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THE GOSPEL MAGAZINE

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Editorial

We do not envy the man who, in after years, will have to sum up the spirit of our time. We have been so vague and so negative. We were quite sure that we must not be dogmatic about this, that and the next thing. But what, positively, we were to believe, we did not know. We were sure we must go somewhere, we were desperate to get there, but where we were to go we did not know.

But are there not the slightest signs of a change? Perhaps it is presumptuous of us to generalise; but we feel that, in one or two areas of secular life, there is some evidence of a reaction against the sinewless thinking of the sixties. And is there not some indication of a change in the life of the church as well? It may be on a tiny scale, but there is the beginning of a movement away from an indefinite theology which focuses attention on ourselves, to one of doctrinal strength in which the glory of God is supreme. Some whose pride once fed on Arminian doctrines have become spiritually humbled to receive the doctrines connected with the sovereignty of God. But pride can also co-exist with the strictest orthodoxy of doctrine. There is need for earnest prayer, that Reformed doctrines will not be learned in an atmosphere of such spiritual barrenness that they will be abused to serve the very pride which they are intended to subdue.

There is need for caution. But surely there is cause for humble rejoicing, too; and we might ask, *What can we do to express our thankfulness to God?* Perhaps there is some way in which we can seek to set before others what has become plain and precious to ourselves. We appreciate that the whole Reformed church cannot entirely unite behind a book like the second volume of John Murray's *Collected Works*. However, in so far as readers feel free to use this book, we would recommend the most widespread use. It would especially be good if this volume on *Systematic Theology* could be placed in Colleges where such truths are not taught. Perhaps a student will find it there who is now searching for just such a book as this.

Studies in Mark

THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

Chapter 4 : 2-20

Read also Matthew 13 : 3-23 and Luke 8 : 4-15

Farming activities in Palestine take different forms. There is the raising of flocks; there is the cultivation of trees, as vines and olives; there is the growing of crops, as barley and wheat. On this occasion Christ made use of the third type of farming activity to illustrate his teaching. As he stood by the Lake of Galilee and spoke of the sower, we can be almost sure that some part or other of his illustration was being enacted before the people's eyes. Perhaps it was April, and the barley crop was ripe. Or perhaps it was June, and the wheat harvest was near.

'Hearken; Behold there went out a sower to sow.' Perhaps his hearers had never before thought of the supreme importance of this event. They were so used to the sight of sowers in the fields near Capernaum that their minds were dulled to the importance of it. They might think a lot of the busy scenes of harvest, and the happy songs that they sang then. But Christ begins at the beginning. He paints the picture of the sower stepping out with the freshness of winter still in the wind and with the bare barren fields before him. He speaks of the duller sowing first because without it the colourful scenes of harvest could never be.

In the supreme sense, the sower must be Christ Himself. He is the One who 'hath life in himself', and it is he who is the Author of all life in the world. He it is who comes to the field of the world with the seed of God's word in his hand. That the seed in the parable is in fact God's word, Christ tells us plainly (v. 14). We are reminded of 1st Peter 1 : 23, where the word of God is described as 'incorruptible seed'. If Christ had not brought his word to the world, the world would then have been doomed to everlasting barrenness and death.

Of course Christ has others, too, who labour in his fields under his direction. These are the ministers of the gospel. And many a barren field they have to face, with nothing but the seed of the word in their hand and the encouragement of the chief Sower in their ears: 'In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand; for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good' (Eccles. 11 : 6).

Some fell by the wayside

The first class of hearers of the word are compared to the wayside. There were paths right through the fields in the East; on such a path the disciples were when they plucked the ears of corn. This first group of hearers are compared to the hard-trodden ground of that path.

There are three points to be noted in relation to this ground. Its prior condition is clear, before ever the seed falls on it: it is hard and unbroken. This describes those who have no prior disposition to receive the word of God at all. The seed falls on an impervious surface. It lies on the surface of the soil and at no point enters in. There is no vital interaction between the two; the seed might as well be lying on the surface of a millstone. And there is another aspect to this point—an aspect which is brought out in Matthew (13 : 19). Hearers like the wayside do not understand the word; they do not even begin to grasp its meaning.

What is the resultant effect? Because of their prior condition the word does not enter in; and then it is carried away, and there is no mark of where it has lain. Of course, the birds play their part in this process. Flocks of birds attend a sowing and it is certain that Satan sends flocks of evil birds whenever the word of God is sown. He keeps the minds of hearers occupied with anything but the word of God which they hear. The result is that thoughts about the world, thoughts about business, thoughts perhaps of direct opposition to the word come like a flock of birds and steal the word away. The sower has been near, the means of life has been near. But for all the effect, it is as if they never were.

Now let us look at this tragedy another way. The path is hard because of the traffic. Are our hearts not hard because there is a through passage given to the world, the flesh and the devil? If access were more limited, our hearts would not be so hard. What is to be done with hearts that are impervious to the word of God because of the evil forces which trespass and traffic there? Only the Law of God has an edge sufficiently sharp to break up that trodden soil. When he has sent that in with irresistible power and broken up our hearts we will be ready to receive the seed of the gospel with understanding, and bring forth fruit with patience.

Some fell on stony ground

Next, Luke tells us that 'some fell upon a rock'. This clearly indicates a thick layer of rock under a thin covering of soil. If the ground were merely covered with stones, the roots of the growing seeds could

have found a way past these stones to reach the earth beneath. With the layer of solid rock, however, their downward progress was totally barred.

What effect did this have on the seed as it began to germinate and grow? It is ironical that the shallowness of the soil which would eventually mean the death of the seed, at first meant that there was an initial flourish of growth, promising great fruit. Mark emphasises (v. 5) that the seed sown in this soil sprang up immediately.

Christ says of this group of hearers that they 'when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness; and have no root in themselves'. It is not then true as it was of the 'wayside hearers' that these hearers did not understand the word. They did to a degree understand it, and did in a sense receive it. The tragedy was that they had no deep experience of it. They grasped at the promises of the word, and appropriated the comforting messages in it, but they had no real experience of repentance and a change of heart.

The fact that there was no depth to these plants beneath the soil was eventually made known above. The plants had no endurance. Christ says that the kind of pressure which brought this out was 'affliction or persecution for the word's sake'. A good example of this process is furnished in John chapter 6. Christ was at this time followed by a whole host of disciples who professed to believe in him but who had only received the word as 'on a rock'. They were now offended at Christ's teaching and said, 'This is an hard saying; who can hear it?' After that they turned back and walked no more with him. As long as everything pleased them they carried on. As long as Christ's teaching, as appropriated by them, ministered to their joy and did not disturb their complacency, they followed him. But when his doctrine took to do with the intimate spiritual relationship between himself and true disciples, the interest of the rocky ground hearers began to wither and die.

Some fell among thorns

The 'thorny ground hearers' remind us that fields in Palestine were often marked off from one another by hedges of thorns. In the ground that was near to the hedge the oxen and the plough could not work, and there the farmer would work with a hoe. However, the ground could not be perfectly purged of weeds, and often it would look perfect when in fact it was riddled with the seeds of thorns and thistles. This is the third category of ground where the seed was sown. Here the seed grew up, but here it was accompanied by other seedlings. There was one seed of barley, then a seed of thorn-bush, then a seed of thistle,

then a seed of another weed, then a barley seed, and so on. And as the barley seed struggled up through the soil it found the race already won by those rank weeds that claimed the area as their own. The slender barley seed had no chance. The others over-topped her, kept the sun and showers from her, and eventually choked her off.

Spiritually, Christ distinguishes between two types of weeds. There are first 'the cares of this world'. A man hears the gospel, and does in a sense receive it, but does not see the incomparable importance of it. He is still concerned about the burden of life to the extent that these cares over-top his spiritual interests altogether. What is he to eat? What is he to drink? What is he to put on? These questions of the day grow like thistles in his soul and outstrip the seed of the word which deals with his eternal needs.

And there is another category of weed which chokes the word—'the deceitfulness of riches and the lusts of other things'. These seem to stand in contrast to the first category. And this is how they get a place in the soul—men are so burdened by the cares of life that they say to themselves, 'I must have some lightening of the gloom, I must have some alleviation of the suffering'. So they swing from being over-burdened to being careless. Perhaps they take too much to drink, to ease the burden of life. So the Devil keeps them alternating between these two extremes—over-concern and over-complacency—and these two types of weeds are kept watered, and each in his own way chokes the seed of the word.

And other fell on good ground

Luke says that those sown in good ground are 'they which, in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience' (8 : 15). This is not to be understood as teaching that 'good ground hearers' are inherently better than others, and that therefore their response to the word is different. Christ is simply describing their conscious response to the word, and does not here deal with the ultimate reasons for it in sovereign grace.

An example of those who had such a response to the word is the church at Thessalonica. Paul went to that city and scattered the seed about for three Sabbath days in the synagogue. Then he had to leave, but evidently from that short season of sowing there sprang up an abundant harvest. So that Paul had reason to write to the Thessalonians (I, 2 : 13), 'For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth the word of

God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe'. Here we have the key to what it means to receive the word 'in an honest and good heart'. The Thessalonian believers did not waste time arguing with Paul as to his apostolic credentials, nor as to his style of preaching. They had heard another voice when he had preached, a voice from Heaven. And in an honest and good heart they had received the word, 'as it is in truth, the word of God'.

Luke tells us that the 'good ground hearers' not only received the word in this way, but that they went on to 'bring forth fruit with patience'. So Paul could say in regard to the Thessalonians: 'Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope'. Again, he deals with these fruits in another way in Galatians 5 : 22-23. 'But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.' These are the fruits that we must look for in our hearts and lives, as we examine ourselves to see if we have received the word 'in an honest and good heart'. But let us not think that fruit-bearing is a sudden and easy thing: let us not be despairing when we do not find the aspect of our hearts transformed in one night. Fruit-bearing is usually slow, and it is painful.

It is a matter of constant vigilance and earnest endeavour to root out these loathsome weeds the apostle mentions. 'Now the works of the flesh are manifest which are these, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such like . . .' (Gal. 5 : 19-21). And it is a matter of patient endurance in faith and hope to look for the other fruits which have a fragrance of heaven about them.

How can we tell whether we belong to the third category or to the fourth? Sometimes such loathsome weeds appear in believers' lives that it is difficult to tell. David is a case in point, and he had much humiliation and heartache before the weed that grew in his heart was rooted out. But there is a principle of holiness implanted in the hearts of the godly, and in virtue of this they cannot continue in sin. They know that they come short, but in the end of the day there is in them a love to holiness and a hatred of sin. Whereas it is a free-for-all in the heart of hypocrites. In the terms of the parable the matter which will determine whether it is a forest of weeds we bear or a harvest of fruit is, how we receive the word. No wonder then that Christ concluded his public address on the parable with the exhortation: 'He that hath ears to hear, *let him hear*'.

THE UNCHANGING CHRIST

EDMUND P. CLOWNEY

This is the second part of the address which Dr. Clowney gave in Glasgow on the words, 'Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and for ever' (Heb. 13:8).

II. The Unchanging Priest: Reality in Communion

If the crisis in communication in our age points to the loss of truth, then the crisis in community points to a loss of love. In modern man's alienation, lust passes for love and violence becomes a cult. Men read with relish the most circumstantial accounts of crimes committed in cold blood. Where does the lure of violence begin? Does it express hidden blood-lust, the eyes of a killer glaring behind the civilised mask? Or is it a desire for suffering, a kind of painless self-punishment through identification with the victim? Psychologists try to explain the tangled fierceness of man's desires to kill and to suffer. Yet no explanation really explains the evil of human hatred or of man's lust for destruction.

There is one symbol of violent death that keeps haunting our time. Andrew Wyeth painted it with sombre understatement in his canvas, 'The Scarecrow'. A grey sky with torn clouds; an empty hill scarred with an old wagon track. The foreground is divided by the stark upright and rough cross-piece of a scarecrow frame. The straw scarecrow has rotted away. Only tattered rags stream out in the storm-wind. What remains is a crude cross, the unintended symbol of a lost faith.

The memory of Christ's cross still troubles secular men. Men cannot escape from Christ's death; the cross remains because death remains: 'It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment' (Hebrews 9:27).

Men fear, not just dying, but death. In its finality, its total judgment of all our hopes, death brings an awful reckoning. In Jean-Paul Sartre's play about hell, 'No Exit', there is a most frightening line: 'You are your life, and nothing else'.

Yet the very judgment of death points beyond itself. It is not meaningless; the meaning is dreadfully clear. Man dies, not as innocent, but as guilty. The wages of sin is death. Beyond the judgment of death there is the judgment *after* death. The finality of death leads to the finality of judgment. 'For we are consumed by thine anger, and by

thy wrath are we troubled. Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance' (Ps. 90 : 7, 8).

The cross of Christ is death by sentencing, death under the charge of guilt. All that men fear about death is openly present. But hear the end of that verse from Hebrews: 'And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment, so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation' (Hebrews 9 : 27, 28).

Christ's death is not one death among many; it is one death *for* many. His is not an example of death, but the death of death for them that look for him. Christ did not merely die once, as every man must; he was *offered* once. The Son of God was crucified and shed his blood for sinners. He is the good Shepherd who gave his life for the sheep.

His death is the final and perfect sacrifice for sin. Hebrews contrasts the repeated animal sacrifices of the tabernacle in the wilderness with the once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The sinless Son of God did not have to offer two sacrifices as the high priest did: one for his own sins and one for the sins of the people (Heb. 7 : 26-28). Nor did he come with the blood of bulls and goats that could not take away sin. Those symbolical sacrifices were endlessly repeated. Rather Christ entered the heavenly sanctuary, not the earthly, with his own blood, 'having obtained eternal redemption' (Heb. 9 : 12). 'This he did once for all, when he offered up himself' (Heb. 7 : 27). 'He, when he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God' (Heb. 10 : 12).

Christ's death is the final and ultimate offering for sin, the blood of God's new covenant, obtaining eternal redemption. Many today reject the sacrifice of Calvary. Instead of perceiving in the symbolism of Old Testament sacrifice a pattern through which they may gain understanding of Christ's cross, they follow an opposite procedure. They reduce the meaning of Christ's work to the shadows of the sacrificial system and then mock it. But Christ is the Lamb of God. The reality of his substitutionary sacrifice is no less than the reality of his person as the God-man. He offered himself and his shed blood speaks, crying out for the justification of sinners for whom the penalty of death has been paid.

Just because Christ's sacrifice is personal and final it must not be separated from his continuing work. The death that conquers death must issue in life. Christ was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification (Rom. 4 : 25).

In the language of the book of Hebrews, Christ not only offered

himself as the sacrifice for sin, but entered as the royal priest into the heavenly sanctuary. His atoning death removed the guilt of our sin; his living ministry ends the loneliness of our alienation. Our generation looks out with dread into an empty sky. With a strange zeal, scientists assure us that there must be life somewhere out there—if not in our solar system, then in our galaxy. Man cannot bear the thought that he is alone in the universe.

But the Christian has a better hope. We await the coming again of the risen Lord, who will make all things new. Our assurance is that Christ lives, and that he is our heavenly High Priest.

In the priestly ministry of our Mediator, fellowship between God and man is restored. In the tabernacle, God's dwelling with his people was symbolised by the cloud of glory. The high priest was the mediator who entered the holy of holies on the day of atonement to sprinkle the mercy seat with blood. That symbolised God's acceptance of the sacrifice in the throne of his glory. The priest stood for the people before God and brought God's blessing to the people.

When the shadows became reality, Jesus Christ came as a royal priest who is not only one with his people as true man, but one with the Father as true God.

What a representative Christ our Priest is! His identification with his people is complete. He took upon himself, not the nature of angels, but human flesh and blood. He was made like his brethren, bore their temptations and fulfilled his obedience as the true Son through suffering. He became 'a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted' (Heb. 2 : 17b, 18). 'We have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin' (Heb. 4 : 15).

This Christ, who knew the agony of lonely prayer in Gethsemane, who cried out in abandonment from Calvary, this Christ is our eternal priest in glory. What boldness that gives to every one who comes to the throne of grace through the blood of Christ! Our Brother bears the brightness of the Father's glory as the Man who shed his blood for sinners. He is able to save forever 'them that draw near unto God through him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them' (Heb. 7 : 25).

In a time of acute personal need I once asked John Murray (my teacher and then my colleague at Westminster Seminary) to pray for me. As he prayed, he seemed to be bearing me with him into the

presence of God. Then he began to praise the Father for the abiding intercession of Jesus Christ in heaven. I had been blending with my prayer thanksgiving to God for John Murray's intercession. But as he rejoiced in Christ's eternal priesthood, it came home to me that I had a better Intercessor than John Murray. Jesus Christ, who prayed for Simon Peter that his faith fail not, ever lives to pray for us whom he calls his brethren.

'Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of Grace,' for in coming to that throne we come 'to God the Judge of all . . . and to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better than that of Abel' (Heb. 12 : 23b, 24).

III Christ the Unchanging King: Reality in Power

Like a television screen spinning with split-second images, the history of our time seems to be exploding. In outer space and in our inner cities, in the mid-East and in the new nations of Africa, a vast power struggle goes on. The word for rapid, violent political change is revolution, and revolution grows with the frustration of men's hopes. The red flag of communism, in spite of Solzhenitsyn's *Gulag Archipelago*, keeps promising peace and plenty in a workers' paradise. The black flag of nihilism, the flag of the 'great refusal', scorns establishment communism. The revolutionaries of the new left promise an even brighter Utopia, free of all repression. Again, the re-made society they seek must come through acts of terror and blood.

There are many who wish to gain a new hearing for Christianity in a revolutionary age by bringing the church into the service of one or another revolution. The Bible, they say, describes the liberation movement of the exploited Israelites from Egyptian slavery. Jesus' life is recast to present him as a freedom fighter, crucified with guerillas in the war against Roman oppression. Others follow the opposite line, identifying Christ's cause with fascist counter-revolution or with the nationalist idolatry of some 'strong-man'.

But the unchanging Kingship of Christ establishes the kingdom of God, not the kingdoms of men. The letter to the Hebrews speaks of two cities, the city of man and the city of God. In Hebrews 13 : 14 we read: 'For we have not here an abiding city, but we seek after the city which is to come'.

Only God's city abides. We have here no abiding city: in the day of God's judgment every proud tower of man's building will crumble. His trumpet will sound and the walls of the Babylon of this age will

fall like those of Jericho. The very mountains will be thrown into the seas and every wall shall fall. (Ezek. 38 : 20; Jer. 51 : 44).

Every visitor to the divided city of Berlin stares at the brutal wall cutting through the heart of the city. Crude concrete, bricked-up buildings, barbed wire, pacing guards—that monstrous wall must fall. But so at last must every wall.

There is no abiding city here: not Berlin, or Paris, or London, or New York. But God has prepared a city. Abraham, the pilgrim of faith, lived in tents but looked 'for the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God' (Heb. 11 : 10). Those who share Abraham's faith 'desire a better country, that is, a heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed of them, to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city' (Heb. 11 : 16).

The people of God sing the song of the city: 'We have a strong city; salvation will he appoint for walls and bulwarks' (Isa. 26 : 1b). God himself is the light, the glory of his city and the wall of fire around it (Zech. 2 : 5).

That city cannot be shaken, for it is the city of Christ's kingdom. Jerusalem of old was the city of the Great King, named not for King David, who made it his capital, but for the Lord himself who was King among his people. Christ, the Son of David, is the Lord and is seated on the right hand of the Majesty on high (Heb. 1 : 3, 10 : 12). The description comes from Psalm 110, the most quoted Psalm in the New Testament: 'The Lord saith unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. The Lord will send forth the rod of thy strength out of Zion: Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies' (Ps. 110 : 1-2).

Christ's dominion is final, because his royal triumph is complete. He endured the cross, despising the shame, and his place at God's right hand means that God has given him rule over all. Such power can be given him only because he is the God-man. The writer of Hebrews boldly applies to him the words of the Psalm, 'Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever' (Heb. 1 : 8; Ps. 45 : 6).

When we come in worship to the city of God, we come to the throne of God and of his eternal Son. The people of God are citizens of the heavenly city who confess they are strangers and pilgrims in the earth (Heb. 11 : 13). But the King to whom we come is the present ruler of all the kings of the earth. We are sojourners, but he dwells in his city and sits on his throne.

To be sure, the Babylons of this world do not confess Christ's name. As sojourners we may pray for the peace of the city that is our present

residence (Jer. 29 : 7), but we seek a better city, a heavenly one. That means we must renounce the idolatry of the city that lifts man's pride to heaven and demands religious zeal for political ends. An even stronger alienation separates us from Jerusalem. Christ was crucified outside the gates of that city and we must go forth to him, bearing his reproach (Heb. 13 : 12, 13). No religious establishment can be home to the Christian that has barred the gate to his Lord.

Because Christ the King has all power in heaven and earth, he does not now call Christians to take the sword, but rather the cross. Christ in glory is the now and future King. We have here no abiding city, no world empire to establish by force of arms. We seek the city that is coming because the King is coming. The book of Revelation describes the coming of the New Jerusalem from heaven with the coming of Christ (Rev. 21 : 2).

The sure hope of Christ's return and the certainty of his final and total judgment is the setting of our service. This does not mean that Christians can condone injustice, but it does mean that they dare not take God's judgment into their own hands. Communism justifies its violent revolution in the name of history, the 'wave of the future'. Arthur Koestler in *Darkness at Noon* shows the fascination and fallacy of the party line that what is certain to come is therefore right. On the other hand, the Christian knows that what is right is therefore certain, because Christ is King.

But as Christians you do not simply wait for Christ. You come to Christ now, worshipping in the Spirit where Christ is in the heavenly city. And Christ comes to you now, filling you with his Spirit to bear witness and show mercy in his name. Beyond the horizon of human power and tyranny the Christ of Galilee holds the final authority. He does not yet bring that awful reckoning, the justice that men sometimes thoughtfully cry for. This is the time of his longsuffering grace. This is the time to point men to the King of grace and glory.

The unchanging Christ, our Prophet, Priest and King, is the same yesterday, today and forever.

As the Christ of yesterday he really lived, walked the shores of the lake, sat on the curbing of the well, prayed under the olive trees, staggered under the cross. But he is not a receding figure in history. He is the abiding Christ, the same today, the real and living Son of God.

Our fathers knew him (Heb. 12 : 7), the patriarchs knew him (Heb. 11). He prayed for Peter and he lives to pray for us.

Praise his name, he is the Christ of today. He has said, 'I will in no

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For Younger Readers

BELOTTI:

The Story of a Wood-Cutter

In the far north of Italy, close to the Swiss border, there lived a wood-cutter named Belotti. For many years this man had worked among the mountains and forests, usually following in the tracks of the regular woodmen, employed by Italian firms. These gangs of men felled trees, sawing up trunks and cutting off branches, eventually carting their loads of timber to the headquarters of their employers. But they always left behind them much wood, not good enough for the trouble of cartage; and it was in their wake that Belotti followed, usually working quite alone.

Belotti had two grown-up sons, married, and living over the border in Switzerland. As charcoal dealers, they could always make use of the timber sold to them by their father.

But the wood-cutter's wife and young children lived in the valley of Domo d'Ossola, and to them he always returned for the winter, when ice and snow made his work impossible. Then at the first sign of Spring, Belotti set off again for his beloved mountains.

He was a quiet solitary sort of man, always most at home in lonely places. In the forests he would build a little hut for himself, of earth and branches, just large enough for warmth and shelter. Here he kept a little fire burning, and did his bits of cooking. Every week he would tramp down to the nearest village, dragging his load of wood to sell, and buying provisions for himself, generally maize and cheese. But on Sundays he took great pains to be washed and shaved, and wearing his Sunday coat, he would go to the nearest church to attend service.

Belotti could read, but he had never had any other instruction, and for many years his library consisted of one book only—the service-book used in his church. From a child he had been familiar with this book; he knew most of it by heart, some passages from the Gospels, some from the Psalms. Even from these slender sources, the Word of God had become a lamp to his feet and a light to his paths. But one day he met a colporteur, selling Scriptures. He bought a New Testament; and from that day the Book became his dearest treasure. In his lonely forest hut Belotti spent many hours reading and re-reading the words of life. It seems that the Holy Spirit Himself was the wood-cutter's teacher; He told of the things of Christ and revealed them to Belotti, as he read and prayed and meditated. Without the help of

any other human being, with the Scriptures alone to lead him, Belotti became a humble believer in the Lord Jesus, putting his whole trust and confidence in his Saviour, and living in communion with Him.

Though very reserved and silent by nature, the woodman found it impossible to keep his good things to himself. Wherever he went, through the forests, over the mountains, or in the little villages, Belotti felt compelled to tell everybody he met about his Saviour. He knew nothing but what he had himself experienced, and most of what he said was in the very words of his wonderful book. People would smile, and even scoff, but there was nobody who did not respect Belotti. As John Cennick puts it, so Belotti felt:

*Now will I tell to sinners round,
What a dear Saviour I have found;
I'll point to Thy redeeming blood,
And say, 'Behold the Way to God!'*

One very wet season, when almost continuous rain made his work impossible, Belotti took refuge for many weeks in a barn belonging to friends of his in one of the mountain hamlets. It became a habit with the family and their neighbours to meet in the barn every evening, the women bringing their knitting, their men-folk joining them at the end of the day's work. Belotti would read to them from his Testament, expounding the passage in his own simple words. His audience listened eagerly, and much discussion always followed. There were many questions and doubts expressed. One man said there was no need to believe anything different from what their fathers had learned. Another asked why Belotti spoke so much of Jesus, and so little of the saints and the Blessed Virgin. It was all very well, said one man, for great criminals and sinners to be told that they needed to be saved, but that sort of thing was quite unnecessary for law-abiding people like themselves. To all these objections, Belotti found answers from his Testament, boldly proclaiming the truth as it is in Jesus.

The church authorities in the area could not have known about Belotti's activities; otherwise they would no doubt have silenced him. In God's good providence, he was left free to testify to his Saviour as long as he lived and worked in these mountains. Then, when he grew old and his health failed, he went back to his family home at Domo d'Ossola, where he died in peace.

'The Lord knoweth them that are His.'

DAMARIS.

THE OBEDIENCE OF FAITH

EXTRACTED FROM WILLIAM GURNALL, M.A., 1617-1679

This choice excellent faith, it is obediential faith; that is, true faith on the promise works obedience to the command. Abraham is famous for his obedience; no command, however difficult soever, came amiss to him. He is an obedient servant indeed, that when he doth but hear his master's knock, leaves all and runs presently [at once] to know his master's will and pleasure. Such a servant God had in Abraham: 'Who raised up the righteous man from the east, called him to His foot.' But what was the spring that set Abraham's obedience a-going? See for this Hebrews 11: 'By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out', etc. As it is impossible to please God without faith, so it is impossible not to desire to please Him with faith. It may well go for an idle faith that hath hands, but doth not work; feet but doth not walk in the statutes of God. No sooner had Christ cured the woman in the gospel of her fever, but it is said, she rose and ministered unto them. Thus the believing soul stands up and ministers unto Christ, in gratitude and obedience. Faith is not lazy, it inclines not the soul to sleep, but work; it sends the creature not to bed, there to snort away his time in ease and sloth, but into the field. The night of ignorance and unbelief, that was the creature's sleeping time; but when the Sun of Righteousness ariseth, and it is day with the soul, then the creature ariseth and goeth forth to his labour. The first words that break out of faith's lips are those of Saul in his hour of conversion: 'Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?' Faith turns the Jordan, and alters the whole course of a man. Says the apostle: 'We were foolish and disobedient. But after the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man appeared'; then the case was altered, as it follows (Tit. 3). And therefore take your foul fingers off the promise, and pretend no more to faith, if ye be children of Belial, such whose necks do not freely stoop to this yoke of obedience. The devil himself may as soon pass for a believer, as a disobedient soul. Other things he can show as much as you: Dost thou pretend to knowledge? Thou wilt not deny the devil to be a greater scholar than thyself, I hope, and that in Scripture knowledge. Dost thou believe the Scripture to be true? and doth he not more strongly? Dost thou tremble? he much more. It is obedience he wants [lacks]; and this makes him a devil, and it will make thee like him also.

Question. But you may ask what stamp is there to be found on faith's obedience, which will distinguish it from all counterfeits? For there are many fair semblances of obedience, which the devil will never grudge us the having.

Answer. Take these two characters of the obedience of faith. 1. Faith's obedience begins at the heart, and from thence it diffuseth and dilates itself to the outward man, till it overspreads the whole man in a sincere endeavour. As in natural life, the first part that lives is the heart, so the first that faith subdues into obedience is the heart. It is called a faith which purifieth the heart (Acts 15 : 9). The believing Romans obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered them (6 : 17). Whereas a false faith which apes this true faith, as art imitates nature, begins without, and there ends. All the seeming good works of a counterfeit believer, they are like the beautiful colour in a picture's face, which comes not from a principle of life within but the painter's pencil without. Such were those who are said to believe on Christ, but He did not commit Himself to them; and why? For He knew what was in man (John 2 : 23-25). He cared not for the painted porch and goodly outside; He knew what was in man, and by that knowledge He knew him to be rotten to the core, naught at heart, before he was speckled on the skin of the exterior conversation.

Question. But how may I know my obedience is the obedience of the heart?

Answer. If it comes from love, then it is the obedience of the heart. He commands the heart, that is the master of its love. The castle must needs yield, when he that keeps it, and the keys of it, submits. Love is the affection that governs this royal fort of man's heart. We give our hearts to them we give our love. And indeed thus it is, that faith brings the heart over into subjection and obedience to God, by putting it under the law of love. 'Faith that worketh by love' (Gal. 5 : 6). First, faith worketh love, then worketh by it. As first the workman sets an edge on his tools, then cuts and carves with them; so faith sharpens the soul's love to God, and then acts by it. Or as a statuary [sculptor], to make some difficult piece, before he goes about it, finding his hands numbed with cold that he cannot handle his tools so nimbly as he should, goes first to the fire, and with the help of its heat chafes them till they become agile and active, then to work he falls; so faith brings the soul, torpid and listless enough (God knows) to any duty, unto the meditation of the peerless matchless love of God in Christ to it, and at this fire faith stays the Christian's thoughts, till his affections begin to kindle and come to some sense of his love of God; and now the Christian bestirs himself for God with might and main.

Question. But how may I know my obedience is from love?

Answer. I will send you to John to be resolved of this question. 'This the love of God, that we keep His commandments, and His commandments are not grievous.' Speak, soul, what account you of the

commandments? Do you look upon them as iron chains about your legs, and think yourselves prisoners because you are tied to them? Or do you value them as a chain of gold about your neck, and esteem yourselves favourites of the King of heaven that He will honour you to honour Him by serving of Him? So did as great a prince as the world ever had: 'Who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly?' (1 Chron. 29). Not, Who am I that I should be a king over my people? But, that I should have a heart to offer so willingly with my people. Not, Who am I that they should serve me, but that Thou wilt honour me with a heart to serve Thee with them? The same holy man in another place speaks of sin as his prison, and his obedience as his liberty: 'I will walk at liberty, for I seek Thy precepts.' When God gives him a large heart for duty, he is as thankful as a man that was found in prison is when he is set at liberty, that he may visit his friends, and follow his calling. The only grievous thing to a loving soul, is to be hindered in his obedience; this is that which makes such a one out of love with the world, and being in it; because it cumbers him in his work, and many times keeps him from it. As a conscionable servant, that is lame or sickly and can do his master little service, O how it grieves him! Thus, the loving soul bemoans itself, that it should put God to so much cost, and be so unprofitable under it. Speak, is this thy temper? Blessed art thou of the Lord! There is a jewel of two diamonds which this will prove thou art the owner of, that the crown jewels of all the princes of the world are not so worthy to be valued with, as a heap of dust or dung is to be compared with them. The jewel, I mean, is made of this pair of graces, faith and love; they are thine, and with them, God and all that He hath and is. But, if the commandments of God are grievous (as they are to every carnal heart), and thou countest thyself at ease when thou canst make an escape from a duty to commit a sin (as the beast when his collar is off and he in his fat pasture again), now thou art where thou wouldest be, and canst show some spirits that thou hast; but when conscience puts on the trace again, thou art dull and heavy again; O it speaks thee to have no love for God, and therefore no true faith on God. That is a jade indeed, and who hath no mettle but in the pasture.

The obedience of faith is full of self-denial. Faith keeps the creature low, as in what it hath, so in what it doth. 'I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me' (Gal. 2 : 10). As if he had said: I pray mistake me not, When I say I live, I mean not that I live by myself or of myself, but Christ in me. I live, and that deliciously, but it is Christ that keeps the house, not I. I mortify my corruptions, and vanquish temptations, but I am debtor to Christ for the strength. None can write here, as one did

under pope Adrian's statue: 'God did nothing for this man'. No, blessed Paul, and in him every believer, acknowledgeth God for sole founder and benefactor too of all the good he hath and doth. They are not ashamed to acknowledge who they are beholden to for all. 'These are the children which God hath graciously given me,' saith Jacob. And, these the services which God hath graciously assisted me in, saith Paul. 'I laboured more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.' O how chary are saints of writing themselves authors of their own good works, parts, or abilities! 'Art thou able,' said the king to Daniel, 'to make known to me the dream which I have seen?' Now mark, he doth not say, as the proud astrologers: 'We will show the interpretation'; that fitted their mouths well enough, who had no acquaintance with God, but not Daniel's, the servant of the living God; though at that very time he had the secret revealed to him, and could tell the king his dream, yet he was careful to stand clear from any filching of God's glory from him. Therefore he answers the king what his God could do, rather than himself: 'There is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets.' What makes Daniel so self-denying? Truly, it was because he had obtained this secret of God by faith at the throne of grace; as you may perceive from chapter 2 : 15-19. That faith which taught him to beg the mercy of God, enabled him to deny self and give the entire glory of it to God. As rivers empty their streams again into the bosom of the sea, whence they at first received them; so men give the praise of what they do, unto that by which they do it. If they attempt any enterprise with their own wit or industry, you shall have them bring their sacrifice to their wit or net. No wonder to hear Nebuchadnezzar, who looked no higher than himself in building this great Babylon, ascribe the honour of it to himself: 'Is not this great Babylon that I have built by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?' But faith teacheth the creature to blot out his own name, and write the Name of God in its room, upon all that he hath and doth. When the servants (Luke 19) came to give up their accounts to their lord, every one for his pound, those that were faithful to improve it, how humbly and self-denyingly do they speak! 'Lord, Thy pound hath gained ten pounds,' saith the first; 'five pounds,' saith the other. Mark, not I have gained, but Thy pound hath gained ten, five. They do not applaud themselves, but ascribe both principal and increase to God: Thy talent hath gained, that is, by Thy assistance and blessing Thy gifts and graces have gained this much more. Only he that did least, comes in with a brag and tells the Lord what he hath done: 'Behold, here is Thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin.' Least doers are greatest boasters.

Reformation Studies

ROBERT RODGERS

THE REFORMATION EUCHARISTIC CONTROVERSY

In the year 1529 Dr. Martin Luther undertook his third major public appearance in order to defend his views. The first had been in 1519 at Leipzig, when his opponent had been the formidable John Eck, and when Luther had argued that Councils, Fathers and Church—all of whom are liable to err—should submit to the authority of Scripture.

The second great occasion was at the Diet of Worms in 1521 when, commanded to appear by the Emperor (Charles V), Luther defended biblical theology, liberty of conscience and the authority of reason.

The third appearance was at the Marburg Colloquy in 1529, when Luther met with his fellow-reformers to debate the doctrine of the Lord's Supper. It was extremely unfortunate that, at a time when the Catholic princes had formed a league to advance their religion, a dispute should have arisen among the Reformers which, mainly because of Luther's intransigence, 'caused incalculable loss to the Protestant cause'.

The conference at Marburg was arranged by Philip of Hesse with a view to settling the dispute among the Reformers concerning the Lord's Supper. At this stage, the dispute was mainly between the Lutherans and the Swiss, and at the Marburg Colloquy the former were represented by Luther and Melancthon and the latter by Zwingli and Oecolampadius.

At length, fifteen articles of faith were drawn up which covered such basic doctrines as the Trinity and the Person and Work of Christ. On the first fourteen articles there was complete agreement, but the fifteenth, which dealt with the Lord's Supper, proved to be the stumbling-block. Indeed, the difference centred around the nature of Christ's presence in the Supper, so that whilst there was general agreement with regard to the rest of the fifteenth article, there was bitter difference of opinion regarding the subject of Christ's presence.

The basic trouble was Luther's conservatism at this point. In general, it may be said that he held a view mid-way between the Roman Catholic dogma and the sacramental position of Zwingli. Though opposed to the idea of transubstantiation he nevertheless advanced the idea of Consubstantiation and retained such characteristic elements of the Roman system as the crucifix, candles and mass vestments.

The Reformers were at one in their repudiation of the Roman Catholic doctrine of the Mass which has been officially defined as:

... one and the same sacrifice with that of the Cross, inasmuch as Christ, Who offered Himself a bleeding victim on the cross to His heavenly Father, continues to offer Himself in an unbloody manner on the altar, through the ministry of His priests.

Nor had they any difficulty in rejecting that particular aspect of the Mass known as transubstantiation. The term itself means that there is a change of substance so that the bread and wine are changed into the literal physical body and blood of Christ.

Luther's substitute for transubstantiation was not an original idea but one which had been formulated and defended by Occam in his treatise 'De Sacramento Altaris'. Luther had learned it from Peter D'Ailly. Briefly stated, the doctrine of consubstantiation advances the idea of the real presence in the sacrament, not of Christ, but of His body and blood. That is to say, the actual body and blood of the Redeemer co-exist in some way, *in, with or under* the bread and wine in the Eucharist. Luther himself expressed the doctrine in these terms:

The very body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ are, by the word of Christ, instituted and given to us Christians to be eaten and drunk in and under bread and wine.

Luther also held that the unbeliever certainly received the actual body of Christ in the Sacrament though this could only issue in his condemnation.

Though his fellow-reformers objected to this that the body of Christ could not be in different places at one and the same time, Luther held firmly to this doctrine which has been described by Cunningham as 'the unintelligible absurdity commonly called consubstantiation'.

The Swiss Reformers agreed, as we have seen, with much of the fifteenth article but refused resolutely to accept the ideas of the corporeal presence and oral manducation. Their views were much more radical though they are frequently misunderstood and misrepresented.

Part, at least, of the blame for this common misunderstanding must be laid at the door of Zwingli himself since his writings are not always clear with regard to the positive side of his teaching. It is clear what he does not believe concerning the sacrament, but when it comes to an attempted reconstruction of his positive ideas some difficulty is experienced.

The fact that he is rather unclear at some points has led some scholars to represent the teaching of Zwingli as advancing the idea that the Lord's Supper was an institution designed to be barely memorial

and nothing else. There are other scholars, however, who feel that there are passages in the Reformer's writings which do attach a somewhat deeper meaning to the sacrament. Thus Berkhof can summarise the Zwinglian position thus:

The true body of Christ is present to the contemplation of faith; but that His natural body is really and actually present in the Supper or is eaten with our mouths we constantly assert to be an error repugnant to the Word of God.

At the conference at Marburg, Luther took a piece of chalk and wrote on the table 'Hoc est corpus Meum' ('This is My body'). He was intent upon interpreting the Saviour's words in a strictly literal fashion and would have nothing whatever to do with any attempt to explain the reference in terms of spiritual significance, metaphor or sign.

Zwingli objected to Luther's literal understanding of the text and appealed to the fact that the word 'is' does not always mean substantial sameness. In addition, he drew attention to those other passages of Scripture which may be regarded as fair parallels to the text in question. 'I am the true vine' and 'I am the Door' (John 15 : 1; 10 : 7) could not possibly be construed in literal terms and therefore the Swiss felt perfectly justified in regarding I Corinthians 11 : 24 as belonging to the same class of texts.

Luther maintained his position and declared that he would never abandon a literal interpretation of the Saviour's words, and added:

I am not going to argue whether 'is' can mean 'is a sign of'. I am content with what Christ said . . . The devil cannot get out of that.

There are those who attribute Luther's attitude to the strong mystical element in his nature. There are others who suspect that Luther's intransigence was really the result of the Peasants' War (1524) which, they claim, had the effect of hardening Luther in his attitudes and rendering him much less susceptible to radical change. Had the Peasants' Revolt occurred after the Colloquy, and not before (so runs the argument), the resultant history respecting the doctrine of the Lord's supper might have been different.

In earlier days, before the Peasants' War had made Luther jealous of avoiding changes, it is possible that he might have been able to have come to some statement of the doctrine which the Swiss could have accepted; and many have supposed, on very good grounds, that had Calvin been present, and Calvin's view of the matter had been before Luther, the union might have been brought about. (*Lindsay.*)

Certainly, it is worthy of note that Luther is on record as approving

the doctrine of Calvin as expressed in the *Institutes of the Christian Religion, Reply to Cardinal Sadoletto* (1539), and *Supper of the Lord* (1541). Nevertheless, the fact of the matter is that Calvin was not present at the Colloquy of Marburg and that that conference took place after, and not before, the Peasants' Revolt.

Whatever may have been the reasons for Luther's attitude on the doctrine of the Lord's Supper, certain it is that his attitude towards the Swiss Reformers was less than charitable. He refused the right hand of fellowship to Zwingli and this brought tears to the eyes of the Swiss Reformer. To the peace-loving Martin Bucer he said: 'You have a different spirit than we'.

The dispute between the Reformers on the subject of the Lord's Supper did incalculable damage to Protestantism in general and to Lutheranism in particular.

As the Divines of some Rhineland cities and the Low Countries followed Zwingli and Oecolampadius rather than Luther, those churches began to look for guidance and leadership rather to Zürich than to Wittenberg. (*Chadwick.*)

Atkinson attributes this to the fact that the Swiss position appealed to the common people whereas Luther's seemed to invite suspicion. The situation is summed up thus:

It is interesting to note that the Swiss carried the laymen along with them in their arguments. There was a direct simplicity and common-sense about Zwingli's arguments which invited acceptance, but a touch of Catholic scholasticism about Luther's which aroused suspicion, certainly reservations.

As a practical demonstration of the trend away from Luther and toward the Swiss position one might appeal to the *Confessio Tetrapolitana* (1530)—largely the work of Martin Bucer—which was drawn up in the names of the four South German cities, Strassburg, Constance, Memmingen and Lindau. This joint confession was strongly Protestant and emphasised the sole authority of Scripture, Justification by Faith Alone and the abolition of images. Indeed, in these very areas it may be said to be more strongly Protestant than any of the previous Lutheran confessions.

The Reformers who met at the Colloquy have been divided into 'lions' and 'lambs' or, as some might prefer, 'hawks' and 'doves'. In the former category must be placed Luther and Oecolampadius and in the latter, Zwingli and Melancthon. Melancthon was very quiet throughout the debate, preferring to leave the argument to Luther.

The Reformer who, more than any other at this time, sought to heal

the breach in the Reformation camp was undoubtedly Martin Bucer. An outstanding theologian in his own right, Bucer had a remarkable influence on Calvin who had assisted him in the work at Strassburg after the expulsion of Calvin and Farel from Geneva (1538).

Bucer had been exercised about the whole question of the Lord's Supper for many years and, as early as 1531, had taken practical steps, in the establishment of parochial overseers, to introduce a much more thorough discipline.

Since he could identify truth and discern error in the two extremes of Lutheranism and Zwinglianism with regard to the Lord's Supper, Bucer spent a good deal of his time in attempting to reconcile the opposing factions. Described as 'a man of principle and among the most learned and level-headed of the Protestants', he agreed with Zwingli that a physical reception of a spiritual gift was an impossibility. Nevertheless, he conceded to Luther the point that there was some communication of the Lord's humanity in the Sacrament. In an attempt to reconcile the parties he proposed the abolition of such prepositions as 'in' and 'under' which he regarded as totally misleading. He much preferred the word 'with'.

Bucer agreed with Zwingli that the channel of reception was faith and that a faithless man could not, in fact, receive anything but mere bread. On the other hand, as we have seen, he agreed with Luther that an objective gift, viz., the humanity of Christ, was received (by the believer) in the sacrament.

Perhaps Bucer's greatest achievement in this area was the influence he exerted upon Calvin during the time the latter spent in Strassburg. In 1538 Calvin had been banished from Geneva because of the teaching he advanced concerning the Lord's Supper and for the next three years he laboured with Bucer at Strassburg. Concerning Calvin's view of the sacraments, Wendel can say:

Luther on the one hand and Bucer on the other contributed to the formation of Calvinist themes and their interpretation of the Augustinian texts certainly guided Calvin towards the line that he took—a line which, in spite of such evident influences and perhaps because of their very diversity, was by no means without originality.

It was the Calvinist concept of the Lord's Supper that eventually commanded widest acceptance. It was manifestly grounded upon Holy Scripture and, at the same time, free from the crippling conservatism that had prevented Luther from entering into a wholehearted reformation of the Church's previous eucharistic teaching. His remarks on the

subject have been described as 'a clear and coherent explanation, impossible to misunderstand'.

Calvin was also keenly aware of the differences among the Reformers on this extremely important point and he therefore laboured to produce a scriptural exposition that would command acceptance by all the parties involved.

During his exile at Strassburg, Calvin prepared his *Little Treatise on the Lord's Supper* which was published at Geneva in 1541. A small work (about 40 pages), it nevertheless wielded an influence out of all proportion to its size. Reflecting the position he had adopted in the various editions of the *Institutes* (Latin 1539 and French 1541), this work won the approval of Luther who declared: 'If Oecolampadius and Zwingli had dealt with the business as he does, the dispute would have been shorter and less bitter'. The irony of the matter is that Calvin had actually been deterred from embarking on the road to evangelical faith by the bitterness of the dispute between Luther and Zwingli.

We may well appreciate that Calvin, keenly aware of the disastrous effect the dispute had had upon the Reformation, was therefore motivated by a desire to reconcile the factions by the production of a scriptural exposition of the Lord's Supper.

A comparison between the *Instruction of Faith* which Calvin published in 1537 at the suggestion of Farel, and the later editions of the *Institutes*, will demonstrate the fact that Calvin adhered to his own doctrine of the Sacrament without being unduly moved by one side or the other and that he held a consistent doctrine throughout his ministry at Strassburg and Geneva.

The Consensus Tigurinus was written by Calvin in 1549 with the express intention of reconciling the Zwinglians with the Calvinist position. That he was successful in this is evidenced by the number of Reformed Confessions which adopt his essential position. One thinks of the *Second Helvetic Confession*, drawn up by Bullinger (Zwingli's successor at Zürich) in 1562. This Confession was extremely influential and 'is, on some accounts, to be regarded as the most authoritative symbol of the Reformed Church' (Hodge). In addition, a significant advance was made toward reconciling the parties as a result of Calvin's work when *The Heidelberg Catechism* was produced by Olevian and Ursinus and adopted by a General Synod held at Heidelberg in 1563. It is not without significance that the former was a disciple of Calvin whilst the latter was the friend of Melancthon.

The teaching of Calvin on the Lord's Supper has been summarised by Berkhof thus:

Calvin also regards the sacraments as acts of confession, but only secondarily. To him they are first of all signs and seals of the promises of God which direct attention to the riches of His grace. He finds their essential element in the word of promise, in the covenant of grace and in the person of Christ with all His blessings. But he did not conceive of these spiritual blessings as deposited in the visible elements, as inherent in these, making them more or less independent distributors of divine grace. For him, God is and remains the only source of grace and the sacraments are merely the instruments by which it is communicated. God communicates this grace only to believers by nourishing and strengthening their faith. Unbelievers may receive the external sign but do not participate in the thing signified.

In formulating his doctrine, Calvin was guided by certain specific objectives and even his most inveterate enemies have been forced to concede that he succeeded admirably in achieving those objectives. In the first place *clarity was achieved*. One result of the doctrinal wrangle between the Lutherans and Zwinglians had been that vital issues had been obscured and even the accurate position of Bucer had been advanced in long, unclear sentences. Secondly, the element of *mystery was preserved*. One of the consequences of Zwingli's position was that the Supper was reduced to a bare memorial and was denuded of its element of mystery. Thirdly, *absurdities were avoided*. Luther's idea of consubstantiation can only be described as absurd and the merit of Calvin's work includes the avoidance of everything that could be regarded in this way. Fourthly, *the rule of faith was observed*. Scripture is to be viewed as a whole and no single doctrine is to be advanced which is out of harmony with the analogy of scripture. Lastly, a *true eschatological tension is maintained*. In opposition to the Lutherans, who attached little or no significance to the ascension of Christ and therefore to His Second Coming, Calvin insisted that Christ had left the earth to which He would one day return. Christians therefore observe the Lord's Supper 'until He come'.

The eucharistic controversy was thus a major dispute which created an obstacle to the progress of the Reformation and appeared to be all but insurmountable. It is to the genius of Calvin, as we have seen, that we owe what measure of agreement and stability the various churches now enjoy with regard to this ordinance.

Glimpses of Dabney

This article is intended as a substitute for a book review, the book in question being *The Life and Letters of Robert Lewis Dabney*, published by The Banner of Truth Trust, pp 585, price £4.

Other books recently published, containing Dabney's writings, are *Lectures in Systematic Theology* (Zondervan, 1972) and *Discussions: Evangelical and Theological* (Banner of Truth, 1967). Those who have read even a little of these books will have become aware of Dabney's extraordinary mental gifts and will be pleased to have the opportunity to read this reprint of Dabney's *Life and Letters*.

That Dabney was a strong individualist one would gather, even from his style of theological writing. This impression is confirmed in the *Life and Letters*. Dabney's versatility was astounding. His feet were firmly planted on Virginian soil, and he was able to turn his hand to an amazing number of practical jobs. But what is more remarkable is, how Dabney was able to carry this versatility over into his intellectual pursuits. He was an able student of languages, he was a deep philosopher, and all this meant that he came to the study of theology as one who excelled in a remarkable number of other academic disciplines.

No wonder A. A. Hodge described him as 'the best teacher of theology in the United States, if not in the world'.

We do not try to assess, nor even refer to, many issues which arise in the course of this book; but here, from *The Life and Letters of Robert Lewis Dabney*, are some glimpses of this incredible man.

Early Years

Dabney was born in the house of a Virginian planter in March, 1820. He attended primary schools, and then went on to Hampden-Sidney College. In later years he spoke of the College as being visited about this time 'by a powerful and genuine awakening'; and it was in September, 1837, that he himself professed his faith in Christ. He then went on to study at the University of Virginia, and after that he went home for a period to help his now widowed mother. He managed her farm, and opened a small classical school to procure extra income. At this time he also taught his gifted young sister, Betty; and in this connection showed the instinct of a teacher, as well as the ability of a future professor, by compiling for her his own *Latin Grammar, Part I*.

In 1844 he went on to train for the ministry at Union Seminary. Here, among other subjects, he studied Oriental Literature, the professor of which department was Dr F. S. Sampson. As to whether or not he found this beneficial, we note that he afterwards said:

'If I ever had any special intellectual growth and vigor, I owed it to three things; first, to the Master of Arts course in the University of Virginia, second, to Dr. Sampson, and third, to my subsequent mastery of Turretin.'

It was on July the 8th, 1845, that Dabney preached his first sermon: Afterwards he wrote to his mother:

'Last Sunday I preached my first sermon at one of Dr. Graham's country churches. The congregation was small, pretty select and pretty critical, the very worst sort of a place to preach in you ever saw; and, besides, they only regard the preaching of the seminarians as a sort of imitation of the reality, and look on with no other feeling than curiosity to see how complete the mimicry will be. I kept the attention of my congregation pretty well; only two leant on their elbows for a few minutes, which I think was very well for so hot, sleepy a day. I found preaching tired me, both body and voice, much more than I expected. The bodily labor is not any great thing, but the strain of mind is so great that when the excitement passes away the preacher feels like a drunken man sobering. To be obliged to talk or keep company in such a state is almost torture. If you want to consult their comfort after preaching, you should give them, first thing, some place to lie down in perfect quiet and rest, especially if they have to preach a second time the same day. I was a good deal agitated, but excitement usually makes me more wideawake, and I avoided all blunders or mistakes completely until the dismissal. Then I thought the thing was all over, and feeling perfectly indifferent and self-possessed, made a mistake in giving out the doxology. I am convinced by my first trial that I can never read sermons to my people in any comfort. Extempore preaching is the thing for me. I could notice the difference plainly between the paragraphs I threw in, although not expressed with half as much propriety of language as that which was on the paper. It is much more important that sinners should be excited to listen to the truth than that I should have the reputation of a pretty writer.'

First Years in the Ministry

The following year he was licensed to preach the gospel, and began his life's work in the area around his mother's home. It had recently been constituted a mission field. Here he worked for a year, and afterwards he accepted a call to the pastorate of Tinkling Spring, Augusta. There are details of a remarkable providence which guided him to take this step on p. 104.

Dabney laboured in Tinkling Spring for over six years. He longed

for a revival among his people, but at the beginning of 1849 he wrote to his mother:

'I have experienced more depression of spirits the last few weeks than for many a month before. . . My charge hangs on my hands like a growing burden, heavier and heavier continually. They listen to my preaching very attentively, and often with fixed interest; but it always feels to me like the interest of the understanding and imagination only, and not of the spiritual affections. My preaching seems to human eyes to be utterly without effect; bad for me, and bad for them.'

His longing for revival continued through that year. Then, in the summer of 1850, he could write in a different tone. As his biographer states, there are in this letter to his mother 'certain apparent crudities'; but then, if we cannot stomach outspoken honesty, we cannot stomach Dabney.

'I have been so busy of late that I have but little time to think of anything, much less to write letters. I have not had any more preaching to do the last two weeks than usual, indeed rather less. Other ministers have been with me at times. It is almost vexatious to see the mistaken kindness of people when they hear that you have somewhat of a revival in your church. During all the wearisome months and years when you are toiling to bring the people up to the proper state of spirituality and zeal, and preaching indefatigably to drowsy and careless hearers, dragging the vast mass of inattention along by a self-destroying effort and overstraining of your energies, brother ministers seem to think you need no help. But when they hear this long toil has been instrumental in bringing round the harvest season, then they come flocking in uninvited, or on the least pretext of an invitation. This is just the time I don't want them. Now it is a delightful indulgence to preach. The congregations full, the listening intent and solemn, one's own mind roused and elevated, and the people catching up any portion of divine truth, as if it were most powerful eloquence (provided it be spoken with unction), it is no effort to preach and no trouble. I don't want help. It is like taking the bread out of a hungry man's mouth, just when he had been toiling a whole year to get it ready. Besides, very few ministers, coming from other congregations in a cold state, are up to the mark of our feeling. They come here with their old, time-yellowed manuscripts in their pockets, and give us their cut and-dried orthodoxy in so chilling a style that it ruins the whole affair.'

During that year, the Session at Tinkling Spring received thirty-three new members on the profession of their faith.

His Teaching Career Begins

At the age of 33, Dabney left the pastorate at Tinkling Spring and took up the professorship of Ecclesiastical History and Polity at Union Seminary. He himself drew up the plan for the house which the Dabney family occupied here, and he superintended the building of it. There is a photograph of this beautiful building in the *Life*.

One of the interesting aspects of this book is, the incidental references there are to the great personalities of the theological world of Dabney's time. For example, on p. 163 we find Dabney writing to his wife from New York about a meeting of the General Assembly which he was attending there:

'The big guns, Drs. Humphrey, Thornwell, Rice, Plumer, etc., preached at several of the most prominent churches. I missed hearing Dr. Rice, but heard Dr. Thornwell last night, on the subject of Foreign Missions. I had not been introduced to him, but he sent to ask me to sit in the pulpit with him and make the closing prayer. He preached a noble sermon. He is a common looking little stoop-shouldered man; but he has a fine mind. His manners are very simple, friendly and natural'.

In his teaching capacity, Dabney was now receiving considerable acclaim. But studying is not everything, and at this stage God ordered matters so that the young professor learned hard things in the school of providence. A devoted father, he lost three of his young children through diphtheria. How much he felt this, and the effect it had on him can be gathered from part of a letter he wrote afterwards to his brother:

'Last Monday, a little after 12 o'clock, our little Jimmy was taken from us by that fearful enemy of the young, putrid sore throat. Just a fortnight before, Bob had been taken, at first not very violently; but afterwards he was for two days and nights at death's door. When he was taken, I was about to start to the Synod of North Carolina, at Greensboro, about one hundred and forty miles off. I hesitated a good deal about starting, but Lavina thought I might venture. From the time I left, Bobby got rapidly worse; and Sunday evening I got a letter and telegram, telling me that he was extremely ill. His attack had developed itself as putrid sore throat, and threatened suffocation. I started that night, travelled all night, and reached home the next night about 8 p.m. Bobby was greatly relieved, but exceedingly feeble, having had a terrific attack. Now he is feeble, and threatened with a rising on the neck. The rest seemed well, but the next evening (last Tuesday week) we discovered that Jimmy was chilly and feverish, and, in short,

had the sore throat. We used prompt measures, and sent early for the doctor, who did not think his case dangerous; but he grew gradually worse until Sunday, when his symptoms became alarming, and he passed away, after great sufferings, Monday. He was intelligent to the last, even after he became speechless, and his appealing looks to us and the physician would have melted a stone. Some half hour before he died, he sank into a sleep, which became more and more quiet, until he gently sighed his soul away. This, my dear brother, is the first death we have had in our family, and my first experience of any great sorrow. I have learned rapidly in the school of anguish this week, and am many years older than I was a few days ago. It is not so much that I could not give my darling up, so far as self was concerned, but that I saw him suffer such pangs, and then fall under the grasp of the cruel destroyer, while I was impotent for his help. Ah! when the mighty wings of the angel of death nestle over your heart's treasures, and his black noisome shadow broods over your home, it shakes the heart with a shuddering terror and a horror of great darkness. To see my dear little one thus ravaged, crushed and destroyed, turning his beautiful liquid eyes to me and his weeping mother for help, after his gentle voice was obstructed, and to feel myself as helpless as he to give my aid—this tears my heart with anguish. And, then, I remember that this death reigns over all else that I love—over wife, remaining children, friends, and my own body—and may seize them, I know not when. How fearful is it to live and love in such a world. How awful that sin of which death is the wages! Such are the feelings with which the natural heart regards these calamities; but, blessed be God, to Christian faith they wear a different aspect. Death is no longer a hellish monster and tyrant, but Christ's messenger. Our parting is not for long. This despoiled and ruined body will be raised, and all its ravished beauties more than repaired. And as to the other beloved ones whom I see exposed to disease and death, I know that death cannot touch them, unless that Heavenly Father who orders everything for me in love and wisdom, sees it best. So that I can trust them, though tremblingly, to his keeping, and be at peace. Our little Jimmy, we hope and trust, is now a ransomed spirit. . . . Now I feel, as never before, the blessedness of that redeeming grace and divine blood, which have ransomed my poor babe from all the sin and death which he inherited through me.'

Apart from the sanctifying effect this trial had on Dr. Dabney himself, the benefit derived by others is illustrated in an incident recorded by a Mrs. Bocock who lived at Georgetown, D.C.

'About the year 1859, Dr. Dabney came to our house to deliver an address in the Bridge Street Church, before the Bible Society. Dr.

Dabney was our guest, and I much enjoyed his company. Of our near neighbours were Mr. and Mrs. Offutt and their little boy, an only child. This child was ill with fever. One morning, I told Dr. Dabney of their grief, and my fears that he would die, asking him if he would not go over with me. This was soon after he had buried two dear boys at Hampden-Sidney. He, without hesitation, granted my request. Without ringing, we gently walked through the house to the back parlor, where the child was lying. Mrs. Offutt was on her knees near her child; Dr. Dabney stood erect, between the wide folding-doors, with his arms crossed, silently taking in the whole scene. Soon he walked to the bed, and kneeling near the mother, gave way to a flood of tears such as I then thought I had never seen a man weep. Then he offered such a prayer as you can well imagine that great tender heart, so recently bereaved, would offer for the afflicted parents, and the precious child *then almost in the Saviour's arms*. When we arose, he repeated some suitable tender words of the Saviour to the mother, and departed. Mrs. Offutt told me afterwards that that visit of Dr. Dabney did her more good than all the visits and prayers of all other friends. She was a member of another church.'

Professor of Systematic Theology

In 1859 Dabney was elected to become Adjunct Professor of Systematic and Polemic Theology and Sacred Rhetoric. His method of teaching theology seems to us worthy of note. Students were given a syllabus of each topic as it was taken up. Then 'the leading points in the topic were stated in the form of questions, and under each, exact references were written out, to the parts of leading authors treating that particular point. . . . The text-book was Turretin in Latin. At the next meeting he held a recitation on Turretin, covering ten to twelve pages. The students were required to write, each one, his own thesis upon the topic. He did not waste the time of the class by having these read aloud, but 'put them into his hat', took them home, then read and corrected each one, and returned it to its author afterwards. The second hour of class-meeting he spent in delivering to the class his own lecture on the same topic.' The effect of this lecture was expressed by one able student as follows:

'We think we have made quite a good thesis, but as soon as Dr. Dabney gets them into his hat, he begins and reads us his lecture on the same subject; then we see what poor stuff our theses are in contrast with the thoroughness and grasp and power of the lecture; so he makes us feel like ninnies, and that we have much to learn in order to become good theologians.'

At the beginning of 1860, Dr. Joseph Addison Alexander died. Soon afterwards Charles Hodge wrote from Princeton to Dabney, describing his late colleague as 'our dependence, our delight and our glory'. He then went on:

'Now, my dear sir, would that I could sit down by your side, or even at your feet, stranger as I am, and beg you, with many prayers and supplications, to consent, should God see fit to call you to come and help us in our great sorrow and need.'

But Dabney did not see his way to comply with the request which Charles Hodge had sent on behalf of Princeton. He felt he should stay where he was, and one of the reasons which he gave to Hodge for his decision gives an insight into Dabney's unselfish motivation:

'Last, I give no little weight to this thought, that I am most probably deciding as a Christian should, because I am deciding contrary to the promptings of ambition, and, indeed, of nearly all the natural affections of carnality. In the eyes of the Presbyterians of Virginia, Princeton is ever esteemed venerable and attractive. Do not suppose, my dear sir, that I am insensible to her superiority. The man who goes there and does his duty, will have his name blown much further by the trumpet of fame than mine will ever be. He will be in the focus of national observation, at least for Presbyterians; I shall remain in comparative obscurity. He will teach the many, I the few; for I do not dream that your Seminary will cease to maintain the preeminence so honourably earned. I have my eyes open to all these things, and because my sense of duty outweighs them, I feel a good confidence that it is conscience, and not carnality, which decides me.'

The War and Afterwards

Then came the period of the Civil War, in which time he did not hide the very strong convictions he held on the side of the South. He was a chaplain for a time, but afterwards he yielded to General Jackson's appeals and became his Aide-de-Camp. The roll of battle drums echoes through these pages, and we get the smell of battle especially in an Appendix describing an incident in which Dabney was instrumental in saving a Confederate baggage train.

After the defeat of the Confederate cause came the hard times which always follow a war. More difficult than anything else for Dabney was submission to 'Yankee' domination: and he thought long and hard about emigration. It is interesting to read that in this connection Dabney wrote a letter to Patrick Fairbairn, who was in the States at the time, enquiring about the suitability of the British Dominions for emigration. Fairbairn sought to discourage Dabney's

idea; and Dabney's eventual renunciation of it was sealed in 1869 when he purchased a farm at Red Hill. The hard physical work involved in developing this property was no doubt the best therapy for his wounded spirit. The book quotes one of Dabney's sons as saying:

'Almost every day had its share of hard physical labor, in which we his sons, participated. This consisted of working on a little farm, or in the garden, or building fences, or carpenter's work, or doing something of the hundred and one jobs to which he could turn his hand with equal facility. . . . When he (Dr. Dabney) set to anything, he drove hard without wasting time over preliminaries. He did not have a particle of false shame about these things.' His biographer adds that, 'While the gentlemen of the community were taking constitutional strolls, dressed in their best, he might be seen, fittingly dressed, at work in his garden or otherwise.'

In these days of reconstruction after the war, the Seminary began to find its feet again. Dabney delivered the opening address for the Session 1869-70. Speaking to the students about the necessity for a time of preparation for their life-work, he said some things which indicated a sharp insight into the temptations to which ministers are exposed:

'The retirement before the active life should be a season of constant self-examination and self-communion. Nowhere are unconscious carnal motives so loathsome as in a minister—to God and to good men. Hence, the demand for thorough examination. The minister's work presents peculiar temptations to conceit, vanity, ambition, spiritual pride, self-indulgence, selfishness under masks. Ministers are in great danger of coxcombry. Hence need for peculiar caution in probing self. In the bustle of an active ministry, there will not be much time for this. Many enter the ministry without it, whence defects and foibles, unseen by themselves, glaring to men of the world, which mar all earlier labours. Two results from this: The more favoured of God are whipped out of their conceit by hard knocks (painful and mortifying experiences) at the cost of usefulness of their prime. The meaner succumb and sink into clerical drones. To avoid these lamentable results let self-acquaintance and self-discipline be cultivated now. The church allows you three years of seculsion in which to do it.'

There is a sadness in Dr. Dabney's life through these later years. He was never reconciled to the cause which the North had espoused against the South, nor to the manner in which that cause had been pressed. His feelings on the issue were expressed in an address which he gave in 1882 on 'The New South'. In the opinion of a competent judge 'two writings would always hold the transcendent place with

him for true insight and power of expression. One was Thornwell's *Dying Appeal to the Confederates*; the other was this *New South*.'

The occasion, and its background, were described by Dabney as follows: 'I had been spending parts of May and June, 1882, in a laborious preaching tour in Southern and Western North Carolina. I reached home the Saturday before College commencement, pretty well broken down. I had a missionary appointment for the next day down at Brown's Church, in Cumberland County, fifteen miles off. But Saturday afternoon a committee of the Philanthropic Society came rushing over to beg me to deliver the main commencement address on Wednesday. I was an old Phip. It was their year to choose the speaker. They had struck too high, selecting first one and then another big politician, who temporized and then refused. So here they were, without any speaker at all, and the Union men, who had succeeded grandly the previous year, flouting them for their failure. I said to them, 'Were I not a good-natured old man, I should view it thus: that you really do not think me fit to represent you, if you could get anybody else. You wish to do with me as the housekeeper does when company comes, and she has a skimpy dinner; she trots out her cold souse, not because it is much eating, but it covers a place on the naked board. Well, I will be your cold souse, provided your president will sanction your selection.' They said, 'Of course he will, gladly. What is the use of such a proviso?' I said to them, 'Perhaps not so much of course as you think. You think, very rightly, that there ought to be no doubt of the acceptance of a man who has lived here twenty-nine years, who has given his services and his money to the College, who has twice acted successfully as its temporary president; but we shall see what we shall see.' Well, Monday forenoon, here came Dr. Atkinson, with hot but embarrassed zeal, to tell me that before he could give his consent he must know what my topic and its treatment were to be. I, being a cantankerous, bitter old man, did not ask him whether he had made such a demand of Speaker Thomas S. Bocock, Ran. Tucker or Judge W. M. Treadway, before allowing them to speak. I told him very good-naturedly my topic and treatment. Whereupon he said I might speak. I suppose he thought, or some fool told him, that I would discuss the Yankee Assembly, with its mutatis mutandis resolutions and the Herrick Johnson rider. Of course I had taste and judgment enough not to drag in so alien a subject upon a college commencement platform.

'Having now but part of two days, I attempted to write nothing. The speech was extempore, none of its verbal dress thought out and nothing written, except some heads on one sheet of note-paper. Wed-

nesday came, and they gave me the fag end of the afternoon, with a tired and listless audience. When I rose, Dr. — rose in his place, far forward, and stalked down the aisle with an air of ostentatious protest. As soon as I began, I waked up my audience and held them to the end. This was my speech on "The New South". When I closed, a large part of the audience was in tears. One after another of the grave Trustees came and took my hand and wrung it, while the tears were running down their cheeks; some sobbed aloud, unable to control their feelings.'

Another testimony to Dabney's gifts as a speaker comes from the period after his joining the staff of the University of Texas as professor of Mental and Moral Philosophy and Political Economy. One intelligent hearer reported:

'In the early part of 1886 I went on a Sabbath morning to the Franklin Square Presbyterian Church, Baltimore, as I was accustomed to do, being then a student in the Johns Hopkins University. For some cause I was quite late, and was disappointed at seeing a stranger in the pulpit with Dr. Lefevre, whom I had expected to hear. There was no introduction of the stranger after my entrance, and there was no one near me to tell me his name. His appearance did not much impress me, and my first conjecture was that some elderly brother had come in on Dr. Lefevre, and courtesy had been constrained into putting him up to preach.

'The stranger read the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, and his subject was "The Vicarious Atonement". The method was to state and refute the false or incomplete theories of the atonement, and then to establish the true theory. The discourse lasted an hour or more. I was soon listening with profound interest. I abandoned my previous conjecture concerning the identity of the speaker. When he had been speaking perhaps half an hour, stating with the clearness of light false theories, and crushing them to powder under resistless logic, I came to the conclusion that he must be Dr. Dabney. I had never seen him or his picture, but had heard his students talk of his teaching, and was familiar with his writings; and I saw in the giant reasoner, aflame with scorn of error and of subterfuge, yet bowing with meekness at the cross, one so like our great Dabney, that Dabney it must be. And so it turned out to be.

'Since that day I have understood his great influence upon his pupils. Such a teacher is a rare gift to any church.'

Last Days

He was into the last period of his life now, and it was a time marked by blindness and great physical suffering. In a letter dated June the 24th, 1895, he wrote from Texas:

'You have heard how I have had another long and terrible spell of illness. I think this has about done for me as a working man. I am not at all bed-ridden; I am clear from the cough and sciatica which harrassed me last fall. Can walk a mile, and manage one fairly good meal a day, but my strength does not come back, and I suppose never will. I find that having nothing to do and being of no account to anybody is the hardest work I ever did in my life.'

Two years later he wrote in another letter:

'I am now seventy-seven and a half years old, and my wife just seventy-four. It is too plain to us who have reached such age that there is not much more time before us on this earth. I feel, as no doubt you do, that my chief business now is to be ready for the approaching change. There are some petitions which will come in every time I pray: "Lord, choose the time and mode"; "Lord, make me ready, come when it may"; "Lord, increase my faith"; "O Lord, give me dying grace in the dying hours"; "O Lord, make my children and their children ready" . . .

'We go from here to Davidson College, where I have a short course of lectures; then to Texas, as soon as the yellow fever is out of the way; but during this banishment, the Lord's people in North Carolina are taking good care of us.

'I am much broken in the last year, and as blind as a brick-bat, but I see much happiness.'

It was not to be long till he would see greater happiness than is possible for the church in time. On Monday, 3rd January, 1898, he was busy for most of the day. Along with other work, he dictated a biographical sketch of one who was first his teacher and then his colleague at Union Seminary—F. S. Sampson.

About 9 p.m. he felt a pain in his chest, but after a time his restlessness diminished. His wife asked him if he felt easier, and he replied, 'A little easier, but the blessed rest is here'. Within two hours, that blessed rest was his.

Lydia

MAURICE HANDFORD

One of the most attractive characters in the New Testament is Lydia; she has the distinction of being the first European convert. It was in her home that the first missionaries to Europe were entertained, and where they found refuge after persecution.

With a wonderful economy of words, Luke records the story of her conversion. It is a story well worth pondering. She was:

1. Diligent in Business

A native of Thyatira, she had settled in Philippi where she had built up a good business as a seller of purple, which was a most valuable commodity. Philippi was a Roman colony where many wealthy people lived, and where there was a demand for the beautifully-dyed silk which was Lydia's speciality. She was undoubtedly a woman of enterprise and ability. There is every evidence that she was prosperous; she possessed a home large enough to dispense hospitality to Paul and Silas and others who may have accompanied them.

It is worth noting that she was at the same time a woman of principle. On the Sabbath day she laid down her measuring rod, closed her place of business, and observed God's commandment, 'Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy'. God honours those who honour Him, and who call the Sabbath a delight.

2. Devout in Spirit

Regularly on the Sabbath she, along with other like-minded women, resorted to the place where prayer was wont to be made. Where Jews were too few to build a synagogue they assembled in the open air in some quiet place. Here, away from the bustle of business and rush of city life, they sought God's face in prayer. It was here that the first Christian sermon in Europe was preached.

We cannot but be struck by the over-ruling providence of God. Paul had been called into Macedonia (Acts 16 : 9) while Lydia had been brought by circumstances from Thyatira to Philippi, and there in God's providence they met. God undoubtedly had led her to this place that Sabbath day. Further, Thyatira, to which she belonged, was part of the country to which Paul had been forbidden to go. William Cowper was right when he wrote 'God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform'. What was true of Lydia was true of Spurgeon when he wandered into the chapel in Colchester one snowy morning, and when

God applied the message with saving power to his soul—'Look unto Me and be ye saved'.

3. Dealt with in Grace

We have an arresting statement concerning the Lord's dealings with Lydia; it was the Lord Himself who opened her heart (verse 14). She was a very religious woman, yet until that memorable day her heart was shut; she was religious but not saved. She attended public worship, lived an upright life, and was highly respected in the community in which she lived; she was a good woman, but not a Christian. There are many, one fears, like Lydia today in our churches. The heart is by nature closed to spiritual things. A man may be outwardly good and yet have his heart closed to the Gospel. Lydia's heart had to be opened. God says concerning the heart that it is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, and that He is the One who searches the heart (Jeremiah 17 : 9, 10). The heart is closed because of sin, and only God by His Spirit can open it. In the book of The Revelation we are twice told that the Risen Lord is the One who holds the keys (Revelation 1: 18 and 3 : 7). 'The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him.' Only the Holy Spirit can bring spiritual light and life.

The divine aspect in Lydia's conversion is clearly asserted—'whose heart the Lord opened'. Preaching by the Apostle and attention on the part of the hearers was not everything; another power was needed, that of the Spirit. He must act in the quickening of the soul. Paul may plant, Apollos may water, but it is God who gives the increase. It is not sufficient to hear with the outward ears; the Word must be grafted inwardly in our hearts. Conversion is God's work; it is He who works in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure. No heart, however, is too tightly closed; God is able to break even the hardest of hearts. 'Is not My word like a hammer that breaketh the rocks in pieces?'

The human aspect is also shown. Lydia 'attended to the things which were spoken of Paul'. She did not close her ears or let her mind wander when the Apostle was declaring the whole counsel of God, but rather gave to it her closest attention. She 'gave heed', and so should we when we sit under the preaching of the Word of life; we should desire to hear with profit. Lydia did not let the Word pass her by, and so it became an 'engrafted Word' (James 1 : 21). It is not for nothing that the Lord Jesus Christ urges us 'take heed *how* ye hear'. It is a fact that not all who listen actually hear! Lydia really understood whilst others merely heard the sound of words, and so a flame was lit within her soul.

This chapter of the Acts contains two wonderful accounts of conversion. In the case of Lydia it was something that happened very quietly—perhaps it could be likened to a rose opening to the sun. In the case of the jailor it was very different. It needed something dramatic, an earthquake, to arouse him and to make him cry out, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' Here we have both divine sovereignty and human responsibility.

The Proof Displayed

Lydia lost no time in making an open confession of her faith in Christ. She was baptised, and in so doing everyone knew of her new allegiance. However, faith, if it is real, is shown by the lives we live and the deeds we do. 'It is faith alone that saves, but the faith that saves is never alone,' said John Calvin. Lydia gave evidence of the saving change that had been wrought in her. She opened her home and extended hospitality to the Lord's servants. 'If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide there.' Luke says that 'she constrained us'—this was no half-hearted invitation, it was a very pressing one! She had experienced the grace of God and the love of Christ because of their faithful ministry, and desired to express her thankfulness by providing hospitality. It is interesting to note that the Philippian jailor showed the same evidence of a change of heart. He washed their stripes the same hour of the night and set meat before them. How we need to beware of a barren faith. It was not for nothing that the Baptist urged his hearers 'bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance'.

What an attractive person, then, was Lydia. *Her ears were open to hear the Word of life. Her heart was opened to receive Christ; then her mouth was opened to confess the Lord; and finally her home was opened to receive the Lord's servants.*

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ANNUAL LECTURE

**WEDNESDAY, 5th JULY, 1978, at 6.30 p.m.
at Westminster Chapel, SW1***

Subject: AUGUSTUS TOPLADY: The Sainly Sinner

Lecturer: The Rev. Paul E. G. Cook, B.D.

Chairman: Dr. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

**N.B. Venue*

Book Reviews

COLLECTED WRITINGS OF JOHN MURRAY, Vol. 2: Systematic Theology. Banner of Truth Trust, pp. 417. Price £4.50.

In the *Preface* the publishers state that, in so far as this volume follows the form of a Systematic Theology, the responsibility belongs to the publishers rather than to the author. The material presented here was prepared at different times and for different purposes, and was not worked into an harmonious whole by the author himself. We feel that, in the gathering and arranging of this material, the whole church owes a debt of gratitude to the Banner of Truth Trust.

The perfect order which characterises the way of salvation itself is reflected in John Murray's handling of it. He was mastered by the revelation of God's will, and all his intellectual and spiritual energies were laid out to endeavour a faithful statement of that revelation. It is therefore not uncommon in reading this book to find distinctions being made in areas of biblical teaching where our thinking is not as clear as it should be. In the chapter on *The Atonement*, for example, we read:

There are several ways in which even Reformed believers have failed to do honour to the love and grace of God the Father, and this aspect of the Father's love is basic to the correction of this default of faith and devotion. Let us prize the love of the Redeemer himself. Let us know and reproduce that of which the apostle speaks (2 Corinthians 5 : 14, 15; Galatians 2 : 19, 20). But this love of Christ is not in its biblical perspective unless we perceive that it is love constrained by and exercised in fulfilment of the Father's will, and the Father's will as the purpose flowing from his invincible love. We must be captivated by the Father's love. For this is love, not that we loved God, but that the Father loved us and sent his Son a propitiation for our sins (cf. 1 John 4 : 10).

At some points, John Murray differs from the traditional Reformed position. Regarding the call to salvation, for example, he takes issue with the Westminster Shorter Catechism definition of effectual calling. Whereas the Catechism speaks of this as a work of God's Spirit, John Murray maintains that it is an act, and that 'God the Father is specifically the author'. Again, we note that on p. 130 he questions the application of the term 'covenant' to the eternal plan of salvation. He is consistent with this on p. 143, where he refers to 'the inter-trinitarian

economy of salvation': but he himself uses the term 'eternal covenant' on p. 167. This is no doubt part of the 'inevitable unevenness' which, the publishers say, 'would have been eliminated if the author himself had prepared the work for the press'.

Definitive Sanctification was one subject on which John Murray felt that he had something to say to the church. His main point is that, although the New Testament uses the term sanctification in the sense of a gradual process, it is a fact too frequently overlooked that in the New Testament the most characteristic terms that refer to sanctification are used, not of a process, but of a once-for-all definitive act! There is no suggestion here, of course, contrary to the Scripture teaching on indwelling sin in the believer: as to what, positively, is involved in definitive sanctification, readers can study the matter for themselves. It may well be that the Scriptures on which John Murray bases his teaching at this point have not received the consideration which they deserve.

In Section VI Professor Murray deals with the church and her sacraments, and it is not expected that all Reformed readers will agree with his views here.

When handling biblical concepts, this author's thoughts seem to have been controlled by his acquaintance with the scriptural usage of the terms involved. In giving expression to his thoughts, his desire to give an accurate and comprehensive statement of the scriptural teaching as he understood it sometimes resulted in a syntax and vocabulary which might appear somewhat daunting. But why should we be put off by that, if we have good reason to believe that a little work will bring a rich reward? Even if reading is limited to a few pages each Lord's Day, we will be surprised if appetite for this fare will not grow as time goes by. For ourselves we feel that this book, theologically and spiritually, is the most enriching that we have read for a number of years.

SERMONS TO THE NATURAL MAN .W. G. T. Shedd. Published by the Banner of Truth Trust, pp. 442. Price £3.50.

Those among our readers who are in the ministry may well have read Shedd's *Homiletics and Pastoral Theology*. It is a book which deals with the various aspects of preaching in a most helpful way.

In this volume of sermons, we can do regarding Shedd's own preaching what he in *Homiletics and Pastoral Theology* counsels us to do regarding the sermons of others. We can study his approach to the whole exercise of preaching the gospel; we can analyse the structure of his sermons and examine how he presents his subjects.

Generally speaking, the present-day reader will find Shedd's language direct, graphic and powerful. That this should still be so, one hundred years after the sermons were first published, is a remarkable tribute to how modern his language was in his day. This is just one example from many, of how the author enforces by example in his sermons what he teaches by precept in his *Homiletics*.

Of course the sermons were not issued in order to become the subjects of critical assessment by Shedd's fellow preachers. He says in his Preface that 'deeply conscious of their imperfections, especially for spiritual purposes, I send them out into the world, with the prayer that God the Spirit will deign to employ them as the means of awakening some souls from the lethargy of sin'. What are the subjects he takes up, as he seeks to achieve this tremendous aim of the Christian ministry? Some of the sermon titles are as follows: *The Future State a Self-Conscious State*, *Sin in the Heart the Source of Error in the Head*, *The Impotence of the Law*, *Christianity Requires the Temper of Childhood*. May these sermons be greatly used again by God today.

THE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS. John Bunyan. Banner of Truth, pp. 379. Price £4.

The content of this book ought of course to be well known by all. As Augustus Toplady wrote, the book describes 'every stage of a Christian's experience, from conversion to glorification'. It is not only that every stage is described, it is the way in which it is described. The language is so living and graphic, and the correspondence between the tale as told and the spiritual experiences which lie behind it is so perfect that this is a literary as well as a spiritual masterpiece.

As regard the rich style in which this edition has been produced, we quote from the publishers: It is not a luxury to possess a de luxe edition of a work which, though we may not, like Spurgeon, read it a hundred times, ought to be the companion of a life-time. There are fourteen full-page illustrations, distributed throughout the two parts of the book, and the wide margins are used to accommodate notes and Scripture references as in the original edition. The book was written in poor circumstances, but it is fitting that its rich content should now find such luxurious presentation.

J.T.

THE UNCHANGING CHRIST—*continued from page 108*

wise fail thee, neither will I in any wise forsake thee' (Heb. 13 : 5), The unchanging Christ is the Lord of today with its joy and fears. 'The Lord is my helper, I will not fear.' To him we look as we run our race, filled with love of the brethren (Heb. 13 : 1), and free of the love of money (Heb. 13 : 5).

Yesterday, today, for ever! Jesus Christ is Lord of the city to come. His power is our hope. Our labour is not in vain in the Lord, for he establishes the works of our hands upon us and crowns our wilderness journey with his beauty. If you are Christ's, your future is Christ's and it shines toward the coming of the eternal day.

The Christ of power is the Christ of hope. The Christ of communion is the Christ of faith, the Christ of communion is the Christ of love. He is the Christ of the truth—believe it! He is the Christ of the cross—take it! He is the Christ of the city to come—run to meet him! To the great Shepherd of the sheep be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

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