

JULY — AUGUST 2000

THE GOSPEL MAGAZINE

CONTENTS

Editorial — 109

A Powerful Look: M. Handford — 110

For Younger Readers: C. MacKenzie — 114

The Doctrine of Election — Part I: D. N. Samuel — 116

What is a Christian?: S. K. Evers — 122

The Shadow of Good Things to Come (4): J. Seaton — 125

The Testimony of William Timothy Foley — 130

Boldness and Access with Confidence: D. J. Bradshaw — 136

Book Reviews — 142

PUBLISHING THE TRUTH SINCE 1766

THE GOSPEL MAGAZINE

Editor

EDWARD MALCOLM

15 Bridge Street • Knighton • Powys • LD7 1BT

edward@revmalcolm.freeserve.co.uk

Incorporating the Protestant Beacon and The British Protestant

New Series

No. 1613

JULY — AUGUST 2000

Old Series

No. 2613

Editorial

THE FAITHFULNESS of God was the burden of the last editorial by the Rev. Maurice Handford, written when failing eyesight was obliging him to relinquish his much-loved editorship, faithfully carried on over twenty years.

In a day when every change seems to prove for the worse, we, God's people, have learned with good reason to fear novelty. We agree with Lyte in joining together "*Change and decay in all around I see*": and feel they are indissolubly linked. We therefore ask God's mercy that the *Gospel Magazine* will be given grace to abide undecayed and to ride out these evil days of change for change's sake.

It is a simple truth that every human foundation has an unwritten law contained in itself, that it will turn into its own opposite. Take, for an example, the Churches set up by the Reformers. Today it would not be an exaggeration to say that they actively seek to reverse the Reformation, and to be the opposite of what their founding fathers intended. One could observe the same of secular institutions, for instance the setting up of Communism in Russia in 1917, reversed by Gorbachev so recently. However, supremely this rule applies to Gospel endeavours.

The need for God's Holy Spirit to be merciful to us and to guard against this fascination with the positions our fathers rejected, has never been more needful. The pressure to conform to today's thinking has seldom been stronger. Therefore, in taking on this task, I not only wish to pay my respects to the last editor, but also to reassure you. Let us take Malachi 3:6 for our own: "For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." Jacob's sons through the centuries proved fickle and unreliable. If we rest on the arm of flesh so must we, but we rest on the Word of our Lord Jesus Christ, and are at peace. "Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away."

O Thou that changest not, abide with me

A Powerful Look

A Sermon by the former Editor

“And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter” (Luke 22:61)

POSSIBLY, of all the Apostles, Peter is the best loved, not because he was in any way perfect or more cautious or more understanding than the others – indeed at times he was rather rough and clumsy – but there is something about Peter that is intensely human, so much like ourselves in many ways. He was impulsive, he was impetuous, he made mistakes, he sometimes spoke unadvisedly, as we all do, and these are things which attract us to him. He was intensely human. But we need to say this, that Peter did not expect to fail the Lord in that time of need. This was the last thing he intended – it was farthest from his mind, because he meant to follow Jesus to the very end, to follow Him through thick and thin. I think we need to say this too, that the record of Peter’s failure has been preserved, not for Peter’s shame, but for our instruction, because you remember how the Apostle Paul put it: “Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.” I think, too, when we look at the narrative there is a striking contrast. You see, we have our Lord on the one hand, forsaken by His friends, unjustly condemned by the Judiciary, cruelly treated by His enemies, and there He is, betrayed, but He shows no sign of fear or resentment. On the other hand, we have Peter, with so great an Example before him, and he shrinks from the slightest chance of recognition. Also there is a tremendous contrast in Peter himself. Think of Peter in Gethsemane. He is there, as bold as a lion. He takes up his sword and he seeks to do battle, and you remember how he struck at the servant of the High Priest, and yet in the Palace Courtyard he seemed to be a different man – he cowers before the word of a servant girl.

I want to look at the downward steps of Peter. What made him deny the Saviour in that supreme hour of need? Let us remind ourselves of Peter. He was an eminent Apostle. He enjoyed special privileges. You remember how he had been the spokesman for the rest of the disciples at Caesarea Philippi and had professed true faith in Christ and declared Christ’s deity – “Thou art the Son of God” – and the Lord gave to Peter a special commendation: “Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.” This is the man given so great privileges, and yet he is overcome by fear and denies the One he loved so much. You remember too to what lengths Peter went in his denial. He said, “I don’t know the Man at all. I have never set eyes upon Him, and I don’t know who you are talking about” – and yet this is the One he has companied with for no less than three years. Why? The Saviour had been in his house and healed Peter’s mother-in-law and, what is more, the Saviour had saved Peter from drowning in the Sea of Galilee, and all that Peter can say at

that time is, "I do not know who you are on about. You are speaking about someone who is quite unknown to me." He denied all knowledge of Him.

Now, what then were the steps, what were the reasons that Peter fell so badly? I think, first of all, because of self-confidence. He said to our Lord when the Saviour spoke of the coming time: "Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended" and "Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death." Peter's fall, I think, came from his over-confidence in himself and in his own ability, in spite of our Lord's warning, when you remember the Lord said to him, "Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat" – he was warned more than once, but Peter was confident that he would be able to hold on and to hold out and to be faithful to the end to the Saviour. He was foolish and cock-sure. That old saying is so true that "pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall" and Peter must have read many times in the Scriptures (because he knew his Bible well) that great word in the Book of Proverbs: "A man's pride shall bring him low." If ever there was a case in point it is here in Peter. So we need, then, to beware of self-reliance in any form. These things are written for our learning. You remember Paul again speaking to the Corinthian Christians says: "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God." That, I think, was the first step in Peter's downfall – over-confidence, self-confidence.

The second reason was this, that he failed in prayer. He was prayerless up to a point. You remember in Gethsemane how our Lord took the three disciples, Peter, James and John, and He left them and went a stone's-throw from them, but He gave them a commission, to "watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation". And Peter and the other disciples failed miserably in this respect, and the Lord came back to them and with astonishment said: "What, could ye not watch with me one hour?" And the Lord addressed His comments particularly to Peter. Peter gave way to drowsiness and fell asleep. Well, this sometimes can be where we slip up and fall in the Christian pathway. Maybe we are very confident on the one hand but, maybe, we are not holding on in prayer as we should, and, if we become confident in ourselves we, in effect, say, "Well, what is the need to cry for help?". Peter failed because he failed to pray.

Then notice in verse 54 of this chapter in Luke that "Peter followed afar off" – "Then took they him, and led him, and brought him into the high priest's house. And Peter followed afar off." In Gethsemane when the soldiers came on the scene we read that "all the disciples forsook him and fled". Peter seems to have gathered a little confidence now but he is following afar off. The Saviour had been arrested, and He had been brought before the High Priest, but Peter followed at a distance. How impossible all this seemed! Is this the same man who said, "I will go to prison and prepare for death itself rather than to deny him"? He followed afar off. How about ourselves? Are we following closely or is it to be said of us spiritually that we are following afar off? Are we as keen as we used to be in

Christ's service? is the question we need to put to ourselves. *First* overconfidence, *then* prayerlessness. He "followed afar off".

But what about *worldliness*? Look again at verse 55 where it says there was "kindled a fire in the midst of the hall . . . and Peter sat down among them". He mingled with bad company. He sat down . . . among them. Following in the distance, he had grown cold, and he was attracted by the enemies' fire. Oh! there appeared to be little amiss in what he was doing in that action, but danger lurked in that company. He "sat down among them". You know, the story is true in present-day life. When a Christian becomes cold in heart then the fires of worldliness will provide a sort of attraction. Surely there was something sadly wrong that the disciples could sit down with the enemies of Christ and feel to a degree at ease among them! Peter sat down among the Christ-rejecters. He "followed afar off". He entered into the company of the worldlings, and so it issued in that oath of denial. How quickly he was caught off his guard – a maid with a sharp eye and an equally sharp tongue, blurted out the accusation. "Why," she said, "you are one of them." And Peter's denial was made under a very small provocation. No threat was used, no violence was employed, but it was enough to knock Peter off his balance and to overthrow his faith. He staggered at the very sight of Christ bound and on trial for His life, and Peter's faith collapsed and went adrift, and so there came from him the three-fold denial. Oh! how his conscience must have lashed him because he knew he was bitterly failing His Master when He needed him the most. This is what Mark's version says: "He began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this man of whom ye speak." So vehement was his denial that he resorted to swearing and cursing. But I want you to remember that Peter was still an Apostle, a disciple, though a disobedient one, and *thank God* that was not the end of the story.

Let me come to the text which says, "And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter". Now, all the four Gospels record the story of Peter's denial and his quite swift repentance, but it is only Luke who tells us that the Lord turned and looked on Peter, and that look brought loyalty back again. It caused Peter tears – he "went out, and wept bitterly" – but that look changed the man. Just think of the situation. There was Christ surrounded by blood-thirsty and insulting enemies, in full prospect of the Cross, and yet the Saviour turned and looked upon Peter. He looks at His erring disciple, and how sorrowfully He must have looked, but there was deep emotion in that look, and I think it really preached a sermon to Peter, one that he would never forget. "The Lord turned, and looked upon Peter." There was an unforgettable look in the Saviour's eye. The eyes have a language all their own, and sometimes they speak more than the lips can ever say. He "turned, and looked upon Peter". But there was infallible yearning in those eyes. He felt so intensely and we cannot really grasp the emotion that the Saviour felt. Oh! what power there was in that look! I think, for one thing, that look speaks of Christ's knowledge, because the Saviour was a prisoner at the far end of the hall. He was intently occupied with the questioning and the argumentations of the Priest. He

hardly was likely to have heard Peter's denial, although it was with oaths and cursing, but, when He turned and looked on Peter, it is as though the Saviour said: "I have heard it all – all the details – the denials – the oaths – I have heard it all."

You remember how John says after the cleansing of the Temple that the Lord "needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man." And is it any wonder that, after the resurrection and the ascension, when they were filling up the ranks and electing someone to take the place of Judas, Peter and the others prayed, "Thou, Lord . . . knowest the hearts of all men". Yes, that look showed Peter that the Saviour knew it all. Was it not Hagar in the Old Testament who said, "Thou God seest me"? He knows everything. There is no escaping from His eyes. Oh! we may hide tolerably well from man, "but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do".

The question is, What does He see when He looks into the inner recesses of our heart? Well, he spoke of the knowledge of the Saviour, and also he spoke of the pain of the Saviour. Peter had never thought that he was hurting his Master by his denial – he only thought of saving himself, but, in effect, Peter's denial was a spear-thrust into the side of Christ before the time, and, no doubt, Peter said in his heart, "I have wrung His heart with yet another pang, I have joined the ranks of the tormentors". So Peter failed in the hour of the Saviour's greatest need.

It also spoke of something else. It spoke of love. Does the Lord cease to love us when we fail Him? Thank God He does not. What would we do if He did? But He doesn't love our sins, He doesn't condone our sins, but His love for His own never changes. There is a lovely word in the 13th chapter of John where it says of the Saviour, "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end". And there is that magnificent verse away back in the Old Testament in Isaiah where God says: "I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee". He looked on Peter with saddened disapproval, but there was no spark of anger; love was steadfast, unmovable and firmer than any rock.

What did that look do for Peter? Well, I think, for one thing, it tore away the veil that hid Peter's sin from his view, and, in a flash he saw the ugliness of the deed he had done, and it melted Peter's heart into sorrow, and Peter found out by experience the truth of the word in Jeremiah where it says, "it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord", and no doubt Peter felt again keenly the words of Solomon: "The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways". Oh! he fell so foully and, in spite of repeated warning, is it any wonder that "when he thought thereon, he wept" bitterly?

Let me take you on a stage further. After the resurrection the Lord sent a very special message to Peter. He hasn't cast him off. This message was sent by the angels to the women who came to the tomb in the early dawning of Easter Day. The message was, "Go your way, tell his disciples *and Peter*", and you remember when the disciples came back from Emmaus they came back post haste and when they got to the upper room the friends there said to them: "The Lord is risen indeed,

and hath appeared to Simon". You remember too that Peter had been singled out and that interview no doubt was very personal. What the Lord said to him, we do not know – who knows? But subsequently on the sea-shore when the Saviour prepared breakfast for them, He gave Peter a new commission. He was asked a three-fold question: "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" And you remember the commission: "Feed my sheep"; "Feed my lambs." What a searching question the Lord put to Peter. He did not say, "Have you fully repented? Are you fully persuaded never to fall again". No, that was *not* the basis of the question. The question simply was this: "Do you love Me?" – "lovest thou me?" *That*, I believe, is the most searching question of all, for without love to Christ, there can be no vitality in our religion. Knowledge, orthodoxy and morality alone do not make a Christian. This is the question – "Do we love the Saviour?" "Lovest thou me?" We must have personal feeling towards Him. So Peter could take up his pen and write: "Unto you therefore which believe *he is precious.*"

The Lord had shown Himself very precious to Peter. He restored him, re-commissioned him, and I believe at the end of his life, Peter never forgot the tender look in the eyes of Christ when "the Lord turned, and looked upon" him. That look recaptured him. It held him in life, it held him in death, and Peter gave the rest of his days in unstinted service to the Master. He counted not the cost, he went out to serve Him because He was so precious to him. "The Lord turned, and looked upon Peter."

And the Lord looks on us, for the promise is, "where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst". May that look call us back into a more whole-hearted service! Amen.

M.H.

— • —

For Younger Readers

CARINE MACKENZIE

SING TO THE LORD

LYING IN BED early one morning wide awake, I could hear the marvellous sound of what we call the "dawn chorus" – the birds singing with full-throated enthusiasm. It sounded so tuneful and cheerful and is a reminder to us that after the long winter, spring is here and summer is on the way.

The Bible tells us that the "time of singing of birds" (Song of Solomon 2:12) is a sign that the winter is past.

God cares for the birds. Not even one sparrow falls to the ground without His knowledge. Have you ever seen a blackbird high up on a branch pouring out its beautiful song which seems like a hymn of praise to its Creator?

How much more reason do we have to sing praises to our Creator. Not only has He made us but He has given His only Son to die for His people on the cross to save them from the awful misery of hell and to bring them at last to heaven to be with Himself.

God commands us to serve Him with gladness and to come before His presence with singing (Psalm 100:2). He wants all people to make a joyful noise to Him. The book of Psalms is a praise book that we can sing when we are happy or when we are troubled.

James' advice to the people who received his letter was to sing psalms if they were feeling merry.

Paul and Silas were in prison in Philippi with their feet firmly fastened in the stocks. At midnight they prayed and sang praises to God in these difficult circumstances (Acts 16).

King Jehoshaphat was being attacked by the people of Moab, Ammon and Mount Seir. He prayed earnestly to God for help and guidance. One important part of his strategy was to appoint a choir – singers to the Lord who would sing, praising the beauty of holiness as they went out before the army (2 Chronicles 20:21). Their song was: "Praise the Lord; for his mercy endureth for ever" (Psalm 136). As they were singing and praising the Lord the enemy was overcome. Jehoshaphat and his army had a wonderful victory.

The saints of God in heaven sing too. John in the Book of Revelation tells us that he saw them in his vision singing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb. "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest" (Revelation 15:3-4).

So when we hear the little birds singing their songs of praise, we should be reminded to sing our songs of praise to our great God. If we trust in the Lord Jesus as our Saviour our singing becomes new. God gives us a new song in our heart by His grace.

BIBLE SEARCH

Find the missing words in the verses. If you have the correct answers, the initial letters will spell out the words *Sing Praise*.

1. And he hath put a new _____ in my mouth, even praise unto our God (Psalm 40:3).
2. The levites and the priests praised the Lord day by day, singing with loud _____ unto the Lord (2 Chronicles 30:21).
3. And he [Moses] said, . . . the _____ of them that sing do I hear (Exodus 32:18).

4. Singing with _____ in your hearts to the Lord (Colossians 3:16).
5. And David and all Israel _____ before God with all their might and with singing (1 Chronicles 13:8).
6. It (the wilderness) shall blossom abundantly and _____ even with joy and singing (Isaiah 35:2).
7. Sing _____ unto God our strength (Psalm 81:1).
8. Let the _____ of the rock sing, let them shout from the top of the mountains (Isaiah 42:11).
9. Let the _____ be joyful in glory; let them sing aloud upon their beds. (Psalm 149:5).
10. Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion and _____ joy shall be upon their head (Isaiah 51:11).



The Doctrine of Election

Its Importance and Relevance for the Church Today

DAVID N. SAMUEL

PART I

IN THE NEW TESTAMENT we see the Church under two aspects – the temporal and the eternal, the visible and the invisible. The visible Church is recognised in its Gospel, sacraments and professing members. The invisible Church is known only to God, and is composed of those who are truly regenerate and predestined to everlasting life by the eternal decree of God the Father. Thus we have those two statements held in juxtaposition: “As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Galatians 3:27) and, “Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his” (2 Timothy 2:19).

The visible Church, according to this teaching, includes all who have been baptized and have made an open profession of faith. It includes Judas, Ananias and Sapphira, Demus, Simon Magus, and Hymenaeus and Philetus. The invisible Church includes none but those who are truly faithful and endure to eternal life.

Thus the Church is represented not by one circle, but by an ellipse of two different foci. The visible and the invisible Church, the outward professors of

Christian religion and the elect, are not commensurable. These two aspects and representations of the Church have to be held in tension, and must never be separated. It is the invisible Church – the New Testament concept of God’s elect – that governs and controls our understanding of the visible Church, its sacraments, its membership and all its outward manifestations.

For example, when Paul speaks of the efficacy of the Word and the sacraments, it is never divorced from this understanding of election. The Word is only efficacious in God’s elect. “But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the eyes of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them” (2 Corinthians 4:3-4). Likewise, baptism is only efficacious in the elect. It cannot be otherwise. And, by the same token, God’s decree to save is not limited to the general means God has provided. He can disclose His saving purpose to Cornelius, a Gentile outside the Church, and the baptism that follows is but the confirmation of the saving grace that has already been communicated.

So, then, we find that the eternal decree and purpose of God is the controlling factor which governs every other consideration in the teaching, activity and orientation of apostolic Christianity. To leave out election and predestination is not merely to leave out something that is incidental or peripheral to it, but to deprive it of its fundamental axiom. It is like Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark.

In any properly balanced doctrine of the Church this element has always been present. Because we are dealing with the overlapping of two circles, as it were, it gives the doctrine a double-sided and paradoxical appearance, which to the minds of some amounts to a contradiction. Paradox, however, is inescapable when we are dealing with the penetration of time by eternity. The phenomenon if the visible Church is both continuous and discontinuous with that of the invisible. Like a stick broken in water, the visible Church gives the appearance of discontinuity with the visible. Yet there is a real and essential relationship which must be maintained, though the membership of the one is not commensurable with the other.

This paradoxical character of the Church has been reflected in every truly great Christian theologian. They have never tried to resolve the paradox by eliminating one side of it, and they have never neglected or rejected the doctrine of election. Where the doctrine of election has been lost sight of, the Church has invariably fallen into error. An overemphasis upon the doctrine of election is, if anything, safer than its neglect. But the soundest and best position is that where the biblical balance and proportion is held.

SAINT AUGUSTINE’S TEACHING OF THE CHURCH

I shall take two examples from Church history. First we find in Augustine (354-430) this double aspect of the Church brought out. In his controversy with the Donatists, who had separated from the rest of the Church over the question of whether those who had lapsed under persecution should be readmitted, the

question he sought to answer was *Ubi ecclesia?* Where is the Church? He answered it in two ways. First, he sees the Church as the universal institution which embraces all faithful Christians, and is led to the conclusion, "It is the sure judgment of the whole world that they are not good who cut themselves off from the whole world". He attaches such a high importance to the visible, institutional Church as to assert in his anti-Donatist treatise on baptism, that there is "no salvation outside the Church".

Yet those who think this is Augustine's final word on the Church are mistaken, as are those who interpret him one-sidedly. Augustine was too great a man and too profound a theologian to be so limited and circumscribed. This was the mistake of Cardinal Wiseman, who wrote in 1829, that the great Augustine (by his words on schism) was condemning Anglicans in advance.

Augustine has something else to say in answer to the question, Where is the Church? which Cardinal Wiseman did not mention. It is found in the key word "predestination", which Augustine derived from St. Paul, and which he hands on to his great disciple John Calvin.

The true Biblical complexity of Augustine's understanding of the Church is seen in his recognition of the fact that the Church does not consist merely of the visible institution and its members, but in the company of the elect, the unknown company of the predestinated.

On the one side of the Church is a visible society, an identifiable homogenous institution girdling the whole world as a unity, the only Church of God's redeeming grace, the one ark above the flood. On the other side the Church is invisible, save to the eyes of God alone, and its true members the unpredictable monuments of His sovereign grace. Job, the great outsider from Idumea, is for Augustine, the type of the elect, for he reminds the empirical Church as it strides the centuries, that, according to the predestination of God, there are many sheep outside the fold and many wolves inside.

It is this double-sidedness that preserves the balance in Augustine's teaching and prevents him from descending into error. He never resolves the antinomy of the Church which is both visible and invisible. For him, as for Calvin, God's sovereign grace presupposes all the institutions of the Church as its means, and they are ultimately of no significance without it.

Had Augustine succumbed to the temptation to eliminate one side of the paradox – i.e. either election or the institutional Church – he would not have been the seminal influence upon subsequent theological thought which he afterwards became, but would have lapsed either into mysticism or sectarianism. This latter was the mistake of Augustine's contemporaries, who in the controversy with the Donatists appealed to the authority of Rome . . . "Rome has spoken, the matter is settled". This famous epigram, falsely attributed to Augustine, misrepresents his position. In his anti-Donatist treatise, *The Unity of the Church*, there is not a single reference to the Roman see as the divinely ordered centre of Christianity, or to Rome's Petrine claims.

Let me here try to illustrate what I mean by error arising from the elimination of one side of the paradox. If, for example, you have undue emphasis upon predestination to the neglect of the visible institution, then you lapse into mysticism regarding the Church and the errors commonly associated with it. Some time ago I was at Speakers' Corner, in Hyde Park. A large, burly man had set up his stand with the words on it "The Invisible Church". A voice from the crowd said, "And that must be the invisible man". At which everyone roared with laughter. Throughout the history of the Church there have been those who, because of their insistence upon the invisible Church, have been led to disparage the visible institution, and in consequence have failed to treat with the seriousness it deserves, its ministry, sacraments and discipline.

Likewise, where you have an unqualified emphasis upon the visible Church, to the neglect of its mystical and transcendent nature, you have a narrow and exclusive sectarianism. Whatever appeal may be made to numbers, the Church of Rome is in fact the Roman sect. Newman argued against this in his *Apologia*, in an attempt to rebut the charge. He argues but does not convince. Rome exalts the institution and eliminates the invisible Church by equating it with the visible – indeed eliminates Christ by making Him interchangeable with the hierarchy, and so makes the institutional Church fantastic and blasphemous in its claims.

As Bishop Ryle observed in his tract on *The Church*:

"To give to the visible Church the names, attributes, promises, and privileges which belong to the one true Church, – the body of Christ; to confound the two things, the visible and the inward Church, – the Church professing and the Church elect, – is an immense delusion . . . once confound the body of Christ with the outward professing Church, and there is no amount of error, into which you may not at last fall. Nearly all perverts to Rome begin with getting wrong here."

And Bishop Ryle continues:

"Once get hold of the idea that Church government is of more importance than sound doctrine, and that a Church with bishops teaching falsehood is better than a Church without bishops teaching truth, and none can say what we may come to in religion."

His words need to be weighed very carefully in these ecumenical and spiritually perilous days, as well as the wise words of Hooker on the subject. "For the lack of the diligent observing of the difference . . . between the Church of God mystical and visible . . . the oversights are neither few nor light that have been committed."

WYCLIFFE'S VIEW OF ELECTION AND THE CHURCH

I come to Wycliffe, the second example I have chosen of a great man who discerned the antinomy or paradox of the nature of the Church, and used the

doctrine of predestination and the invisible Church of God's elect to oppose the excessive claims of the papacy and the institutional Church of his time. Great man though he was we would not endorse everything he said. His teaching must be seen as corrective, and not as a norm to be followed. His position pushed to its extreme would tend to dissolve the institutional Church altogether. However, he did not press his doctrine that far, and his emphasis was necessary at the time to offset the evil in the Church, and quicken men's minds to a higher concept of the true Church and its spiritual nature.

There is no doubt as to the importance of predestination in his teaching. David Hume wrote in his *History of England* that Wycliffe asserted that everything was subject to fate and destiny, and that all men are predestined either to eternal salvation or reprobation. Wycliffe's quarrel with the papacy and the hierarchy was over the powers which they had arrogated to themselves over men's souls, and over their lives and property. Their power was universal and unchallenged. People went in superstitious dread of the Papal curse, and of excommunication. To be denied the sacraments and membership of the institutional Church was to be denied salvation.

How could such overweening confidence on the part of the hierarchy, and such narrow exclusiveness in the visible Church be combated, but by affirming the character of the invisible Church, which consists of all God's elect people. Membership of that Church does not depend on the diktat of the pope and hierarchy, but upon the decree and command of Almighty God. Set in such a context, the place and importance of the institutional Church is properly understood. The doctrine of election must at all times be the controlling doctrine of the Church.

This Wycliffe showed in his tracts and sermons. On the Lord's Prayer Wycliffe wrote: "When we say, Thy kingdom come, we mean, that all men and women living in this world that shall be saved . . . come to the bliss of heaven . . . for all men and women that shall be saved be God's kingdom and holy Church." None, he said, is a member of holy mother Church, who is not a predestined person.

Thus, at a stroke, by the recovery of the biblical doctrine of election, Wycliffe freed men from the tyranny of an overbearing institutional Church, by teaching them that if they were God's elect and saved by grace, then none could exclude them from the privileges of salvation, or from membership of the true Church, whatever pretensions they might make to do so.

Concerning the decree of Innocent III making auricular confession to a priest binding for the forgiveness of sins, Wycliffe argues:

"And thus it seemeth to many men, that Christian men might be saved without any such confession, as they were before Pope Innocent. . . . Who is he that letteth (i.e. hinders) God to save men as he hath before ordained before the Pope and the law came in, and before the world was made? Also

God giveth freely his grace notwithstanding man's law. Why may not God do his grace through his servants, that serve him well, as if there were no such priest or pope? As sometime there was none."

We should note here that the doctrine of predestination is seen in its practical application to a pastoral problem. "Christ had made his servants free, but antichrist had made them bound again." The doctrine was not treated in a merely speculative manner, but related and applied to the Christian experience of freedom in Christ – the liberty of the Christian man – and it was seen to be indispensable to that end.

Today, many treat the doctrine of election as something purely speculative and irrelevant to the pastoral and practical side of Christianity. When this happens we should be on our guard, for we can be sure that something of the fulness of our salvation in Christ is being lost. The doctrines of Scripture are not given us to afford us academic pastimes and speculative indulgence. They have practical relevance for the Christian's experience and life. None is superfluous. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:16).

What part of Christian freedom is being lost today by the neglect of, or even contempt for, the doctrine of predestination? I shall return to this. I cannot do better than to sum up this section in the words of Professor Whale:

"This doctrine of predestination in the hands of its exponents is fatal not only to hierarchical and sacerdotal, but also to all ecclesiastical pretensions and arrogance: indeed, to all human assumptions of superiority."

Dare we affect to ignore it, or despise such teaching in the Church today? If we do so, we do it at our peril.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Pitch thy behaviour low: thy projects high;
So shalt thou humble and magnanimous be.
Sink not in spirit: who aimeth at the sky,
Shoots higher than he who means a tree.
A grain of glory mix'd in humbleness,
Cures both fever and letharginess.

George Herbert

What is a Christian?

STAN K. EVERS (Potton, Beds)

OUR ETERNAL DESTINY depends on our response to this vital question; so we must get the answer right! But there are so many different opinions on the subject. How then can we know who is right? We must go to the Bible where God Himself answers the question, "What is a Christian?". We turn to the words of Christ's brother. "Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called" (Jude verse 1). This is God's own definition of a Christian given to us by his servant Jude. We take the words in reverse order because our experience of divine grace begins with God's call.

CALLED

It is necessary to distinguish between two kinds of call. There is the *general call of the Gospel* to everyone who hears the preaching of God's Word. The sinner may turn a deaf ear to this gracious call. However, *the special call – the effectual call* – cannot be rejected. The person who hears this call must come to the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. The effectual call is the voice of God, through His Holy Spirit, compelling sinners to respond to the human voice of the preacher.

Several examples of this effectual call are found in the Bible, such as the call of the first disciples. Simon, and his brother Andrew, and their partners, James and John, were fishing by the sea of Galilee when Jesus came along and said, "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men". They left their fishing nets and, through their preaching, threw out the Gospel net and brought many people to know the Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 4:18-22).

God's special call also came to Zacchaeus, the cheating tax collector, who climbed up a sycamore tree to see Christ. Imagine his acute embarrassment when Jesus stopped at the bottom of the tree and told Zacchaeus to come down. Jesus must have spoken to hundreds of people in Jericho who paid no attention to His teaching. Why did sinful Zacchaeus find salvation? Because of God's inward call to his soul! (Luke 19:1-10). Another example of this irresistible call is seen in the dramatic conversion of the apostle Paul on the Damascus road. He heard the voice of the risen Christ asking, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" (Acts 9:4).

God's call brings the sinner from death to life, according to Paul's words in Ephesians 2:1: "You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1). How strange to describe living people as dead! The sinner though physically alive is spiritually dead. An illustration of this truth is seen in the story of Lazarus who had been dead four days. Mary and Martha, his sisters, were breaking their hearts when Jesus went to the tomb and said, "Lazarus, come

forth". But Lazarus was dead! How ridiculous it must have seemed to talk to a corpse! Nevertheless, Lazarus rose from his grave because Jesus is God (John 11). Christ gives dead sinners life through His Word.

Furthermore, God's call brings us out of Satan's kingdom into God's kingdom. "The Father . . . hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son" (Colossians 1:12-13). The powerful call of God rescues us from the devil's bondage. He alone can deliver sinners!

Paul writes again about God's call in Philippians 3, where he uses the picture of an athlete running to win the coveted prize. "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (verse 14). God calls us to holiness now and to heaven later. But the words *I press* warn us that the way to heaven is not easy! The Christian race demands determination and discipline. Nevertheless, we run knowing that we will receive the prize of seeing Christ and living forever with God.

SANCTIFIED

The outcome of God's call is that we are "sanctified" (Jude verse 1). This word means "set apart for God's use". In the Jewish temple utensils and furniture were "set aside" for the worship of God; these items were viewed as "holy" because they belonged to the holy God.

As believers we do not need the ritual of the temple, connected with animal sacrifices to appease God's wrath, because Christ died on the cross to deal once-for-all with sin. Now Christians are God's temple set aside – sanctified – for His own use.

Just as we made a distinction between the general call of the Gospel and the special call of the Holy Spirit, we also note a difference between *initial sanctification* and *progressive sanctification*. Why does Jude place sanctification before preservation and calling? Because in God's sight we are already saints! In the mind of God we were chosen for sainthood even before time began and from the moment of conversion God treats us as saints. Before conversion we wore the dirty rags of our sins; now we are clothed in the perfect robe of Christ's righteousness.

How do we receive this initial sanctification? "By the washing of regeneration" (Titus 3:5). Paul cannot mean that we are born again through baptism. To interpret his statement in that way contradicts the first part of the verse, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us". The apostle's constant emphasis, in all his letters, is that salvation is not through ritual or ceremonial, but comes from faith in Christ alone. Paul's words, "the washing of regeneration" look back to John 3:5 and Ezekiel 36:25-27. God promised to wash His people clean by putting His Spirit in their hearts. Ezekiel pointed forward to the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and His indwelling in the hearts of believers. The Holy Spirit lives in us to make us holy!

“The washing of regeneration” covers initial sanctification, whereas “the renewing of the Holy Ghost” indicates progressive sanctification (Titus 3:5). The Holy Spirit gradually changes us into the likeness of Christ. We are given the title “saint” from the first day of conversion, and then spend the rest of our time on earth proving by our conduct that we really are saints! We do this as we shape our lives by God’s Word. To do this we must slot into our busy lives time each day to read the Scriptures and to pray.

Christians are called, sanctified and . . .

PRESERVED

Christians are “*preserved in Jesus Christ*” (Jude verse 1). This part of the verse finds an echo in the closing doxology: “Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy” (verse 24).

The believer makes progress in sanctification because of God’s keeping power. Preservation means that the Christian is eternally secure; he can never lose his salvation. None of God’s children will fail to reach heaven!

Older writers often used the phrase the perseverance of the saints to maintain the balance between God’s sustaining power and human responsibility. The believer exerts himself to run the race (Hebrews 12:1-2) and fights courageously in the spiritual warfare (Ephesians 6:10-18), but he does so only through God’s strength infused into him (Philippians 4:13).

Coming back to Jude 1, notice the words *in Jesus Christ*. The 17th century Puritan, Thomas Manton, preached many sermons on Jude. In one of these sermons he comments: “Jesus Christ is the cabinet wherein God’s jewels are kept.” The Saviour will not let any of the jewels be lost because He bought them with his precious blood. Another thought wrapped up in these three words – *in Jesus Christ* – is our union in Christ. He lives in us and we live in Him (John 14:23; John 15:1-5). To use a favourite term of the apostle Paul, we are “in Christ” (see for example, Ephesians 1:3-4). True religion is *the life of God in the soul of man*, to borrow a Puritan book title.

Does the doctrine of the saint’s preservation result in slackness and pride? Not at all! Though it sounds like a contradiction, nevertheless it is true that, “None are more apt to suspect themselves than they that are most sure in God” (Manton). We know that we are weak, but we are sure that God is strong!

What is a Christian? He is a person who has been sanctified, preserved and called. Are you such a person? Are you a Christian?

The truth must be preached, though hell break out into opposition; and we must keep faith and a good conscience, though persecutors print on our sides the marks of the Lord Jesus.

An old divine

The Shadow of Good Things to Come (4)

JACK SEATON (Inverness)

A RIGHT ATTITUDE OF MIND AND A RIGHT WAY TO COME

THE OTHER TWO WORDS mentioned under the terms of appropriating are *attitude and action*. As far as attitude is concerned we read that first of all in verse 3 of the chapter. "If his offering be a burnt sacrifice of the herd, let him offer a male without blemish: he shall offer it of his own voluntary will at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the Lord" (Leviticus 1:3). He shall offer it of his own voluntary will means gladly and unreservedly. This worshipper has now been persuaded in his heart and mind that God has given an acceptable way and he gladly takes it, making that offering of his own voluntary will. Verse 4: "And he shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt offering; and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him." Here is the way that God grants an atonement to the person, conscious of his sin and his exclusion from the presence of God.

Many Israelites acting in faith could see what God had granted to them and grasped it with both hands. We look back to the cross but these people looked forward to that which God would provide for them. "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain" (Hebrews 11:4). For those who had a felt need to come before the Lord, God had provided the means, which they gladly received. It is that attitude that he had in his heart and mind, that glad attitude, that he could do what he was doing because God had directed him so to do. That attitude must then pass into action which God also prescribes. Again there is a glorious picture of the Gospel. "If his offering be a burnt sacrifice of the herd, let him offer a male without blemish: he shall offer it of his own voluntary will at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the Lord. And he shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt offering; and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him" (Leviticus 1:3-4). He shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt offering, bring it to the door of the tabernacle, and he shall do it of his own voluntary will. He shall literally lean on the head of the offering, which signifies the transference of the offeror's sin on the head of the offering. When the offering is slain it is accepted on the behalf of the offeror, and the offeror is accepted on account of the offering. It is transference, substitution, of the most basic straightforward kind. In one of the Messianic Psalms literally rendered, our Lord Jesus Christ addresses His Father in prophecy, and says: "Thy wrath lieth hard upon me" (Psalm 88:7), and indeed it did, and when a person is able to see that, they lay their sin upon Jesus the spotless lamb of God. The Old Testament

worshipper was following God's prescribed way, by not simply touching the head of the sacrifice, but leaning on it, doing it gladly, and this was God's way to accept him. The more conscious a person is of their need of a Saviour for their sin, the more heavily they will lean on the Saviour, and undoubtedly one of the plague sores of our day in the professing Churches of Christ is the absence of any sin and repentance. No preaching of the one way to have our sins forgiven, and no glad reception of that one way for sinners before their God. You know the terms of the Gospel in the old hymn:

"The vilest offender who truly believes,
That moment from Jesus a pardon receives."

The man leans upon the offering God said he was to bring, and by His enabling grace he takes the way God has provided. So in appropriating the whole thing, there was the approach to God, the right attitude of the worshipper, and the action that God prescribes. Any one of those Israelites could have known all about the way, even to come to the very door of the tabernacle with the offering, but until they leaned their hands upon the offering, the transference did not take place. You can know the facts of the Gospel, but unless by God's grace you lay your hand upon Christ and know that He is the One that God has provided for the salvation of His people, you can never have that salvation. God has given the means, and the way of appropriation for the Israelites by the approach, the attitude and the action.

THE GOSPEL IS READILY AVAILABLE

The other word is *availability*, that great Gospel word. It has been pointed out that those offerings God prescribes were not exotic beasts. They did not have to go up into the mountains and search for a rare kind of species to bring down for the offering. Oh no! They were brought from the herd of the field, or from the flock, or from the barnyard or the dove-cotes. They were things ready to hand for them and surely there is no clearer picture of the Gospel than that. Paul reasons: "But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Romans 10:6-9). There are endless depths in the Scriptures and yet at the same time there is stark simplicity with regards to the availability of the means of salvation for every one to whom the Gospel is preached. Believe and you shall be saved, believe not and you shall be damned. That is Christ's preaching and it has not changed.

Christ says "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe

all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:19-20). The One who gave that word has promised to be with us, indeed as we declare that word we live in a kind of unique generation. Man has changed in this 20th century and some say the Gospel has to change to accommodate him, so the devil rubs his hands in glee. As long as the world remains the commission stands: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16). Some say they cannot understand that, but I cannot see any words clearer; if a person believes in Christ salvation is theirs, but until they believe in Christ damnation is theirs. Cain's countenance fell, it says, and he was angry when his brother Abel's sacrifice was accepted, but God in His grace and mercy came and spoke to him. Cain, He says, "Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door" (Genesis 4:6-7). God is saying this: your brother offered correctly, why are you angry with him and with me? If you do the same thing you will be accepted, the sin offering lies at the door and the availability of the Gospel is now. The means of acceptance was available, and it was availing.

The sacrifices differ, but the offeror who brought the turtledove was no less accepted than he who brought the bullock from the herd. The man who brought the bullock from the herd was no more acceptable than the man who brought the turtledove from his dovecote. Variations in the offerings had nothing to do with acceptance but simply to do with ability. Does that mean that we are not to give all that we can when we come to the things of Christ in our lives? It means no such thing! That is an entirely different application; this part of the Word of God says that God has granted the means of acceptance and it is there for every one. It did not matter who the man was, rich or poor, he simply did what God told him to do, and into all of that you simply pour all of the "whosoever" of the Gospel. "And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:17) "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). The Pharisees could not understand that, they said, "This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them" (Luke 15:2). Of course He did! That is why He came into the world.

A little girl went along to church and when she came home - her mother was not able to go that particular morning - she said to the wee girl, "What was the preacher preaching about today?" the child's eyes lit up and she said, "He was preaching about me". So her mother said, "Preaching about you!". The wee girl's name was Edith and she said, "Yes he was preaching about Jesus receiveth sinners and Edith with them". Well that is true: Edith, Tommy, Jimmy, Joan and Margaret - whosoever - because the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is set forth and preached for as long as the world shall be and is available to those who will hear it, receive it, believe it, fall under the terms of it, and come to God through it to the glory of His name.

THE SPOTLESS SACRIFICE

The next word is substitution, found in verse 4 of the chapter, where the offeror lays his hands on the head of the sacrifice, the offering being accepted for him, as a substitute on his behalf. "And he shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt offering; and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him" (Leviticus 1:4). It is the offering that God accepts and he accepts the offeror on account of the offering. It shall be accepted for him, on his behalf and that is the great foreshadowing of the Gospel that was to come in Jesus Christ the Saviour, for we are accepted only in God's beloved Son. There were two things with regards to the element of substitution in Israel of old; the substitute had to be spotless and it had to be sacrificed, both of which come to their fullness in Christ the Lord.

The substitute had to be spotless, without blemish, in so far as anything in this fallen creation could be without spot or blemish, but when it comes to One being provided as the substitute for sinners, that requirement of spotlessness had to be absolute from beginning to end. Chapter 2 in the Book of Leviticus teaches the requirement, and that spotlessness is spelled out for us. It would be right to say the first chapter of the Book of Leviticus sets before us the burnt offerings which the Lord appointed for Israel in relation to the atonement. The second chapter sets out the meat offerings or meal offerings, and they were also to be brought before the Lord in the way He appointed. If the burnt offerings of chapter 1 point us to the death Christ was going to die on the behalf of His people, then the meal offerings point us to the life Christ was going to live in connection with that death.

Without going into great details, look at those ingredients which God told the children of Israel to bring in the meal offerings. There were things they were to bring and things they were not to bring. They were to bring fine flour, frankincense, oil and salt as meal offerings, but they were not to bring leaven and honey. "No meat offering, which ye shall bring unto the Lord, shall be made with leaven: for ye shall burn no leaven, nor any honey, in any offering of the Lord made by fire" (Leviticus 2:11). Fine flour went through the mill time and time again to make it pure, and the children of Israel used it from day to day, in fact the Book of Proverbs speaks about a man grinding his teeth with the flour gathered from the floor of the gaming house where it had mixed with all kinds of grain. Fine flour also prefigures the coming of Christ into this world, to live a life on our behalf, for He would pass through and under all the mills of His Father. The apostle speaks about Him as one "Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared" (Hebrews 5:7). Christ underwent these things to show who He was and what He was. He did not become fine flour, in that sense, by going through those things, but He was shown to be a sacrifice suitable for us and the sins of all His people.

Oil was all bound up with those meal offerings, because throughout the Scriptures holy oil is the shadowing forth of the Holy Spirit and when Christ

would come into this world, He would come accompanied by the Holy Spirit. As He stood in the synagogue in Nazareth, the Spirit of the Lord was upon Him, as He says: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek" (Isaiah 61:1). Frankincense is exceedingly sweet, "majestic sweetness", says the hymn writer, and the salt had deep meaning in those days. When God said this is the kind of offering you are to bring to Me, these are the ingredients of the meal offerings, it is Christ we are being shown as the fulfilment of the fine flour, the oil, the frankincense, the salt and everything else. But the Lord says, "for ye shall burn no leaven, nor any honey, in any offering of the Lord made by fire" (Leviticus 2:11). Throughout the pages of the Word of God, leaven is the great symbol for sin, sinfulness and corruption.

Paul writing to the Corinthians tells them to deal with the sin that is in their midst. "Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us" (1 Corinthians 5:6-7). Throughout the Scriptures that imagery of leaven is representing sinfulness. It corrupts, it eats into things and when Christ would come there could be no possibility that in His life there would be sin. In our lives, in the things we would offer to God sincerely, there is sin. There should be no sin in our lives but there is, and if anybody says any different then, says John, you "make God a liar". What the sinner needs is a Saviour, but One who would be a Saviour for sinners could in no way be a sinner himself. When the Son of God would come, His life, leading up to the death that He would die on the cross, would be a sinless, perfect, spotless life, without blemish indeed. When they brought their sacrifice it would be the substitute for the offeror to make an atonement, so God said it must be spotless and without blemish. That is exactly how Christ was to come into the world.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD

It is not the entire man frequently that the world hates – it is the new-born man . . . his union to Christ, his faith in Christ, his love to Christ, his devotion to Christ.

This is what to the world is the Christian's folly: losing the things that are seen for the things that are unseen, the things of time for the things of the eternal state.

Conformity to the world is one of the most besetting sins of the professing Church at the present day.

John ("Rabbi") Duncan

The Testimony of William Timothy Foley

"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward. Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer" (Psalm 19:7-14).

Background

I was born in Pembury, Kent, England, in 1952, and baptized into the Roman Catholic Church. I was given the name William Timothy at my baptism. When I was very young my family returned to Ireland and we lived in Galbally, County Limerick. The family later moved to Co. Tipperary, and there I remained until 1972, when I returned to England.

Providential Care

God's providential care in my life was evident from an early age. God delivered me from drowning in a river as a young boy. Accidents such as being crushed with a tractor wheel, being spiked in the head and caustic soda being thrown into my eyes were terrible.

Irish Life

My early years in Ireland were happy and joyful. But Ireland was very different when I was growing up from what it is today, now it is secularist and materialistic. Roman Catholic Church attendance is falling because of the scandalous behaviour of the clergy, among other things. Many young people have given up on the Roman Catholic Church.

When I was growing up as a boy it was unheard of that anyone who was a Roman Catholic did not practice the Roman religion. The people were friendly and left the doors unlocked in the countryside. The Church's threat of hell was a reality.

The Priest held sway in the Parish. Externally Ireland was a moral country, swearing was frowned upon. Immorality was seldom heard about. If it was, then it was viewed as scandalous behaviour, and the perpetrator was ostracized.

Roman Catholicism

From an early age I was instructed in the Roman religion. Often I heard that if one was to go to heaven it was through the Roman Church. I received Holy Communion at a young age, and I particularly looked forward to that occasion, as I was the recipient of half a crown!

I used to go to "Confession" to confess my sins. I believed in seven sacraments – Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist (Mass), Penance, Extreme Unction, Marriage, Holy Orders (ordination of Priests and consecration of nuns). The Bible only knows of two – Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

I was told that Romanism was the only true religion, and that salvation was through the Church of Rome. I was very religious at various stages in my life, especially when I was in trouble. At one point I used to get up and go to Church early each morning. This happened for some time. I was afraid of going to hell. However, I had questions about Roman Catholic teaching at a very young age.

Protestants

I seldom came into contact with Protestants. When I did, I always found that they belonged to the Irish gentry with a great deal of money. Of course, there were exceptions, as in the case of the people who helped my father – including Canon Hogg of the Church of Ireland. I remember hating Protestants for they were snobs, and never mixed with us. I remember throwing stones at one particular Protestant. This was a frequent occurrence on my part.

School Life

I was first sent to a national school, and then I attended the so-called Christian Brothers in the Monastery School in Tipperary Town. This is a religious order now in decline.

One particular Christian Brother frequently beat me. However, I must say in fairness, my stubborn nature and my dislike of study may have contributed to the frequent outburst of the teacher's anger. I took up athletics and this Christian Brother took a shine to me. When I excelled in an event and won a race, then I found that I was praised, but woe betides me when I lost. I remember getting severely beaten over my poor performance in mathematics.

Confirmation

I remember being prepared for Confirmation. I memorized Our Father, Hail Mary, Apostles' Creed, and the 10 Commandments (different from the Bible). I remember the older boys saying, "Watch out for the slap on the face by the Bishop". That did worry me little, and became my focus.

When I went up the front in the Roman church I was most surprised that he did not slap me on the face, he simply laid his hand on me and said, "Receive ye the Spirit". The only problem for me was that I felt no different, but I was relieved that the occasion was over. I was given another name, Patrick, at my confirmation.

Religious Life

I was much involved in religious life. I used to attend the Stations of the Cross, which are displayed in Roman Catholic churches. My Father was encouraging me to become a Catholic priest, presumably because I was the eldest son. This was reinforced in the school with the enforced celibacy that came with the package.

I believed that some Christian foundations were laid intellectually, so that when I heard the *true Gospel* the language was not unfamiliar, though there was considerable redefining and clarification of doctrine, to accord with biblical revelation. While in the Roman Catholic Church I believed that I was saved through good works, and this was my focus. I never really understood why Christ died. I just could not link Christ with my salvation.

My Path of Discovery

Discovering the true Gospel Christ was not by my doing, but God revealing the truth to me over many years. I ran away from home and settled in Cork, staying in a youth hostel. I got involved in the nightlife, dancing frequently at the Stardust ballroom and other entertainment venues. Going to the cinema, and clubs was exciting. I really got into fashion, and clothes. I made new friends very quickly, but I got into drinking alcohol, and bad company, showing my great propensity for wickedness.

I went through an array of jobs in a couple of years: builders' labourer, steel fabrication worker in a factory (where I nearly lost one of my fingers on my right hand in an accident), coal-man, butter factory worker, quality control inspector, and store-man. I well remember buying my first transistor radio, which was quickly stolen. I was heartbroken. I seldom wrote to my parents, I basically forgot about them, and developed my rebellious lifestyle.

I occasionally went to the Roman Catholic Church, and attended a mission. I once heard a sermon on hell in Cork City, which really caused me to fear. Salvation looked impossible at that stage.

I well remember my first contact with a religious person (I do not know if he was a Christian), he was an American person who befriended me, and we walked about a couple of miles together, talking about spiritual things along the way. However, it went in one ear and out the other. I also remember picking up a Christian tract on a street in Cork, and reading it – I did think about spiritual things, but not seriously. I knew I was in rebellion against God, and was accountable to Him.

My circumstances began to go wrong for me, and I found myself out of a job when I was in Cork City. I had rent to pay, and the prospect of nowhere to stay faced me. I felt desperate. So I rang an American Christian couple who were missionaries in Cork City. They were staying in Douglas, next door to Pastor Shaw, who was the Minister of the Baptist Church in Cork City.

I had been courting their daughter, who was a professing Christian. She put in a good word for me. Well this missionary was kind and enthusiastic; he began

work on me straightway. There is no point in letting the bird out of the cage unless you have tamed him!

He gave me a crash course on the Bible, and introduced me to Bible prophecy. I remember he showed me many passages from the book of Hebrews, and Galatians and every argument I put up, he was well able to answer it. I was impressed.

This missionary got me to kneel down and say a prayer – I said an Act of Contrition (part of the confessional) – I did not know anything else. He told me I was saved. I started to take a Bible course, and look at the Bible.

This family gave me a copy of the RSV Bible (today I believe that the AV Bible is the best and most accurate translation of God's Word in the English language). I really wanted to prove Roman Catholicism wrong, because of my strict upbringing. I was victim to "easy believism", but the seed was being sown nevertheless. I did not become a Christian then. The American Missionary spoke to the Personnel Manager of the Railway Station, in Cork City, and got me a job on the railway as a porter. The American Missionary family provided accommodation and they laid down the rules and I kept them.

By this stage I was a competitive swimmer, and very keen on lifesaving. I had got second in the all-Ireland in lifesaving. I really loved those American Missionaries. They were good to me, showing practical Christian love. I stayed with this family for some time. They went back to the United States. I frequently went to church, but I never really prayed, because I did not know God.

I was baptized because others were being baptized, and mixed with the Salvation Army, and the Brethren, the Baptist, and the Methodist. Pentecostal folk got me to speak in tongues. To all intents and purposes I appeared to all that I was a Christian, but I do not believe I had saving faith, nor had I repented of my sins. I became moral and I did reform outwardly for a time.

I purchased an amazing collection of Christian books, and read Dr. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones on Romans – Justification by Faith. I believed the Five Points of Calvinism, and became Calvinistic in my theology, and fully understood the errors of Rome, and had done battle with the cults, yet I was not saved.

Children of God Cult

I met the Children of God cult and joined them. I got involved with Arthur Blesssett, who told me that I was going to be a preacher some day. I admired his courage when he spoke to the students at Trinity College and in the YMCA in Dublin. I thought he was a great character. I gave the Children of God all my money and possessions, and lived in Dublin (Blackrock). I spent many hours in Phoenix Park witnessing to people with a chap called *Parable*. My name in the Children of God was *Mel-chis-ed-ec*.

England

Then I came with the Children of God to England, and went to a Pop Festival in Wigan, then to Lincoln, then down to Crystal Palace, and finally on to Bromley,

the headquarters of the Children of God in the UK. I remember carrying around with me Christian books on Theology. I witnessed a strict regime in the Children of God. I left the Children of God and went to a Pentecostal Conference in Minehead, and Derrick Prince was the preacher. However, I returned for some time to Bromley. Then I left the Children of God and returned to Ireland. Later I returned to England and lived in Oxford, where I got into a very sinful lifestyle.

Prison in Oxford

Prom time to time I made contact with Christians in the Brethren and the Assemblies of God. I attended Westminster Chapel in London and heard Dr. Glynn Owen preach. Meanwhile I worked as a fence erector for a company in Oxford. I ended up in prison on remand for violence and breaking up a nightclub, whilst being drunk, with other people. Prison life was miserable.

A Pentecostal Minister visited me, and he appeared to give me up as a hopeless case. I went to see the chaplain, who was unable to help me spiritually. I tried making amends to God. But no sooner was I out of prison I returned to my wicked lifestyle. When the case came to trial I was let off because I had served three months on remand and was fined £60.00, to be paid in instalments. This was a bad crime.

St. Albans

After I was released I lived in St. Albans with my uncle and his wife. Having been obnoxious I was asked to leave. I found a flat, and lived a most wicked life of sin.

St. Albans Council employed me as a pool attendant in 1973. I even made an attempt to reform by going to a Brethren Church now and again, but I finally gave up Christianity, but Christians were praying for me. I went to the Roman Catholic Church on occasions even though I knew it was wrong in its doctrines. I became a body builder, and worked in a nightclub in Watford. My life got so unspeakably wicked. I got involved a little with the Seven-Day Adventist Church. My soul was sick.

Accidents

I was involved in a car crash, I fell off a racing bike on another occasion and broke a collarbone (same one I broke as a boy), I also fell off a motorbike, and each time I escaped death.

Near death

The worst time in my life was when I was living in St. Albans with people who were wicked like myself and taking drugs, and I became dangerously ill, and developed peritonitis and almost died, but I was rushed to St. Albans Hospital, and operated on and lived. I was told that I was not far from death. Once again, God kept me alive. However, I did not repent. The American Missionaries, who I had known in Cork, had been to see me when I was living there. (They had got my

details from my father, who I had disgraced.) I put on a show of religion for them on that and other occasions.

Rebellion against God

I returned to my life of terrible wickedness, and gave up on God. There are many things that were very wicked which I did, and it would not be glorifying to God to rehearse them here. In particular, I remember closing the door of the kitchen in my flat in Wheathampstead in Hertfordshire, and making a conscious decision to sin as much as I could. I was keeping a track of my sins and thriving in my wickedness. I remember thinking on the road from Wheathampstead to St. Albans, very near where the dead body of the Australian heiress was found, that "God will send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie". That was describing me, running away from God. I was hardened in my sin, wretched, and blind to the Gospel of God. Every overture of grace I simply rejected. I hurt a lot of people, and sinned greatly against God.

Greater and deeper wickedness

From about 1976 to 1981 I hardly gave God a thought, living a life of terrible rebellion against God. The hunger strike was happening in the North of Ireland and I began to think about those men who were dying, and where they were after death. I saw the hopelessness of the situation. I was working by day and mixed with the wicked by night. I was living the fast life with a flash car, but I got bored of committing my sins against God. Grace began to dawn in my soul. The Holy Spirit was working. I was not looking for God. No one had spoken about God to me for many years.

Conversion to Christ

I was lying on my bed on 27th December 1981, and I remember being restless with life. I thought about eternity. I never gave a thought to my Roman Catholic teaching or background. The verses of Scripture, which I had memorised in the Children of God cult, came back to me. They were from the Authorized Version. I had a debate in my mind. If I repent now then I will miss all the sinning, but the answer came, "What if you were to die tonight, where would you go?". "Hell," was the reply. I was aware of my awful state, I could no longer fight against God. I said, "I will repent at the end of my life when I am 70 years or so." The reply came, "You may not be able to repent then, it is now or never". There was urgency in the situation.

I was convicted of my sin, my eyes were being opened to the danger, and I was concerned about the Judgment. I wanted to live. I said, "I would like to make a new start, and give up all my sin, and live for Christ". The prospect seemed exciting. I turned to God, and I got out of bed and I went back suddenly to the kitchen and gripped the door handle of the kitchen door, where I had decided some years ago that I was going to live a most awful life of wickedness. That was

the turning point. It was then I repented. God had come down to me and pulled me up from the mire. I was like a stone in the mire, fast sinking, and I could not help myself. It had to be sovereign power, and God's grace working. I was not searching for God, He was searching for me. He inclined me to respond to His love in Christ.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

— • —

Boldness and Access with Confidence

DUDLEY J. BRADSHAW (Norwich)

“ . . . in whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Jesus Christ ” (Ephesians 3:12)

SURELY this is one of the most utterly amazing and breathtaking privileges that any man can ever know. Yet it is the privilege of every true believer! And it is especially wonderful when we consider the unimaginable vastness, power, holiness, infinity and awesomeness of His Almighty and everywhere present Being, compared with our insignificance and sinfulness. When we consider that this God, the one true God, takes up the isles as a very little thing, and counts the nations as the small dust of the balances, how unspeakably wonderful it is that He should have anything to do with such specks of dust as we are. I do not wonder that the Psalmist exclaims in utter amazement, “When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers . . . what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?”

Yet our text states explicitly that all who are His people have boldness and access with confidence to this so vast and incomprehensible God, at personal level. And in verse 2 of the chapter the same point is made – that through Jesus Christ we all, Jews and Gentiles alike, really do have this access. It is a fact, not simply a pious hope!

However, before we look at the nature and meaning of this access we must hedge up the way. For in Hebrews 10:19 we read that this access is strictly limited to those who are saved through the blood of Jesus. The way of access is clearly defined there. It is a *new and living way*. Verses 19 and 20 put it – “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to

say, his flesh." Here the awesome analogy is made, linking us straight back to the moment of Christ's dying. As our holy and blessed Saviour – the one whose Name is Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of peace – as this utterly glorious Person hung there on Calvary, bearing the weight of His people's sin in His own body, the *veil was still there*. That veil of the Temple, beyond which no man save the high priest might ever go. That veil which prevented any ordinary man from having access to the presence of God in the Holy of Holies was still in place. But in the hour of the dying of the Christ, something awesome and supernatural took place. This mighty Christ, as both High Priest and Sacrifice, offered Himself without spot to God, and having paid the price of human sin to the uttermost in the shedding of His own blood, He gave a shout of victory which echoed throughout the heavenly places, and rang in ultimate triumph throughout the universe – "Finished!" And in that sacred, never to be repeated moment, the *veil of the Temple was ripped in two from the top to the bottom*. And who did this great act? God the Father, in His capacity as Judge. There was no human hand there! And it signified that the way of access into the presence of God was laid wide open to all through the rent flesh – the shed blood – of the Lord Jesus Christ. So we read in the letter to the Hebrews those wonderful words: "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, *by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh.*" The way into the living presence of the Holy One is laid wide open. Believers have *access – freedom* – to know, to speak to, to commune with, the living God, through the death of Christ.

"On the mount of Crucifixion fountains opened deep and wide.
Through the floodgates of God's mercy flowed a vast and gracious tide.
Grace and love, like mighty rivers, poured incessant from above,
And heaven's peace, and perfect justice kissed a guilty world in love."

Access, with boldness and confidence into the very presence and heart of God! Do you have it? Do you know it? Do you practise and use it? Is it really yours? Yes, if your faith and hope rest exclusively on the Person and work of the Lord Jesus, and if you have come to Him in real and living faith, by the grace of God.

What does access really mean?

It means freedom to enter. Freedom to come. There are no barriers. If we are God's people, we may come to Him at all times, in all circumstances, and we are welcome. Night and day, the door is always open, and our Father never sleeps. Though He is God Almighty, whose power and glory are infinite, yet to us who believe He is simply and beautifully "our Father". It is a truth so vast as to be quite indescribable. I do not wonder that Anne Steele cries out in ecstasy: "My God? My Father? Blissful Name! O may I call Thee *Mine*?" And the answer is given

again and again in Holy Scripture – yes! I may, if my faith and hope are in the Lord Jesus. And it is not presumption to do so – indeed, it is unbelief and sin not to do so!

Access, then – full freedom to come into the presence of the Father at any time, in any place, in any condition, day or night, in sickness or health, poverty or riches – whenever, whatever, however. There are no barriers and no limits. May the Holy Spirit help us to enter into the wonder of it.

Let us look now at some of the characteristics of this access.

It is intimate access

. . . if we are looking to the Lord Jesus alone, for then, by the Holy Spirit's indwelling we have true intimacy of access, such as a little child has to its father in human terms. We have the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry "Abba, Father". And the word "Abba" here is rather like the word framed by little children, when they cry, "Daddy". It is not easy to explain this without appearing to be either irreverent or childish, but let me try. "Abba" is an Aramaic word which is always joined with "Father" in the New Testament, and it means effectively the sound an infant makes when it is expressing absolute trust, but perhaps before it can frame the more formal "Father". "Abba" is a sound which expresses total and unreasoning trust, whereas "Father" expresses an intelligent grasp of the relationship. Add the two together and you have a wonderful expression of the intimate and unquestioning relationship between a child and its father. There is much that a child does not understand. But he knows (and this would be especially true in Bible times) that "Daddy" is always there for him – always welcomes him and is pleased to see him. He does not have to make an appointment if he wants to see his father or talk to him. His father never says to him, "Oh! I am too busy, child. I cannot stop and talk to you just now." He always has time for his little one.

Some might think it is going too far, almost to the point of irreverence, but there is a beautiful children's hymn which says,

"Prayer is our heavenly Father's knee,
On which His child climbs gratefully".

When a child climbs on its father's knee, there is a precious intimacy – he feels he can just talk to his father with real freedom – tell him and ask him about the things he does not understand. He can talk to him, freely about himself – his life – his hope and fears – almost unconsciously realising that his father loves him and is interested in him and his little affairs. He does not have to try and "talk big" to his father – he can just share with him and tell him about things with complete freedom from any embarrassment. Some of it may be little more than childish prattle, but the father loves to have his child with him *because he loves his child* – feels for his child – his heart goes out to his child.

Something like that, in measure, is the access God's true children have to *Him!* True, there must always be reverence and godly fear, but we may nevertheless tell Him *anything* – we can bring to Him our most intimate secrets. He knows them anyhow, and He loves to have His beloved children bring them to Him. We can ask His advice and counsel – we can ask His guidance and direction. We can tell Him of our secret hopes and fears. We can just *talk* to Him about His wonderful works.

“O Lord,” cries the Psalmist, “how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all!” We can just tell Him how wonderful He is. There is nothing we cannot bring to Him. And even when we find it difficult to express just what we mean, we can tell him so: “Father, I do not know just how to explain this or put it into words – but *Thou* understandest my secret thoughts, and I just bring them to Thee.”

How much do you personally know of this blessed intimacy with your heavenly Father? How much time do you spend in precious and holy communion with Him? Do you seek to cultivate it? Do you, by His grace, “Practise the presence of God? as one writer once put it? Are you, as one hymn beautifully puts it – “No more a stranger or a guest, but like a child at home”? If not, why not? Our text says in Christ, “we have boldness and access with confidence”. How much do you really know of this real intimacy of access. Oh! the beauty and wonder of it! May the Holy Spirit lead us all to avail ourselves of what we actually *have* by His enabling grace.

It is personal access

By this I mean one to one. This really is unspeakably marvellous. Christians do have access to God corporately in public worship, and this is a great mercy. But I want to speak now of having one to one access at personal level.

Though our heavenly Father is everywhere present throughout and beyond the created universe, and millions enjoy this personal access to Him at the same time, yet there is a blessed sense in which you and I, if truly His people, have *his whole and undivided attention at individual and personal level!* As if there were no one else! We cannot explain this, but to put it crudely, we never have to wait our turn and queue up in order to have an audience with the King of kings! That this so great God should have any time at all for such insignificant creatures as we are is breathtaking. But that He has personal and individual time for each one of His people at personal and individual level is beyond words. We have the undivided attention of the Being who controls the vastness of the universe, and who remains in that control at all times. A sparrow “shall not fall on the ground without your Father”, said the Lord Jesus. He controls nations, continents, individuals, principalities, and powers. As the hymn says: “In heaven and earth and air and seas, He executes His firm decrees.” And again: “No thought can fly nor thing can move, unknown to Him who sits above.” He holds the stars in their courses. This whole mighty universe and everything in it, is under His personal control. Yet, as

the Psalmist cries in utter amazement, "I am poor and needy; yet the *Lord* thinketh upon *me*".

Dear believer, remember these things when you, by faith, enter upon this blessed access. God will not refuse to hear. As David said in Psalm 34: "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him." And again: "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry." Personal access! One to one! Marvellous beyond words!

It is loving access

The love of God for His people is a great wonder. It is the love of a father for his child. Our heavenly Father is never impatient, but always ready to receive His children in infinite love. Even an earthly father loves to be with his children simply because they are his children – he has begotten them. He wants nearness, intimacy, fellowship, with his children because they are of his household. They belong to him in a unique way. He loves to hold them in his arms – feel them close – do things for them – train them up aright. The hug of a child is a wonderful thing to a father – he *wants* to feel it. This *begetting* is quite unique. The child is effectually a product of the father's love.

Now we need to be very careful here. For the Lord Jesus is *the only begotten Son of the Father* – absolutely unique. But the Bible is very daring – if I may so put it – in its statement in 1 Peter 1:3: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath *begotten us again* unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

Again, speaking of those who received Christ, John tells us that they were born again – and the Greek means literally "generated". They were born *of God*. Born of the Spirit. John's First Letter tells us that "every one that doeth righteousness" is born of God; that "every one that loveth is born of God"; that "whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God".

I am very emphatic that the Lord Jesus Christ is the *only begotten Son of the Father* in a unique and special sense. But the Bible's teaching is clear and inexpressibly awesome – that if we truly believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, with all that it means, we have been *born again* to new life in Christ by the activity of God Himself. Regenerated by Him; brought to new life by Him – by His divine activity. It is not merely our decision, nor our effort. It is something we cannot explain, but something we *do* experience! All things miraculously become new – a new hatred of sin, a new sense of the need for forgiveness, a new realisation that only in Christ, and through His atoning blood, can sin be forgiven, leading to our coming to Him alone for forgiveness and salvation. And all this is the truth of being born again *by the direct action of God!* Is it any wonder that this access we have brings us straight into the intimacy of His personal love for us, because we are His dear children by this new begetting?

Christian believer, can you grasp that you matter a lot to God? That you are very *dear* to Him? That *He* loved you so much that He sent His one dear Son to

an agonising death that you might be born again to new life in Him? That before you were born He set His love upon you? That over your life on earth He watched, guiding every step and hedging up your way, all with the express determination to bring you to new birth? Even the death of His dear Son was worth it in order to bring you to Himself, because He loved you. And so when you really avail yourself of this access, you come into the presence of a Father who loves and welcomes you. You are indeed, as the hymn says: "Loved with everlasting love. Led by grace that loves to know."

It is bold access

This lovely word carries the meaning of freedom to speak plainly, but it also means a general boldness – the absence of fear and trembling. Yes, there must be reverence and godly fear, yet we do not have to dress up our words, or feel reserved and inhibited. We may, through His grace, and by the blood of Jesus, be bold and unafraid in His presence. We may feel at home with Him, reverently free with Him, and not tongue-tied or embarrassed. Moses argued with God. Jacob wrestled with Him. Abraham pleaded and argued with Him. And this is the freedom and boldness that all His dear children have. What an indescribable privilege! Who can measure it?

It is confidence access

When we come to our Father, we may come with absolute confidence – and we *should* so come! Whatever our current feelings may be, or the current state of our spiritual life and experience we may and should come in the absolute confidence that, in accordance with His own Word, He receives and hears us in Jesus' Name. To come in fear that perhaps the Father will not receive or hear our prayers because they are so poor, is direct unbelief, and very grieving to Him. No! We *must* come to Him in the absolute confidence of faith that we do have an access which is *real* in Jesus' Name. Not that we *may* have it, but that we *do* have it. That our Father in heaven *always* hears us and *always* receives us. Access in the total confidence that *all* his promises are absolutely true, and that He will always be faithful to them. He cannot deny Himself. He *will* give strength to His people. He *will* give grace according to our need. He *will* give wisdom to all who ask in faith. He *will* have His everlasting arms underneath us. Our steps *shall* be ordered by Him. He *will* show us His paths. He *will* forgive us our sins. He will *not* allow us to be tempted above our ability to bear. Sin shall *not* have dominion over us. He *is* our refuge and strength. In the day of trouble He *will* deliver us. When we cast our burden upon Him he *will* sustain us. He *is* nigh to all that call upon Him. He *will* be our guide for ever and ever. His grace *is* sufficient for us.

O, the promises of God! How many! How varied! We can never, if we are His people, come into any situation where we are not covered by them. They are a mine of pure gold and priceless jewels. They are all "yea and amen" in Christ

Jesus. And He has put them there for us deliberately, thoughtfully, and with infinite wisdom, love and power. As the hymn so beautifully says: "What more *can* He say than to you He *has* said?" And for us to fail to avail ourselves of this *access* with humble and yet rock-like confidence is to insult Him and to grieve His Holy Spirit. For ultimately unbelief is the sin of sins. There is absolute certainty that He will always do as He has said.

Are you using this access? It is *yours*, Christian believer, for God in Christ has personally given it to you. Use it humbly and reverently, but *boldly* and in total confidence. Use it daily – hourly. Walk in the light of it. Live in the certainty of it moment by moment. Remember the cost of it to God, and how He gave us His own dear Son in order to provide it. Are you living as a pauper when in fact you have untold riches, strength and grace provided?

O! may we learn, by His grace, *to practise* this blessed access. To talk to Him about *everything*. May He in mercy open up this truth to us, that the practising of this access with boldness and confidence be the story of our lives, to His glory and our joy and happiness even in our worst and lowest times.



Book Reviews

***Does God Believe in Atheists?* John Blanchard. Evangelical Press. pp. 655 hardback.**

I was immediately at home in this book which, while it has some technical content, is enjoyable and easy to read. John Blanchard has here assembled a wealth of historic atheistic data which undergirds so much modern thought and he explains how it now moulds the worldly doctrines which combine to create doubts about the existence of God, such as humanism, materialism and evolution theory. He sets out the ghastly consequences of atheistic communism with state action being responsible for the violent and unnatural deaths of some 125 million people in the 20th century; he confronts us with the evils of nationalism, he tells of the well-known British humanist, Sir Ludovic Kennedy, who informed readers of the *Daily Telegraph* in 1997 that he had nearly finished a book in which he sought "definitely to disprove the existence of God", and he warns us of those clerics and bishops who have sold themselves to fashion and undermine the very faith they were appointed to defend.

In the field of evolution theory the author has drawn on the best and latest works to make us aware of compelling arguments against the evolutionary model. Authors such as Dr. Henry Morris, Phillip Johnson, Malcolm Bowden, Ken Ham, Michael Denton and Michael Behe are cited to confound the godless views that

blind purposeless processes over vast aeons of time produced all the diversity of plant and animal life culminating in man.

John Blanchard tells us all these things and so much more that one cannot put too high a value on this book which is a rich source of information and will be much consulted. It is a brilliant defence of the faith and it finishes where all Christian books about atheism should finish, by glorifying Him who upholds all things by the Word of His power.

T.B.

Sound of Trumpets. Faith Cook. The Banner of Truth Trust.

The author is a gifted biographical writer and has a rare penchant for getting to the "root of things". In *Singing in the Fire* she highlighted perseverance; in this new book she emphasises a note of triumph over great adversity.

The men and women highlighted by Faith Cook are not likely to be known to some readers but by the time reading is completed, not only Archibald Brown, John Nelson, Tom Barnado, but also Colonel James Gardiner, Christine Watt, Samuel Pearce and Sally Wesley will have stirred one's feelings.

J.C.

Saving Grace. John Cheesman. The Banner of Truth Trust.

This book is a complete revision of a work originally published by the Trust in 1972 as *The Grace of God in the Gospel*.

The author, Vicar of St. James' Church, Westgate, Ramsgate, Kent, shows from Scripture that man's only hope is in the grace of God. Saving grace is the answer for those who cannot save themselves – and that means everyone.

At the end of each of the eight chapters there are questions which might be voiced by someone who disagrees or who has doubts about what has been written. There is then a brief attempt to answer each question.

On reflection, after reading the 136 pages, the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip", may speak with renewed meaning.

J.C.

The Holy Spirit (Puritan Paperbacks). John Owen. The Banner of Truth Trust. pp. 208. £3.50.

Reading John Owen is not easy! So we are indebted to Dr. R. J. K. Law for preparing this "abridged and made easy to read" (to quote the subtitle) version of John Owen's work on the Holy Spirit, first published in 1674. To condense Owen's 650 pages in Volume 3 of his *Works* (Banner of Truth edition) to this 208 pages paperback is a remarkable achievement indeed. In this abridgement the Bible is quoted throughout in the New King James Version.

The Publisher's Preface slots this book into its historical context. John Owen had problems with three groups: the Socinians, who denied the deity of the Holy

Spirit; the Quakers, who advocated mysticism; and the Enthusiasts, who claimed direct revelation from God and extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit. Therefore this reprint of Owen is especially useful because of the confusion today concerning the Holy Spirit resulting from Charismatic teaching and the Toronto Blessing.

After proving from the Scriptures that the Spirit is a divine Person, Owen deals with His ministry in the Old Testament, followed by chapters on His work in Christ and in His Body, the Church. Several chapters explain the Spirit's work in regeneration and sanctification. Other chapters focus on election as a motive to holiness, God's command to be holy and how the Holy Spirit's activities relate to Christ as the Prophet, Priest and King. The final chapter is about the difficulties of holy living in an unholy world because of indwelling sin in the Christian's soul.

Owen on the Holy Spirit is one of several books, published by the Banner of Truth, presenting "the treasures of John Owen for today's readers". Reading these books would surely bring great blessing to the Church at the present time.

S.K.E.

Please obtain any books reviewed or advertised from your local Christian bookshop, as we regretfully are not in a position to supply your requirements.

FROM THE SECRETARY'S DESK

GIFT AID

On 6th April 2000 the Government introduced improvements to the Gift Aid Scheme. If you pay tax, all donations you make to registered charities can qualify for this scheme

IF YOU ARE A UNITED KINGDOM TAX PAYER, AND WOULD LIKE YOUR DONATIONS INCLUDED IN GIFT AID, PLEASE WRITE TO ME FOR A FORM, SO THAT THE *GOSPEL MAGAZINE* CAN COLLECT NEARLY 30% EXTRA FROM THE INLAND REVENUE, ON TOP OF THE ORIGINAL GIFT.

All correspondence should be addressed to: *The Secretary, "Holme Regis", Old School Lane, Stanford, Biggleswade, Beds. SG18 9JL, United Kingdom.*