 8:5 it is rendered "pattern" as there it means the "sketch" of a building. Returning to Romans 6 we feel sure that Paul has in mind, when using this expression "form of doctrine", a collection of material summarising the Christian Faith.

(vi) Our interest is also aroused by a passage in the epistle to the Hebrews. It more than hints at a fixed form of teaching and, if we are not mistaken, actually enumerates the articles of an early doctrinal summary. The writer describes the basic teaching his readers had received as "the first principles of the oracles of God" (Heb. 5:12) and, since the word translated "principles" means "rudiments", "the first, distinct elements of which anything consists", the author appears to have in mind what Dr. T. C. Edwards has called "the alphabet of Christian doctrine"—a list of those fundamentals essential to an understanding of Christianity.

A little later he calls it "the word of the beginning" (Heb. 6:1 margin), by which he means that doctrine with which they began their Christian lives. It was a carefully laid "foundation" (v.1) upon which their new lives could be built.

The list of doctrines then given (vv. 1,2) bears every mark of arrangement and order and undoubtedly has the form of an early creed.

(vii) A careful study of the New Testament will bring more doctrinal summaries to light, each of them bearing the same characteristics of formal statements. We will give one example here. Describing the church as "the pillar and ground of the truth" on account of the fact that it supports and upholds the doctrines of the Gospel, Paul then proceeds with words which look very much like a quotation from some early Christian Confessions: "God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory". (1 Tim. 3:15,16). Had we the space we would refer to other passages such as Ephesians 4:4-6, but sufficient scripture has already been quoted to support the point we are making. There are clear indications that doctrinal statements were used from the beginning.

Today the forces of unbelief are at work outside and inside the church, nor is there much sign of these forces being checked; but there is a remnant, and thank God for them, bearing their witness to the time-honoured truths of Biblical Christianity. Unlike so many "modern" Christians, their desire is for solid books and for solid sermons. They want to understand what God has revealed about Himself, salvation and the life to come. They take their faith seriously and are willing to spend time and effort studying the deep things of God. Whatever else may be offered, they can be satisfied with nothing but sound doctrine. Through God's grace, we stand with them. The Lord keep us all faithful, even to the end!

The prerogative of our Christian faith, the secret of its strength is this—that all which it has and all which it offers is laid up in Person. This is what has made it strong while so much else has proved weak. It has not only deliverance, but a Deliverer; not redemption only but a Redeemer as well. This is what makes it sunlight, and all else, when compared with it, as moonlight. And oh! how great the difference between submitting ourselves to a complex code of rules and cleaving to a Person. Our blessedness (and let us not miss it) is this—that our treasures are treasured in a Person who is not for one generation a present Teacher and a living Lord and then for all succeeding generations a past and dead One, but who is present and living for all.

Robert Hawker.

Faith's Strange Logic

CORNELIS PRONK

Psalm 25 has always been a favourite with the Lord's people because it describes so well the experiences of believers. The poet, David, is pictured here in a great variety of mental states and conditions. We hear him confessing his sins, fighting depression, crying for mercy, trusting in God, praying for help against his enemies—in other words everything that goes on in the life of a Christian is found in this Psalm.

It is evidently a composition of David's later years, for he mentions the sins of youth. And from its many references to his enemies we may perhaps conclude that this Psalm was probably written during or after the period of Absalom's rebellion.

That it was indeed a time of great trouble for David is indicated for example by v.15ff, where he says, *Mine eyes are ever towards the Lord, for He shall pluck my feet out of the net.* Not only was David in trouble; he evidently felt responsible for much of it. His distress makes him think of his sins, and this in turn leads him to confess them to the Lord and to cry for pardon. Consequently we hear him pray in v.7, *Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions.* And in v.18 he says, *Look upon mine affliction and my pain and forgive all my sins.* But it is in v.11 where we have the clearest indication of his sin consciousness and his longing for forgiveness. For there David pours out his troubles into the ears of his God this way: *For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great.*

These words show that David, the man after God's own heart, knew himself to be a great sinner—not only because of what he had done to Bathsheba and Uriah. To be sure, that double sin of adultery and murder was terrible and cost him many a tear afterwards. But David was also keenly aware of his indwelling corruptions. Did he not cry out in Psalm 51, *Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me?*

David had long been an observer of the workings of his wicked heart, and he had often asked the Lord to search and try him, for example in Psalms 19 and 139. The result of these x-rays of the Holy Spirit had been that he came to know the plague of his own heart. From a review of his thoughts, words, and deeds, he could come to only one conclusion: *My sins are very great!*

But wasn't David a child of God? Had his sins not been forgiven already? Yes indeed, David was a true believer, a man who loved God

and who had experienced the Lord's forgiving grace. But that does not mean that he did not sin anymore, or that he did not have to pray for forgiveness any more. I know there are people today who say, once you are a Christian and God has forgiven your sins you shouldn't think about sin any more. Just praise the Lord and think positive.

But David did not belong to that class of people. Even when he was old he thought of sins committed long ago, and was still bothered by them. Here we have him confessing to the Lord that he is a great sinner in need of divine pardon. Such a confession befits all of us. For whether we realize it or not, we are great sinners, all of us. To be saved it is absolutely necessary that we become aware of the greatness of our sins. Not only is this necessary in order to be saved initially, that is in the sense of coming to know Christ as Saviour, but also for those who are already believers. The Heidelberg Catechism says that for a Christian to enjoy the comfort of knowing that he belongs to Christ, he must first of all know how great his sins and miseries are. That is an ongoing process. The Holy Spirit leads God's people into an ever-increasing knowledge of their sin and guilt, so that they may also attain to an ever-increasing knowledge of Christ and His salvation. The more we realize how sinful we are, the more we will feel our need of Christ and appreciate what He has done for sinners.

David was such a Spirit-taught believer. His prayer here in Psalm 25:11 proves this. It is a most moving prayer, which also includes a most remarkable plea. Notice what he says to God: *For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great.*

David pleads the greatness of his sins as a motive why God should pardon him. This makes no sense from the human point of view, does it? It seems to violate all the laws of human logic. That logic would dictate David to say: Lord, pardon my iniquity for it is not so great as that of others. Or, Lord, I admit I have done much wrong, but there are also good things which help to balance the scales. But David knows that human logic does not necessarily operate in the kingdom of God. There one makes use of divine logic or the logic of faith.

David has been instructed in the school of the Holy Spirit. Therefore he pleads not the smallness of his sins, but the greatness. How could David make such a plea? Because he knew that the greater his iniquity was, the more he was in need of pardon. That's obvious, isn't it? The sicker a patient is, the more he is in need of medical attention. The thirstier a traveller, the more he needs water.

Yet how many there are who say, my sins are too great, there is no forgiveness for me. Maybe this is also your problem. You believe forgiveness is possible for others, but not for you. You have sinned too much or too long, you think.

Let David teach you how wrong it is to reason that way. It is downright foolish too. If you are a big sinner and you feel the burden of guilt pressing down on you, this is all the more reason why you should come to the throne of grace. No sin is too great for the Lord. In fact, the greater your sin, the more honour God receives for pardoning you.

That is the real pleading ground for David. This is what he means when he says: *For thy name's sake pardon mine iniquity*. For thy name's sake. The name of God is the same as the being of God Himself. And as that Being is glorious and exalted, so is His name glorious. Everything God does is for His own glory. This is especially true with respect to His work of salvation. When God forgives sin, He does it for His name's sake, that is, for the glory and honour of His holy name. What David means therefore, is this: the greater my sins, the greater honour the Lord will receive by pardoning my sin.

This is a sound argument. Let me give an example. Suppose a young doctor sets up an office in a certain town. He is eager to establish a reputation as a good physician. Now what kind of patients will he be looking for, you think? People with headaches, cut fingers, or upset stomachs? Will that make him famous? Will that demonstrate his great skills? Of course not. He is rather looking for patients with serious diseases. Preferably those who could not be healed by other doctors. Such cases give him the opportunity to display his healing skills.

What an encouragement I see here for big sinners! Are there such sinners reading this message? Do any of you feel that your case is hopeless? Are you afraid the Lord can't or won't save you, because you're too far gone? Maybe you have prayed many times already, but you've come to the conclusion, it's no use. That is the devil talking, you know. He doesn't want you to go to Christ, so he tries to convince you that for sinners like you there is no hope. But don't listen to the devil, that liar and deceiver. Listen rather to the Word of God as it comes to us from Psalm 25.

That Word tells you that the greater your sins are, the greater need you have to flee to Christ. But also, the greater glory will be brought to His precious Name when you put your case into His hands.

Why would Christ refuse to save big sinners, or any sinner, for that matter? Is it not His business to save? Is that not the work His Father gave Him to do? Is not His name Jesus, that is Saviour? Remember also that He did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. If you are a pharisee and come to God, saying, Lord I thank Thee that I am not as other men, Christ will reply: there is nothing I can do for you. But when the Saviour spots a poor publican standing somewhere at the back, not daring to lift up his eyes to heaven and smiting his breast and crying, God be merciful to me a sinner, then the Lord's reaction is quite

different. Then He will say: there is a case for Me; there is a suitable object for me to work with. In such an empty vessel I can pour my grace.

Can the Lord say this about you? Are you a poor sinner, in need of God's forgiving grace? Say then what David, said to God: *For Thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity, for it is very great-greater than I can ever imagine all my sins, for Jesus' sake.*

Blessed are all those who may do this by grace. They will experience what Mary once said of her great Son: *He hath filled the hungry with good things; but the rich He hath sent empty away.* (Luke 1:53).

The Epistle to the Colossians

A. V. McCANDLISH

The All sufficiency of Christ. Col. 4; 2-6.

"Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving." V.2

Here Paul calls on believers to pray, for Christ is sufficient to meet every need. He does not enter into the doctrine of prayer here; and it may cause surprise that his words were so brief. He assumes that prayer is the effective link with the all sufficient Saviour. He says, continue in prayer. Persevere in prayer, be earnest, and unwearied, and steadfast in prayer. There is the same emphasis that our Lord brought before His disciples, when He said, "which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, friend lend me three loaves: for a friend of mine in his journey is come unto me, and I have nothing to set before him? And he from within shall answer and say, trouble me not; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed: I cannot rise and give to thee. I say unto you, though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth". Luk. 11: 5-8. Clearly there is a need for us to persevere in prayer. It is not that God is unwilling to give, and needs to be persuaded to open His hand; He is more ready to give than we are to pray. Prayer is the weapon used in our warfare with Satan; see how it appears as such in Eph. 6: 10-18. It is the weapon that Satan fears; "Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon his knees." At all costs he seeks to prevent us, or stop us. He diverts our thoughts by reminding us of something else that ought to be done, he

seeks to discourage us if for any reason God does not answer us soon, he injects doubts, so that our praying becomes feeble, and lifeless. Here is God's call, "continue, persevere, and watch in the same with thanksgiving," Prayer is like the two wings of a bird; if one wing is clipped the bird cannot rise into the air. If our prayers are to be all that God designs, there must be thanksgiving as well as supplication. The great object of prayer is that God may be glorified, and it is written, "whoso offereth praise glorifieth me." Ps. 50:23. When our prayers seem to be earthbound, and our desires are cold and formal; then let us begin to sound forth the praises of our Lord, and proceed to give Him thanks for all His loving kindness, and for all that He is in Himself, and for the gift of the Holy Spirit, and for all that He has done. Then the Holy Spirit will lift our prayers, and kindle them with his divine fire.

"Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds; that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak." v 3,4.

Paul was a prisoner in Rome awaiting trial before Nero. He was chained to a Roman soldier night and day, and had very many discomforts. He does not ask believers to pray that God will deliver him from this galling captivity. He keeps before himself, and the believers the great commission that God had given him; and asks them to pray that God will open for him a door of utterance to declare the mystery of Christ, for which he was a prisoner. What was the mystery of Christ? It was "that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of God's promise by the gospel." Eph. 3:6. Far from asking them to pray that he may be set free to return to Asia Minor, he asks them to pray that he may be enabled to use the opportunity that was now his. Rome was the very centre of Gentile power, and he felt that he had been sent there by God, to proclaim the gospel there. It was for this he asked them to pray that God would open for him a door of utterance. He did not seek an easier sphere, or easier conditions for himself, but that God would give him grace to execute his commission just where he was. How revealing are the words, "that I might make it manifest, as I ought to speak." Though he was an apostle, he recognised his own need to be given right words to speak. It is the Holy Spirit who convicts of sin, and who opens blind eyes to see Christ as Saviour, so he asks for prayer that his words may be given to him by God. What a lesson there is for us as to the purpose of prayer. How selfish and unspiritual are many of the prayers uttered. May we learn in our praying; not to seek our own will, but the will of God, and the glory of the Lord our Saviour.

"Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time." v. 5.

From the subject of prayer, Paul now turns to that of witness. Notice that he speaks first of behaviour, not of words. Our Lord said, "Ye shall *BE* witnesses unto me." The Chinese have a proverb, "What you are is shouting so loudly, that I cannot hear what you say." Paul says, "Behave wisely to those who are not yet believers in Christ." Be like wise merchants who, when they see a precious commodity, buy it; so that they can sell it at a profit. Every day we are presented with opportunities to serve others, to give help to some in need, or time to listen to one who is in trouble, the opportunity to invite one who is lonely to have a meal with you, and to pray with him. These are precious opportunities, let us take care not to let them pass us by, for they will never return. Let us seek to put ourselves entirely at the disposal of our Lord to minister to others all day, and every day. We are to be as He is in the world. Did He not say, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Matt. 5;16.

"Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man." V. 6.

This does not mean that your speech should always be religious; it does mean that all our words should be gracious. We are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and our words should be prompted and directed, and checked by Him. All our words should be truthful, kind, considerate, modest, and reverent. We should never utter hasty, hurtful, or ill-tempered words, or speak without thought. They should be words of which Christ would approve, words that cheer, and uplift and make people the better for hearing them, words that are in harmony with our christian profession. "Seasoned with salt". Paul says, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth." Eph. 4; 29. Salt preserves, and arrests corruption. Our words should check filth, slander, blasphemy, gossip, or any other evil thing. Salt was always used with the offerings, Lev. 2;13. So then all our words should be such as can be spoken into the ear of God. There should be no foolish talk, no idle jesting, nothing empty or flippant. Salt gives savour to food, so our words should never be insipid, or just commonplace. We should know how to answer every man. How can this be? There is many a frivolous question put to us, and some may well come from hungry hearts. None but the Holy Spirit can read the heart, and know what is the word to speak. Our Lord said, "Be filled with the Spirit." Eph. 5;18. Only when He has the complete possession of our whole being will He direct us how we are to answer every man. In all this matter of praying, or witnessing, our Lord Jesus is all sufficient. Let us learn to cling to Him in our weakness.

For Younger Readers

CARINE MACKENZIE

WATER

When you turn on the tap to take a drink of water, do you ever think what a wonderful gift that is? If the water happens to be turned off in your home for a few hours, you soon realise just how important it is.

No water in the house means—no drinks of tea or coffee or juice—no boiled eggs—no jellies—no water to wash yourself or your clothes.

Factories use lots of water too. It takes about 10,000 litres of water to make a car, for example.

Water is vital for all living things. God sends us the rain for the plants and crops and animals too. Without rain, the land would become a barren desert.

Once when Moses was leading the Israelite people on their long journey through the desert away from Egypt towards the promised land of Canaan, they travelled three days without finding any water.

Eventually they found some water and started to drink thirstily, but this water tasted bitter and they could not bear to drink it. The place was called Marah which means "Bitterness". The people complained to Moses, their leader. "What shall we drink," they pestered him.

Moses knew who could help them with this problem. He cried to the Lord for help, and God gave him a wonderful answer. God showed Moses a tree growing nearby. When Moses had thrown the tree into the waters, the waters were made sweet and good to drink.

God miraculously provided water for his people to drink.

Later on his journey, after travelling through the wilderness of Sin, the Israelites camped at a place called Rephidim. Here there was no water at all. Again the people began to moan and complain to Moses, "Give us water to drink", they said. "Why did you bring us from Egypt to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst". Had they forgotten what God had done for them at Marah? It seemed like it.

Had they forgotten God's kindness for them in so many ways? Perhaps they had, but Moses took his problem to the Lord. And God told Moses what to do.

Moses took his rod in his hand and hit the rock in Horeb and out from that rock poured water—enough for all the people.

Yet again God had supplied their needs. God had provided the gift of water for the Israelite people.

God has also provided a wonderful gift for his people who trust in him, and Jesus compared this gift to water.

He once said to a woman in Samaria "Whosoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life".

Just as the gift of water is essential to natural life, so the gift of salvation is essential for spiritual life. We are told that the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life. There is nothing for us to pay for this gift. "Whosoever will let him take the water of life freely." Pray that the Lord will make you willing to take a drink of water out of the wells of salvation.

The Bible speaks of several different places where drinking water can be found. Fill in the blanks to find some of them.

1. David longed to have a drink from the _____ in Bethlehem. (1 Chron. 11.17)
2. The Lord promised to guide his people and to make them like a watered garden and like a _____ of water. (Isaiah 58.11)
3. Paul and Silas went to the side of a _____ near Philippi where prayer was wont to be made. (Acts 16.13)
4. People pressed to hear Jesus as they stood by the _____ of Gennesaret. (Luke 5.1)
5. The angel of the Lord found Hagar by a _____ of water in the wilderness. (Genesis 16.7)
6. The hart parts after water _____. (Psalm 42.1)
7. There is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a _____ called Bethesda. (John 5.2)
8. God brought _____ out of the rock for the children of Israel. (Psalm 78.16)

If we love Him, it is because He first loved us. If we choose Him as our chief joy, it is because He first chose us as His portion. But if the affections of our souls do not follow hard after Him in love, we have no cause to hope that we have part or lot in His eternal choice. It is only through the links of personal holiness that we can trace our way back to the first link of election, and onward to the last link of glory.

—Dean Henry Law.

David Morgan of Ysbytty Ystwyth

IRFON HUGHES

Mr. Hughes is pastor of Wycliffe Independent Chapel, Sheffield.

1983 marks a number of notable anniversaries, Martin Luther's birth, and William Wilberforce's death, few will mention or even know that it is the anniversary of the death of David or Dafydd Morgan of Ysbytty Ystwyth. It is true to say he was a remarkable servant of God and few will merit such a tribute as this at his funeral.... "Mr. Morgan's name will be held in great respect as one who was an instrument of God who did great things.... God raised Mr. Morgan to wake the Churches and to shake the world from its sleep. Dafydd Morgan of Ysbytty was the instrument in God's hand of my conversion, and when the lead-mines will be no more, posterity will still look lovingly to this little spot as the home of Dafydd Morgan—the Revivalist."

These words, from the oration by one of Wales' greatest scholars and principal of her first University College, demand we look at this man, and the incidents in his life which led to such a remarkable and fulsome tribute.

Dafydd Morgan was born in a mill house between David's Bridge and Cwmystwyth in Cardiganshire (now Dyfed) in 1814. His parents were godly people and belonged to the Calvinistic Methodist Church (now the Presbyterian Church of Wales). This denomination was the direct result of the great revivals in Wales during the 18th century. Although Hywel Harris, Daniel Rowland, William Williams Pantycelyn and others were Anglicans, their ministries led to the establishment of groups of believers linking together, giving each other nurture and mutual recognition of ministry and gathering in vast Associations once or twice each year in North and South Wales. In 1811 they ordained men in order that they might have ministers to administer the Sacraments, and in 1823 drew up their Confession of Faith which firmly established them as a separate denomination. They continued to experience local and national awakenings, and espoused the classic doctrine of the Reformation, exemplified by powerful preaching and careful Church discipline. Dafydd Morgan was born and brought up in

the Calvinistic Methodist Church's early days as an independent body and undoubtedly drank deeply of its earliest history and present power.

We know very little of Morgan's early life and our first record is of great concern about his soul. He was about 22 years of age at this time, and had no conviction of his being a true believer. He seems to have desired to join the Church, yet realizing the standards required to be a true member of it, hesitated to put his hand to the plough of spiritual commitment. However, whilst attending a service in Cwmystwyth he was soundly converted—an experience which remained a reality even at the hour of death, since amongst his last words were "The old Covenant made in Cwmystwyth is as firm as ever it was."

Having now assurance of salvation as well as experience of it Dafydd Morgan immediately joined the Church, taking a prominent part in all its activities, Sunday School, Temperance Meetings, as well as prayer meetings, society meetings and Sunday Services. Although his work as a carpenter sometimes took him a considerable distance from home he was rarely if ever absent from week night activities, and had been known to run nine miles after his work to be in his place for prayer or society meetings. Much devotion to the means of grace puts us to shame in an age of cars and public transport.

From his earliest days as a Christian Dafydd Morgan was to become known locally as a mighty man of prayer.

This remained his hall-mark throughout his life. Neighbours and friends would visit his home at the time of family devotions simply to hear Dafydd Morgan at the throne of Grace, and his praying was said to be more powerful than his early attempts at preaching.

In 1841 his employer, an elder in the Calvinistic Methodist Church urged Morgan to preach—but he was reluctant to do so until he heard a sermon at the church where he had been converted. Feeling that the Gospel should be preached with greater conviction and clarity than in that particular sermon he offered himself as a local preacher to the Calvinistic Methodist Churches in his area. In 1843, he and another young local preacher John Jones were instrumental in a local revival in Llanafan, Dyfed, but of this we know little.

Despite the vigorous history and glorious beginnings of the Calvinistic Methodist Church the 1840's and 50's saw a decline in its zeal. Some of its strongest leaders died, and the passing of these giants in preaching and doctrine allowed the new methods taught by Charles Finney to percolate through a decidedly Reformed Church. Finney's lectures on Revivals had been translated into Welsh in 1839, thus giving them a wide readership. This allied to a decline in doctrinal precision and enthusiasim led to their spread and rise in popularity in these years

of indolence and decline in spiritual zeal. A decline in truth sadly leaves a vacuum into which all manner of error awaits to be poured.

From 1843 onwards Dafydd Morgan gave himself entirely to preaching, supplying different pulpits every Sabbath, as was the custom in the denomination at the time. In 1848 he was recognized as an official preacher, but was not ordained until 1857. He was both a popular and powerful preacher at a time of great preachers, and was particularly known as a vigorous preacher of the Law, and Gospel duties.

It is said that people would say if he was announced as preacher "Ah! we'll be called to account next Lord's Day—Dafydd Morgan is here!!" Although he wasn't a well-educated man in terms of scholastic achievement, he read in both English and Welsh, and had read most of John Owen's Works, Thomas Watson, Matthew Poole and some Welsh Commentaries on the whole Bible along with Gurnall's "Christian in Complete Armour", also in Welsh. Only one note in English is found in his diaries.

'When I am to die to Jesus I'll cry,
For Jesus hath loved me I cannot tell why
But this I do find we two are so joined,
He won't live in glory and leave me behind'.

A fragment of a sermon in Welsh runs thus:-

What is religion i.e. what is Christianity

- a. It is not an accident but a principle—for
if it was an accident all Jews would be
truly religious.
- b. it is not judgement—or none would have hope.
- c. it is not feeling
- d. it is not conscience...

His preaching was "tightly woven like corduroy rather than loosely woven as linen". He loved to deal with the excuses of worldly sinners, at ease in Zion, and those who listened without commitment. Yet all was done with warm evangelistic zeal and intention.

Above all Dafydd Morgan, like Asahel Nettleton had a deep knowledge of human nature. In a tribute to him by Evan Phillips who accompanied him during the revival, he says that previous to the revival he had heard him preach and whilst the Godless were slain, the Godly were refreshed. But he had never met anyone who knew human nature better than he. He knew exactly how to question new converts, to draw out what he wanted to know—recognized pride and pain. He would not break nor quench, but he was equally firm with the arrogant and foolish.

From 1849 onward it was noticed that he never missed an

opportunity in public prayer to beseech God to revive his work. And one can be sure that this was true of his personal praying as well. And the need was great.

According to Dr. Eifon Evans in his book "When He Is Come", there were 15 revivals in Wales between 1762-1862 so that "they serve to justify the appellation given to Wales, for that period at any rate 'the land of Revivals'. Yet, there had been no national ingathering of souls since the death of John Elias in 1841. He himself was saying.

February 11, 1841. "It is evident that sermons...are very defective as to light and power...The cause no doubt is that the Lord has withdrawn himself in some degree from us the preachers...many alas are content to go through the work without the Spirit's influences".

Conditions had not changed 12 years later when John Hughes of Liverpool wrote:

"We must agree that the face of Methodism 50 years ago and before then is different from what it is now. There was a greater irresistible zest in the ministry; more solemnity in the convictions; the wheels of the religious machine turned faster; revivals were more frequent and more ardent; the experiences of the saints were sweeter, and their conversation more blameless".

Despite some local quickenings such as in 1841, and 43, an apathy, an insular involvement with more social aspects of religion eg. the singing festivals and Sunday Schools had made Wales neither "hot nor cold". In the main fanciful, oratorical, showy preaching was the order of the day.

But there were many who were concerned. Let Dafydd Morgan speak for them:-

1855. It is a great thing to feel that the Lord will revive His work...As we read Church History we see that His cause has always ebbed and flowed. But whenever the Lord came near to save there has been an expectation of His coming amongst the Godly. Along with prayer we should do as much as possible to revive God's work. This have the Godly always done—they prayed and they worked.

1857. The Gospel is the power of God to quicken sinners....We are strangely willing to go through the means of grace without signs of the Spirit's activity. In Scripture the saints would not go out if the Spirit was not with them...He is yet a living God, and the power of God's Spirit is yet at our service.

The spirit of expectation typified by David Morgan did not go unsatisfied by a Sovereign and Almighty God.

On June 18th, 1858 Humphrey Jones, a Welshman who had emigrated to America in 1854, landed in Liverpool on his way to Wales. He was a Wesleyan Methodist, and had been used of God in the revival

which was then sweeping Eastern America. He had seen many hundreds profess conversion under his ministry and was filled with an earnest desire that his homeland should experience similar blessings. He wished to "make every effort to awaken Zion. No matter how much you preach to the world it will be of little value without first of all awakening the Church from her sleep."

David Morgan, despite misgivings regarding Humphrey Jones' Arminian doctrine and Finneyite methods, heard him preach on October 1st, 1858, and felt he had trivialized his own calling, and had lacked energy and passion in such a holy calling. He spent some time with Humphrey Jones but remained in travail of mind and spirit until October 5th when we read:-

"...he went promptly to bed and slept for some hours. He awoke about 4 a.m. and the moment he awoke he knew he had undergone some mystical change...He was aware of some strange brightness in his faculties, and that the Omniscient God had touched his memory in some remarkable way. David Morgan himself said "I awoke about 4 a.m. remembering every religious thing I had every learnt or heard."

David Morgan notes boldly in his diary—"The visitation began".

And so it had. Initially there was a twosome—Humphrey Jones and David Morgan. Gradually the order was reversed and eventually David Morgan went everywhere on his own. Wales was to know eighteen months of tremendous religious awakening during which time somewhere near 100,000 people were added to every Protestant denomination in the Principality, and the quality of life socially and religiously was fundamentally changed. Two testimonies show how wide spread was the influence of this work of God. From Cardiganshire he wrote "Almost all the workmen here were drunkards and Sabbath breakers. They came to work on Monday with bruised faces and black eyes. The change is beyond anything I have ever known. The men work in groups or companies, not one company begins work without its own prayer meeting. They sing beautifully. On Saturdays they meet underground to thank for the mercies of the past week. Hardly a house lacks a family altar". To quote more fully from Thomas Charles Edwards' eulogy to David Morgan, he said

"I remember that meeting in Bala Theological College... At that time I was studying great things but I had never realized that they could be, or felt them to be, great truths to my soul. I knew Butler's proof of an eternal state, and Paley's evidences for Christianity. Although I felt their force as arguments and could not refute them, I was in doubt regarding the truth as a whole. But two simple men from Cardiganshire came to Bala (David Morgan was accompanied by Evan Phillips of

Newcastle, Emlyn—who was Mrs. D. M. Lloyd Jones' Grandfather), preaching Christ simply, having little education but having more than that. Eternity came to the meeting, heaven came to the place. The chapel was full of eternity, full of God. The change I experienced was sufficient testimony to me of the divinity of Christianity. Up to that time I was a lump of damnation but in that meeting I became a new creature...

"Before the revival the Churches in our land were fainting; a wave of apathy and practical aposticism had spread over Wales. Little was done and it was virtually impossible to get young men to do anything. But God raised Mr. Morgan to wake the churches and to shake the world from its sleep."

Although 45 years of age David Morgan was given remarkable strength to travel the length and breadth of Wales on horseback, for 18 months. But the power of the Revival vanished as suddenly as it had appeared, and the visitation was over by the early months of 1860. During the work however he preached and exhorted well in excess of twenty times a week as well as counselling and encouraging young believers, advising on books and group instruction and travelling significant distances between meetings.

With the ending of the Revival David Morgan reverted to his itinerating role. He married in 1865 and seven children were born to him and his wife. In 1868 he became the stated minister at Ysbytty Ystwyth. He became involved with social and political questions and this was to bring trouble to him which clouded his usefulness. In 1878 after attending the funeral of his thirteen month old daughter he was seriously injured in a fall from his horse, and was severely disabled. During October 1881 on a preaching tour in Anglesey he began to preach with some of the old power of former years but in 1883 his health deteriorated and he died on October 27th 1883 almost exactly twenty five years after that glorious period of usefulness began.

It is not my purpose in this article to assess the character and effects of the revival, or some of the methods used in it—although it is an important part of David Morgan's life. But such a man used of God deserves a brief assessment and we see in him:-

1. A man of integrity.

Throughout his life this characteristic stands out. He was concerned for his own spiritual honesty from the first movements of grace of his soul to his death. This honesty and integrity inevitably caused difficulties in other things, but in spiritual things it was noble and admirable. He never debased spiritual truths to further his own ends and demanded of himself the zeal and passion which he expected of

others. In him there was no guile, and he never sought personal glory or gain from his work for God.

2. A man of discretion.

Nowadays everyone in the spiritual limelight are celebrities and books, articles and opinions flow readily from them. David Morgan never entered into debate or justification regarding the visitation of 1859. Its own effects and power were justification in themselves.

Neither did he speak of the profound spiritual experience he had. Although we know of occasions where remarkable events seem to have occurred he neither spoke of them at the time or subsequently—they belonged to his fellowship with God. He emulated Paul's reticence in II Corinthians 12.

Above all he did not speak of those things divulged to him privately. None could identify themselves in his illustrations and sermons. He was concerned for God's name and glory. Christ was all to him, and the salvation of souls his great concern. Of him could be said that he never strove but in emulation of his Master, a bruised reed he would not break nor quench the smoking flax.

3. He was a man of great commitment.

One has said that "In 1859 men praised the Redeemer." He was committed to raising up Christ before his hearers, and for them to live Christ throughout their lives. We may gather therefore from inferences and conduct that the great doctrinal truths of the Gospel had preeminence in all that he did. He was unhappy with anything which moved from the great central truths of the faith, and encouraged the formation of classes for doctrinal instruction of all converts. His own careful though limited reading prevented frothy and superficial religion. Unfortunately his own lack of discernment led to men who had already sympathy for the German School of Theology being able to continue to hold their opinions under the Revival umbrella. If he had been more aware of the dangers inherent in their position he could have saved Calvinistic Methodism and Wales in general from subsequent depredations.

4. A man of great piety.

We have already noted that his praying was a notable feature of his private and public life. How often we discover this when we examine the lives of famous men of God. But he was faithful in prayer. He had prayed for ten years publicly and privately for a reviving amongst the Churches; such faithfulness stands as a rebuke to many in our day.

He was also a great worshipper. Many Christians, not least ministers are not great listeners anywhere, and sadly most often in God's house.

This was not true of David Morgan; whilst not a noisy worshipper, he was a fervant worshipper and paid attention to all who preached the Word—no matter how humble or famous.

No opportunity was missed to do good especially the household of faith. Again he confused this principle with political action, but at least his motives were pure even though his actions left somewhat to be desired. But his desire to put God's principles into godly practice marks him as a man whose Saviour was his delight.

His piety remained to his death bed; how encouraged we ought to be that in our darkest hour God never leaves us nor forsakes us.

As we look at dark days what we desire is a similar quickening amongst the Churches. Oh! that God would rend the heavens and bring us to the bail again, but let us remember too that God uses simple ordinary men, and women, in His work. Great faithfulness and great likeness to Christ are the paramount weapons in God's armoury. As this applied to David Morgan may it apply to us as well.

A Prayer Memorial

IN LOVING MEMORY OF ANSWERED PRAYER—1918

This article recently appeared in the Newsletter of Alexandra Road Congregational Church, Hemel Hempstead and is reproduced by kind permission. We trust it will be an encouragement to our readers and a further reminder of the faithfulness of God.

"My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." 2 Corinthians 12:9. I have always believed in specific prayer and would like to relate a perfectly true story of many years ago as a memorial to God's wonderful grace to our family.

At the end of the First World War (some of you will remember) when the soldiers returned home, they brought with them a terrible epidemic of influenza, which was a killer. People were dying like flies in the village where I lived, daily. So many graves were needed that ordinary labourers were asked to help dig them and communal graves were instituted. I only tell you this to point out the pathos of that time.

My family was no exception in this, we were *all* in bed at once with influenza. Mother had just given birth to a sickly child and she herself was desperately ill, and therefore was unable to feed her little boy but relied on the daily delivery of milk. The Church people were very kind

in helping but one by one, they too were stricken. So there we were left, with no-one to help and by four o'clock in the afternoon, no milkman had called and the sickly child lay unfed, *but* Mum relied completely on God and here I quote, "Whatsoever ye shall ask in Prayer, *believing*, ye shall receive." Matthew 21:22. Needless to say that ill though Mum was, she prayed in anguish for help.

"If ye ask anything in my name I will do it." John 14:14. As I lay in bed, I suddenly heard the sound of a pony and a trap. Did it stop? Yes; right outside our house and there was a sharp rap on the front door. Dad said, "I wonder who it can be, we are all too ill to get up." Mum replied, "I know who it is, the Lord has sent the milk." I had heard of Jesus being a Shepherd and a friend, but never a milkman before. I say this in all reverence I do know now that He took on the form of a servant. See Phil 2:7, and John 13: 4-10. Mum then called to me as I was better than the others and said, "Put on your dressing gown dear and answer the door, the Lord has sent the milk."

I shall never forget what I saw when I opened the front door. There stood an old lady with a huge glass jar full of rich, creamy milk and a pony and trap outside. She said, "you may think that I am a silly old woman, but the Lord has sent the milk."

How I carried it in I do not know, as I was only a very little girl, but I knew it was very precious. The old lady said, "I had to come, I heard a voice that never stopped.

Take Mrs. Waterhouse milk!

Take Mrs. Waterhouse milk!!

Take Mrs. Waterhouse milk!!!

Mum called to me to ask how much it was. The old lady from the farm some miles away replied, "Dare I charge the Lord for milk? He sent it."

Every afternoon for another fortnight at about four o'clock, the little old lady would arrive with the jar of milk until the milkman was better.

"Now to him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." (1st part of Ephesians 3:20) Mum never knew, but as she fed my sick brother, she also fed the little girl that fetched the milk in for....Life.

Q.W.

Satan cares not how spiritual your intentions or how holy your resolutions, if only they are fixed for tomorrow.

J. C. Ryle

Blythswood Tract Society

Virtually from the outset the Blythswood Tract Society has been giving away Bibles. It all began in 1966 with some students in Glasgow who were impressed by the need to bring the gospel to those in the city who seemed to have no thought of God. They met together with some friends and decided to print a tract, sharing the cost between them. They handed out their tracts on Glasgow's busy streets.

The group continued to meet and pray for God's blessing and His guidance. They felt led to offer further help in the shape of God's word. So the second printing of tracts contained the offer of a Bible on request. The work developed apace. Friends gave money, the first order for 100 Bibles was placed and the society moved into a rented office in the Blythswood area of Glasgow, hence the name. At the same time since so few in Glasgow seemed to be being reached the Society began tract distribution and giving and selling Christian books door to door in the city.

The open-handed desire to meet needs with the Word of God has characterised all the subsequent work into which the Blythswood Tract Society has entered. The work has spread into book vans, bookshops, book agencies and substantially abroad into Third World countries.

Bookvans were the first outreach development and were purchased, converted, stocked and driven to villages and local sites to serve people in the countryside. They are available for door to door colportage, running a market stall and for agricultural shows and other open air gatherings.

The initial interest shown in the book vans in the local places they served frequently led to the establishment of Christian bookshops. There are now sixteen in Scotland, four in England and two in Northern Ireland. Like the vans, the bookshops are very much mission work, sited where there is a spiritual need, staffed sometimes by voluntary and sometimes by paid workers. It is not unusual for the Society to put £4,000 to £5,000 of stock into a shop because the area needs a witness and a testimony, not because it is commercially viable as a Christian bookshop.

Before the Society was very old, its offer of free Bibles in the tracts was bringing in requests from overseas. Now the majority of the 30,000 Bibles despatched every year will be going to the Third World. Blythswood's main areas are Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, Uganda, India, Italy and China. Normally grants of tracts are made to local pastors. The tracts are published in the local language and frequently with no

reference as to their source, for there can be a wall of resistance to outside influences. Everywhere Blythswood works with the locals and serving them.

In Italy the Society has been drawn into a conventional missionary support role backing the Fede Viva (Living Faith), an evangelistic group founded in 1976 by an ex-priest Franco Maggiotto. The China connection is through the Tallach family, Dr. Cameron Tallach and his wife Dr. Ishbel Tallach, who were friends of the Society before going to Taiwan. Presently concerned with the Vietnamese Boat People in Hong Kong, their ultimate destination is mainland China. Blythswood takes care of some family needs and supply the Tallachs with literature.

There are many other aspects to the work of Blythswood. There is a considerable trade in books by post. The Society publishes a quarterly magazine to a mailing list of 7,000 friends and supporters.

Committed people are the very essence of Blythswood Tract Society. There are 45 of them including staff in the bookshops who see their work as their mission. In a tribute John Ross the leader of the work says "God in His lovingkindness has given us workers who share our desire to spread His Word. Some in our shops work on a voluntary basis, giving of their time to the Lord and to this area of His cause. Others who work with us receive a salary far, far below anything they would receive in the secular field. Some have given up well paid jobs to help us in the work. Even so, our monthly salary bill is a large one, as only a few of our shops are self-supporting. We long to be able to give a little more to our workers for basic needs in these times of high prices. But the Lord does provide".

The work of the Society never stops. It is increasing all the time, at home and abroad. The letters bear witness. A West country village policeman who came across one of the Society's tracts writes and confesses, "in 20 years as a policeman I've seen much depravity including my own". The Society sent him a Bible and a couple of Christian books plus a little counselling on where to go to worship.

The work of Blythswood has gone from strength to strength and today many thousands of people are able to read the good news of Christ. We warmly commend the work to our readers.

Christ sends none empty away but those who are full of themselves.

C. H. Spurgeon.

The Gospel and Entertainment

DENIS K. CLARK

In recent years there has been a sudden and quite widespread introduction of dance, drama, mime and rock music into worship and evangelism by charismatics and evangelicals. In many evangelical churches it is now quite common to find 'sketches' slotted into a service of worship, and in some churches stages are being erected alongside pulpits. The Gospel is being mixed with entertainment.

A member of one Christian Rock Band when interviewed by the press said, 'Our songs do have a message but we don't want to ram it down people's throats. We just hope to give a good night's entertainment.'

An evangelical church arranged a Rock Opera. It was presented in church after evening service on Sunday and there was said to be standing room only.

One Vicar invited a troop of liturgical dancers to dance at his worship service on Sunday and said afterwards that the congregation had been challenged by this more than by most sermons. Literally and metaphorically the stage is replacing the pulpit in many of our evangelical churches. Some churches which had a reputation for good gospel preaching and witness are now known better for their 'presentations', humour and music.

Many Christians seem to be thrilled by all the changes and innovations and some are even leaving the churches.

We might consider these activities under the following headings:

Is there a Biblical warrant for such activities?

Can one honestly find a real or concrete warrant in Scripture for dancing in worship or for drama in evangelism? Carefully look up all the references to dance in scripture and you will find that many of them are associated with either sensuality, drunkenness, murder, idolatry or indulgence. There may be occasional and isolated dramatic events recorded in scripture but can they really be used to justify the setting up of Christian theatre, street theatre and road shows? A careful reading of the Acts of the Apostles and of the epistles will show that no dramatic arts were used by the Apostles. Can we not learn most about the methods of presenting the gospel by studying the lives of Jesus Christ and the Apostles as recounted in the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles? There we find preaching, teaching, disputation and personal

witness backed up by much prayer. There is no sign of plays, musicals or dancing. 'For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith, the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.' (Isa 55:8-9).

Has God appointed THE way for spreading the Evangel? Romans chapter ten will provide us with a clue. 'How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a PREACHER? (Rom 10:14) 'How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things.' (Rom 10:15).

Are they a suitable framework for the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ?

The use of the folk arts in worship and evangelism often involves a good deal of laughter and fun, there is an atmosphere of entertainment. But the gospel deals with very serious issues; those of death and judgement, heaven and hell. When considering these things seriously is there really any room for much humour or entertainment, and is there likely to be any depth of conviction of sin or unbelief in an atmosphere of light-heartedness?

The bible speaks of the foolishness of preaching (I Cor 1:21) and of the offence of the cross (Gal 5:11) and one wonders whether these two aspects of the gospel are present when dance or drama are in use. Preaching is offensive and foolish to the natural man, he tends to despise it, but what is his attitude to dance, drama and rock?

It is often said that Jesus had a sense of humour: we do not need to deny that he had, but in reading scripture we find that he rarely used it and that he was a man of sorrows and grief, (Isa 53:3) he wept over the sins and the apostasy of the people. (Lk. 19:41-42) Is it not true that the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is more associated with tears than with laughter? The centre of the gospel is a stark cross on which the Lord Jesus died in agony for our sins. These things sober us and fill us with awe.

Are they supported by the history and tradition of the

Reformation churches?

A newspaper columnist recently described dance as a time-honoured way of worshipping God and said that there was no reason why the devil should have all the dancers. But from the Reformation to the present day how many biblical churches or societies have ever used dance or drama as a means of communication? how many have ever used either in worship? The pre-Reformation miracle, morality and mystery plays followed on from liturgical drama and were presented

before uneducated people. After the Reformation in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries it was the Jesuits in the southern half of Europe who made use of drama in their colleges. (Encyclopedia Britannica 'Western Theatre') The Reformed churches have always believed in education; teaching people to read the bible for themselves. They have always believed in preaching. These methods surely must be priceless and approved of God in his word. '---from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.' (2 Tim 3:15) There is no substitute for reading and preaching!

Book Reviews

"Heaven on Earth" Thomas Brooks. Banner of Truth. Pp. 320 £2.45.

This is reprint of the first Banner paperback edition of 1961, with updated covers, happily retaining "the Vale of Dedham" by Constable.

This famous puritan begins by proving from Scripture that believers may in this life attain to a well grounded assurance of their everlasting happiness and blessedness. He shows from Rom. 8:32-34, that Paul bases his teaching on assurance, not on any special revelation, but on the experiences and knowledge common to all the godly. The purpose of Scripture is to help believers to obtain assurance. Many do so. God has promised assurance to his people, and the Spirit of God exhorts believers to seek assurance. The rest of the book expounds the experiential teaching of the whole Scripture as assurance is affected by it.

Someone may ask, Why reprint books written in the seventeenth century? My reply is twofold. First, though I have more opportunity of hearing preaching than formerly, I cannot recall ever hearing the subject of assurance taught in the pulpit, and second that so much teaching these days, again by all schools of thought, is so shallow, and not soundly scripture based, that it behoves both the people in the pews, and the person in the pulpit to turn again to the unrivalled masters of the art of scripture exposition, in the three great ages,—the Reformation, the Puritan era, and the days of the Evangelical revival. A closing quote:-

"Ah, Christians! the want of assurance hath made many changelings in these days; but if ever you would be like Socrates, if ever you would be like the philosopher's good man, that is Tetragonos, four square,

that cast him where you will, like a dice, he falls always sure and square, then get assurance of everlasting happiness.

Assurance will make you souls like the laws of the Medes and Persians, that alter not; it will sweeten the darkest day, and the longest night; under variety of changes, it will make a man sit down with Habakkuk, and rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of his salvation. Hab. 3.17-19".

W.J.P.

Urban Harvest, Roy Joslin, Evangelical Press, 336 pp., pbk., £4.95.

This is a book about evangelising industrial and inner-city communities—the type of missionary literature that has always been severely neglected in evangelical circles. This book reveals some of the problems and offers some instruction in connection with reaching the working-classes with the Gospel.

What are the working-classes? Why are they generally alienated from the Gospel? How does the working man think today? How can we think biblically concerning him and his needs before God? In order to answer these and related questions the author delves into history, sociology and New Testament principles of evangelism. Illustrating his teaching from the experience of Paul and Barnabas at Lystra, the author considers the information given in the New Testament about that area. Its location, population, occupants and language, its education and religion are all examined before a comparison is made between three sermons preached by the Apostle Paul as he adapted the message to reach different types of 'congregation'.

Since the centre from which the working-classes are to be evangelised is the local church, the 'Nevius principle' of the Church as self-supporting, self-governing, self-educating and self-propagating is advanced. This leads naturally to a consideration of the best means of nurturing working-class converts in the Christian faith and lessons are drawn from the experience of John Wesley and his class-meeting.

It is important for Christians to live and work and witness in urban areas. If Christians are the salt of the earth are they not meant to be in the place where they can arrest the rate of decay and 'bring out the flavour of the commodity being preserved'?

These again are some of the questions that the book seeks to answer—questions that are highly relevant whether or not we actually live in an urban area.

The book is brought to a close with an examination of Responsibility, Reformation and Revival and the reader is left with the disquieting feeling that all is not well in the state of evangelicalism.

Mr. Joslin is to be congratulated for writing such a book. His work will certainly not please everyone. There are many of his positions with which one might wish to disagree but no-one surely can fail to appreciate that he had produced a very timely, provocative and challenging book.

R.R.

"The Christian's Great Interest" William Guthrie, 207pp, paperback, £1.45, Banner of Truth Trust.

A review of this lovely work by the Scottish minister Guthrie (1620-1665) seems almost superfluous. It was his only published book and has been reprinted many times. Dr. John Owen said of it: "I have written several folios, but there is more divinity in it than in them all". Suffice it for us to give some of the chapter headings which will show the scope of the volume: "Ways by which men are drawn to Christ"; "The new creation as an evidence of an interest in Christ"; "Reasons why some Christians doubt their interest in Christ"; "How to obtain a saving interest in Christ"; "Difficulties explained and answered" (including such a problem as "the sin against the Holy Ghost"); "Personal covenanting with God in Christ". The volume concludes with short extracts from sermons of Guthrie. The bleak scene depicted on the front cover of this edition by no means illustrates the spiritual warmth of its contents! For a clear, simply-worded, yet Scriptural treatment of personal relationship to Christ, this sweet work is warmly commended to all, especially to those young in the faith.

H. J. W. L.

Mary Jones and her Bible. by M. E. R. 151pp. Paperback £1.75 including postage. Gospel Standard Trust, 8 Roundwood Gardens, Harpenden, Herts.

The story of Mary Jones the poor Welsh girl who walked 25 miles from her home to Bala to purchase a Bible is one of unfailing interest. It has almost become a Christian classic. The fact that she had saved so long and walked so far in order to obtain a copy of the Scriptures so impressed Thomas Charles that he was moved to form a society to make the Scriptures more readily available.

This reprint is from the 1896 edition and retains the Victorian illustrations with black and white sketches of the places mentioned. Of special interest are the pictures of Thomas Charles and Mary Jones's grave.

The book is attractively produced and is worthy of a wide circulation.

M.H.

Our Magazine

We think that readers will like to have a brief account of the annual meeting of The Gospel Magazine Trustees which took place in early spring.

Mr. D. C. Relf was in the chair. He read and commented upon a portion of Psalm 143, dwelling particularly upon v. 10—"Teach me to do thy will".

The absence of the Editor on account of Mrs. Handford's serious illness, was much regretted and both of them were remembered at the Throne of Grace. The Trustees also felt the loss of the Rev. Donald Hill, who died suddenly in November last; and accepted with regret the resignation, due to ill-health, of the Rev. J. Caldwell Peers. The chairman welcomed as a new Trustee Dr. Derek A. Scales, of Cambridge.

The accounts for 1982 showed a healthy balance despite an increase in general expenses. While there is a natural loss of readers every year because of death, infirmity and other causes it was encouraging to find that once again the circulation of The Gospel Magazine had shown a net increase. The warm support of so many readers, and their donations over and above the annual subscription, which has remained unchanged for several years past, indicates the affection with which many regard the Magazine. Correspondence from near and far—we have a considerable overseas readership—testifies regularly to the appreciation and blessing felt and received through the warm, biblical and experimental articles in which the doctrines of grace are maintained and expounded.

Interest is being shown in the re-publication of the volume of stories for young people—*The Book on the Window-sill*, which the Trust issued some years ago. The pen-name of the writer, "Damaris" covers the identity of one who retains an active interest and support for our Magazine. The Trustees are grateful to another friend through whose help it is hoped the re-publication will take place.

If God drop not down His assistance we write with a pen that hath no ink.

William Gurnall.