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A Paradise of Perfect Love

Mankind was created in a paradise, but that paradise was soon invaded by the devil. And the devil brought in sin, which meant that Adam and Eve could not continue in the paradise God had created for them. They were cast out and, as long as there was no revelation of God's grace, there must have seemed no hope that they could ever have returned to a paradise.

Yet very soon after the Fall, God made known that, through the seed of the woman, there was mercy for guilty sinners. And "when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Gal 4:4,5). The Son of God became man so that He might suffer unto death for sinners and restore them to a place among God's children. These children are rescued from the consequences of Adam's fall, and have a right at last to enter a paradise from which no human being will ever be turned out. This last blessing is specially implied in the promise of eternal life to everyone who believes in Jesus.

So when the thief on the cross addressed the suffering Saviour with the believing words, "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom", he was assured of eternal life in heaven. "Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with Me in paradise" (Luke 23:42,43). His was a speedy passage to the promised paradise, but every other sinner who believes in Jesus will reach heaven just as surely – if not so quickly.

Yet some of those who seem to believe are not genuine; they will not persevere to the end; they will meet temptations which they will fail to overcome. On the other hand, the Saviour promised the Church in Ephesus, "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God" (Rev 2:7); goodness and mercy will follow them all their days, and they will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. There they will enjoy a full restoration of what was lost in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve were never able to eat the fruit of the tree of life there, never having reached the end of their probationary period under the covenant of works. So they were never secured in a state of perfect innocence; they never reached

the stage where they would have absolute protection from temptation and sin. Yet everyone who reaches heaven will, figuratively, “eat of the tree of life”; they will have total security from all temptation and sin in that state of perfect blessedness which will be their eternal paradise.

Accordingly John makes a particularly significant statement in describing what he was shown of heaven: “There shall be no more curse” (Rev 22:3). In heaven God’s children will never again experience what was so damaging to them in this life. Sin will never disturb them – sin in other people or in their own hearts – for evil can never again enter heaven; when sin entered the hearts of a proportion of the angels, they and their sins were immediately banished: they were cast “down to hell, and delivered . . . into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgement” (2 Pet 2:4).

In a world where there is no sin, every grace must be in perfect exercise. That is why, in a sermon on 1 Corinthians 13:8-10, Jonathan Edwards¹ describes heaven as a world of love, because it is “a state in which the Holy Spirit shall be more perfectly and abundantly given to the Church than it is now on earth”. Lying behind this is the fact that “heaven is the palace or presence-chamber of the high and holy One, whose name is love, and who is both the cause and source of all holy love”. And he goes on: “There dwells God the Father, God the Son and God the Spirit, united as one, in infinitely dear and incomprehensible and mutual and eternal love”.

Under his second head, Edward makes the following points about heaven: (1.) There are none but lovely objects there. (2.) They shall be perfectly lovely. (3.) They shall be all those objects that the saints have set their hearts upon, and which they have loved above all things while in this world.

He concludes this section by encouraging those who have the beginnings of that love: “Every Christian friend that goes before us from this world is a ransomed spirit waiting to welcome us in heaven. There will be the infant of days that we have lost below, through grace to be found above; there the Christian father and mother and wife and child and friend, with whom we shall renew the holy fellowship of the saints, which was interrupted by death here but shall be commenced again in the upper sanctuary and then shall never end. There we shall have company with the patriarchs and fathers and saints of the Old and New Testaments, and those of whom the world was not worthy, with whom on earth we were only conversant by faith. And there, above all, we shall enjoy and dwell with God the Father, whom we have loved with all our hearts on earth; and with Jesus Christ, our beloved Saviour, who has always been to us the chief among ten thousands and altogether

¹All quotations are from Edwards’ volume, *Charity and Its Fruits*, reprinted in paperback by the Banner of Truth Trust at £7.75 and available from the Free Presbyterian Bookroom.

lovely; and with the Holy Ghost, our Sanctifier and Guide and Comforter.”

It is useful to quote from the main points of Edwards’ fifth head: (1.) Love in heaven is always mutual. (2.) The joy of heavenly love shall never be interrupted or damped by jealousy. (3.) There shall be nothing within themselves to clog or hinder the saints in heaven in the exercises . . . of love. (4.) In heaven love will be expressed with perfect decency and wisdom. (5.) There shall be nothing external in heaven to keep its inhabitants at a distance from each other, or to hinder their most perfect enjoyment of each other’s love. (9.) In heaven all things shall conspire to promote their love and . . . mutual enjoyment. (10.) The inhabitants of heaven shall know that they shall for ever be continued in the perfect enjoyment of each other’s love.

We may now turn to Edwards’ application of his subject: he first points out that, “if heaven be such a world . . . we may see a reason why contention and strife tend to darken our evidence of fitness for its possession”. He then comments on the blessedness of those who are entitled to heaven and gives some marks to help distinguish them from others: (1.) They have had the principle or seed of the same love that reigns in heaven implanted in their hearts in this world, in the work of regeneration. (2.) They have freely chosen the happiness that flows from the exercise and enjoyment of such love as is in heaven, above all other conceivable happiness. (3.) From the love that is in them, they are, in heart and life, in principle and practice, struggling after holiness. The preacher then warns the impenitent, reminding them that what has been said ought to alarm them: (1) by putting them in mind of their misery, in that they have no portion in this world of love; (2) by showing them that they are in danger of hell, which is a world of hatred.

Before closing, Edwards exhorts his hearers to seek heaven earnestly; he gives five directions, particularly to believers: (1.) Let not your heart go after the things of this world as your chief good. (2.) You must, in your meditations and holy exercises, be much engaged in conversing with heavenly persons and objects and enjoyments. (3.) Be content to pass through all difficulties in the way to heaven. (4.) In all your way, let your eye be fixed on Jesus, who has gone to heaven as your forerunner. (5.) If you would be in the way to the world of love, see that you live a life of love – of love to God and love to men.

Those who are brought to heaven found Christ in this world. As they were drawn to Him, they began to love Him, and it is a love that will never end. That love will find perfect expression in heaven for ever and ever, as God’s adopted children cry: “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing” (Rev 5:12). Has that love begun to find expression in your heart?

The King's Highway Cleared (2)¹

A Sermon by C H Spurgeon

Acts 16:31. *And they said. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.*

4. "But," says another, "I do think sometimes I have a little faith, but I have so many doubts and fears. I am tempted every day to believe that Jesus Christ did not die for me, or that my belief is not genuine, or that I never experienced the regenerating influence of the Holy Spirit. Tell me, can I be a true believer in Christ if I have doubts and fears?" My answer is simply this: There is no Scripture which says: "He that believeth shall be damned, if that faith be mixed with doubts". But "he that believeth shall be saved", be that faith never so little, and even though it be intermingled with multitudes of doubts and fears. You remember that memorable story of our Saviour, when He was on board a ship with His disciples. The winds roared, the ship rocked to and fro, the mast was strained, the sails were rent, and the poor disciples were full of fear: "Lord, save us, we perish". Here were doubts. What did Jesus say when He rebuked them? "Why are ye fearful?" – O ye of *no* faith? No; "O ye of *little* faith."

So there may be little faith where there are great doubts. There is light at eventide in the air. Even though there is a great deal of darkness, yet there is light. And if your faith should never come to noonday, if it do but come to twilight, you are a saved man. Nay more, if it does not come to twilight, if your faith is but starlight, nay, candlelight, nay, a spark – if it be but a glow-worm spark, you are saved. And all your doubts and all your fears and your distresses, terrible though they may be, can never trample you in the dust, can never destroy your soul.

Do you not know that the best of God's children are exercised with doubts and fears even to the last? Look at such a man as John Knox. There was a man who could face the frowns of a world, who could speak like a king to kings and fear no man; yet on his dying bed he was troubled about his interest in Christ because he was tempted to self-righteousness. If such a man have doubts, do *you* expect to live without them? If God's brightest saints are thus exercised, if Paul himself keeps under his body lest he should be a castaway, how can you expect to live without clouds? O my dear man, drop the idea that the prevalence of your doubts disproves the truth of the promise. Again

¹In the first part of this sermon, printed last month, the preacher dealt with the first three stumbling-blocks in the way of a sinner who may be coming to Christ: (1) the recollection of his past life, (2) the hardness of his heart and the lack of what he thinks is true penitence, (3) a consciousness of the smallness of his faith.

believe; away with all your doubts. Sink or swim, cast yourself on Jesus; and you cannot be lost, for His honour is engaged to save every soul that puts its trust in *Him*.

5. "Ah," says another, "but you have not yet hit upon my fear." When I first knew the Saviour, I used to try myself in a certain manner and, as a result, I often threw stumbling-blocks in my path. And therefore I can speak very affectionately to any of you who are doing the same. Sometimes I would go up into my room and, by way of self-examination, I used to ask myself this question: Am I afraid to die? If I should drop down dead in my bedroom, can I say that I should joyfully close my eyes? Well, it often happened that I could not honestly say so. I used to feel that death would be a very solemn thing. And then I said, "I have never believed in Christ, for if I had put my trust in the Lord Jesus, I should not be afraid to die, but I should be quite confident".

I do not doubt that there are many here who are saying, "I cannot follow Christ, because I am afraid to die. I cannot believe that Jesus Christ will save me, because the sight of death makes me tremble." Ah poor soul, many of God's blessed ones have, through fear of death, been much of their lifetime subject to bondage. I know precious children of God now; I believe that, when they die, they will die triumphantly; but I know this, that the thought of death is never pleasing to them. And this is accounted for because God has stamped on nature this law – love of life and self-preservation. And again, it is natural enough that the man who has kindred and friends should scarcely like to leave behind those that are so dear. I know that, when he gets more grace, he will rejoice in the thought of death; yet I do know that there are many quite safe, who could die triumphantly, but who now, in the prospect of death, feel afraid of it.

I remember my aged grandfather once preach a sermon which I have not forgotten. He was preaching from the text, "The God of all grace", and he somewhat interested the assembly, after describing the different kinds of grace that God gave, by saying at the end of each sentence: "But there is one kind of grace that you do not need". Then he wound up by saying, "You don't need dying grace in living moments, but you shall have dying grace when you need it".

Now you are testing yourself by a condition in which you are not placed. If you are placed in the condition, you shall have grace enough if you put your trust in Christ. In a party of friends we were discussing the question whether, if the days of martyrdom should come, we were prepared to be burned. Well now, I must frankly say that, speaking as I feel today, I am not prepared to be burned. But I do believe that if there were a stake in Smithfield

and I knew that I were to be burned there at one o'clock, I should have grace enough to be burned at one o'clock. But I have not yet got to a quarter past twelve, and the time is not come yet. Do not expect dying grace until you need it; and when the time comes, you may be sure you will have sufficient grace to bear it. Cast out that stumbling-block then. Rest yourself on Christ, and trust a living Christ to help you in your dying hour.

6. Another most grievous perplexity to many a seeking soul is this: "I would trust Christ, but *I feel no joy*. I hear the children of God singing sweetly about their privileges; I hear them saying that they have been to the top of Pisgah and have viewed the promised land, have taken a pleasant prospect of the world to come, but my faith yields me no joy. I hope I do believe, but at the same time I have none of those raptures. My worldly troubles press heavily upon me, and sometimes even my spiritual woes are greater than I can bear."

Ah poor soul, let me cast out that stone from your road. Remember, it is not written, "He that is joyful shall be saved", but, "He that *believeth* shall be saved". Your faith will make you joyful by and by, but it is as powerful to save you even when it does not make you rejoice. Look at many of God's people, how sad and sorrowful they have been! I know they ought not to be. This is their sin, but still it is a sin that does not destroy the efficacy of faith. Notwithstanding all the sorrows of the saint, faith still stays alive, and God is still true to his promise. Remember, it is not what you feel that saves you; it is what you believe. It is not feeling but believing. "We walk by faith, not by sight." When I feel my soul as cold as an iceberg, as hard as a rock, and as sinful as Satan, yet even then faith ceases not to justify. Faith prevails as truly in the midst of sad feelings as of happy feelings, for then, standing alone, it proves the majesty of its might. Believe, O son of God, believe in Him, and do not look for anything in yourself.

7. Again, many are distressed because *they have blasphemous thoughts*. Here too I can heartily sympathize. I remember a certain narrow and crooked lane in a country town, along which I was walking one day while I was seeking the Saviour. Suddenly the most fearful oaths that any of you can conceive rushed through my heart. I put my hand to my mouth to prevent the utterance. I had not, that I know of, ever heard those words; and I am certain that I had never in my life used so much as one of them, for I had never been profane. But these things sorely beset me; for half an hour together the most fearful imprecations would dash through my brain. O how I groaned and cried before God! That temptation passed away; but a few days later it was renewed again. When I was in prayer or reading the Bible, these blasphemous thoughts would pour in upon me more than at any other time.

I consulted an aged godly man about it. He said to me, "O, many of the people of God have proved all this before you. But," said he, "do you hate these thoughts?" "I do," I truly said. "Then," said he, "they are not yours; treat them as the old parishes used to do with vagrants – whip them and send them on to their own parish. So do with them," said he; "groan over them; repent of them; and send them on to the devil, the father of them, to whom they belong – for they are not yours."

Do you not recollect how John Bunyan hits off the picture? He says, when Christian was going through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, "There stepped up one to him, and whispered blasphemous thoughts into his ear, so that poor Christian thought they were his own thoughts; but they were not his thoughts at all, but the injections of a blasphemous spirit". So when you are about to lay hold on Christ, Satan will ply all his engines and try to destroy you. He cannot bear to lose one of his slaves; he will invent a fresh temptation for each believer so that he may not put his trust in Christ. Now come, poor soul, notwithstanding all these blasphemous thoughts in your soul; dare to put your trust in Christ. Even should those thoughts have been more blasphemous than any you have ever heard, come and trust in Christ; come and cast yourself on Him. I have heard that, when an elephant is going over a bridge, he will sound the timber with his foot to see if it will bear him over. Come, you who think yourself an elephantine sinner, here is a bridge that is strong enough for you, even with all these thoughts of yours: "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men". Throw that in Satan's face, and trust yourself in Christ.

8. One other stumbling-block, and I will have done. Some there be that say, "I would trust in Christ to save me *if I could see that my faith brought forth fruits*. When I would do good, evil is present with me." Excuse me for always bringing in my own feelings as an illustration, but I feel, when I am preaching to tried sinners, that the testimony of one's own experience is generally more powerful than any other illustration that can be found. It is not, believe me, any display of egotism, but the simple desire to come home to you, that makes me state what I have felt myself.

The first Sabbath after I came to Christ, I went to a Methodist chapel. The sermon was on this text: "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" I had just got as far as that in the week. I knew that I had put my trust in Christ; and I knew that, when I sat in that house of prayer, my faith was simply and solely fixed on the atonement of the Redeemer. But I had a weight on my mind, because I could not be as holy as I wanted to be. I could not live without sin. When I rose in the morning I thought I would abstain from every hard word, from every evil thought and

look; and I came up to that chapel groaning because, “when I would do good, evil [was] present with me”. The minister said that, when Paul wrote the verse I have quoted, he was not a Christian – that this was his experience before he knew the Lord.

Ah, what error, for I know that Paul was a Christian, and I know that the more Christians look to themselves the more they will have to groan, because they cannot be what they want to be. What, you will not believe in Christ until you are perfect! Then you will never believe in Him. You will not trust the precious Jesus till you have no sins to trust Him with? Then you will never trust Him at all. For rest assured you will never be perfect till you see the face of God in heaven. I knew one man who thought himself perfect, and that man was humpbacked. This was my rebuke to his pride: “Surely if the Lord gave you a perfect soul He would give you a perfect body to carry it in”. Perfection will not be found this side of the grave. Your business is to trust in Christ. You must depend on nothing but the blood of Christ. Trust in Christ and you stand secure. “He that believeth on the Son of God hath everlasting life.”

It is our duty to fight against corruption; it is our privilege to conquer it; it is our honour to feel that we are fighting against sin; it shall be our glory one day to tread it beneath our feet. But do not expect complete victory today. Your very consciousness of sin proves that you are alive. The very fact that you are not what you want to be proves that there are some high and noble thoughts in you that could not have come by nature. You were content with yourself some six weeks ago, were you not? And the fact that you are discontented now, proves that God has put a new life into you which makes you seek after a higher and better element in which to breathe. When you become what you want to be on earth, then despair. When the law justifies you, then you have fallen from grace; for Paul has said, “whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace”. But while I feel that the law condemns me, it is my joy to know that, believing in Christ, “there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit”.

Now, though I have been trying to clear the way, I feel conscious that very likely I have been putting a stone or two in the road myself. May God forgive me; it is a sin of inadvertence. I would lay this road as straight and clear as ever was turnpike road between one city and another. Sinner, there is nothing which can rob you of *your right* to believe in Christ. You are freely invited to come to the marriage banquet. The table is spread, and the invitation freely given. There are no porters at the door to keep you out, there are none to ask a ticket of admission of you:

“Let not conscience make you linger;
Nor of fitness fondly dream;
All the fitness He requireth
Is to feel your need of Him;
This He gives you:
'Tis His Spirit's rising beam.”

Come to Him just as you are. But I know that, when we sit in our studies, it seems a light thing to preach the gospel and make people believe in Christ; but when we come to practice, it is the hardest thing in the world. If I were to tell you to do some great thing, you would do it; but when it is: “Believe, wash, and be clean!” you will not do it. If I said, “Give me £10 000”, you would give it. You would crawl a thousand miles on your hands and knees, or drink the bitterest draught that was ever concocted; but this trusting in Christ is too hard for your proud spirit. Ah sinner, are you too proud to be saved? Come, man, I beseech you for the love of Christ, by the love of your own soul, come with me, and let us go together to the foot of the cross. Believe on Him who hangs groaning there; O put your trust in Him who is risen from the dead and has led captivity captive. And if you trust Him, poor sinner, you shall not be disappointed; it shall not be trust misplaced.

Again I say it, I am content to be lost if you are lost trusting in Christ; I will make my bed in hell with you should God reject you, if you put your simple trust in Christ. I dare to say that and to look that boldly in the face, for you would be the first sinner who was ever cast away trusting in Jesus. “But”, says one, “I cannot think that such a wretch as I am can have a right to believe.” Soul, I tell you it is not whether you are a wretch, or not a wretch; it is *the command* that is your warrant. You are commanded to believe. And when a command comes home with power, the power comes with the command. And he who is commanded, being made willing, casts himself on Christ and believes and is saved.

I have laboured this morning to try to make myself as clear as I can about this doctrine. I know that, if any man is saved, it is the work of God the Holy Ghost from first to last. If any man is regenerate, it is not of the will of the flesh, nor of blood, but of God. But I do not see how that great truth interferes with this other: Whosoever believeth in Christ shall be saved. And I would again, even to the falling down on my knees, as though God did beseech you by me, pray you: “In Christ's stead be ye reconciled to God”. And this is the reconciliation: That you “believe on [the Lord Jesus Christ] whom He hath sent”, that you trust Christ.

Do you understand me? That you cast yourself on Him; that you depend on nothing but what He has done. Saved you must be – lost you cannot be

– if you fling yourself wholly upon Christ, and cast the whole burden of your sins, your doubts, your fears, and your anxieties wholly there. Now, this is preaching free-grace doctrine. And if anyone wonders how a Calvinist can preach thus, let me say that this is the preaching that Calvin preached, and, better still, it is the preaching of our Lord Jesus Christ and His apostles. We have divine warrant when we tell you: “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned”.

Jonathan Edwards¹

2. “Eager Pursuits After Holiness”

In April 1723, Edwards left New York. He was called to the new settlement of Bolton, just 16 miles from his birthplace. However, he spent the summer at home in East Windsor. There he finished the thesis for his MA degree and immersed himself in other studies, while taking occasional services. Eventually, in November, he settled in Bolton, possibly after the call to him was renewed, and it would seem that he had a rather disputatious people for his congregation. His ministry there lasted only six months, when he was appointed a tutor at Yale, whose main – though not exclusive – function was to provide a general education for men who intended to enter the ministry.

Edwards’ first entry in his diary after coming to Yale was less than optimistic: “This week has been a remarkable week with me with respect to despondencies, fears, perplexities, multitudes of cares and distraction of mind – it being the week I came hither to New Haven in order to entrance upon the office of tutor in the college. I have now abundant reason to be convinced of the troublesomeness and vexation of the world, and that it will never be another kind of world.”² So, more or less, it was to prove throughout his life, but particularly during his time in Yale.

He would have made full use of Yale’s library. He devoured everything from which he might learn whatever might prove useful. But he commented: “Now the world, by their learning and wisdom, do not know God; and they seem to wander in darkness, are miserably deluded, stumble and fall in matters of religion, as in midnight darkness. Trusting to their learning, they grope in the daytime as in the night. Learned men are exceedingly divided in their opinions concerning the matters of religion, running into all manner of corrupt opinions, pernicious and foolish errors. They scorn to submit

¹The previous article, last month, covered Edwards’ early life, until he became minister of a small congregation in New York.

²Quoted in Iain H Murray, *Jonathan Edwards, A New Biography*, pp 59,60.

their reason to divine revelation, to believe anything that is above their comprehension; and so, being wise in their own eyes, they become fools.”³ But Edwards’ views were already firmly fixed in Scripture, and were being reinforced by his wide reading in Reformed authors such as Calvin, Perkins, van Mastricht, Sibbes and Owen.

Yet this was a difficult period for Edwards. There were discipline problems at the college, and his duties necessarily distracted him from more spiritual studies. He complained that his mind was diverted from his “eager pursuits after holiness”. In September 1725 he took ill. He tried to reach his home in East Windsor but was not able to go any farther than North Village. About three months passed before he was well enough to resume his journey. But at North Village he experienced a reviving in his soul. “God was pleased”, he wrote, “to visit me again with the sweet influences of His Spirit. My mind was greatly engaged there on divine and pleasant contemplations and longings of soul.”⁴

After his recovery in both body and soul, Edwards returned briefly to Yale. Then at the end of August 1726 he received a call to become assistant to his 83-year-old grandfather, Solomon Stoddard, the noted minister of Northampton, Massachusetts. Stoddard, who had already spent 55 years in the ministry, was described as an able and faithful preacher, so the 200 or so families of Northampton were a highly privileged people. And after his grandfather’s death, two and a half years later, Edwards warned them: “Woe to them that go to hell out of Northampton and that lived under Mr Stoddard’s ministry! We are ready to wonder at the wickedness we hear there is in some parts of the world . . . but they haven’t one half of the sins to answer for as obstinate sinners will have that go from this place.”⁵ Soon after Edwards arrived, there were signs of some movement among the dry bones of Northampton. This went on for about two years, during which time about 20 people were believed to have been converted. But the years which followed were characterised by carelessness.

Within a year he had married 17-year-old Sarah Pierpont, a minister’s daughter and, on her mother’s side, the great-granddaughter of Thomas Hooker, the well-known American Puritan. The home of the newly-married Edwards was to be one of evident godliness. When Sarah was just 13, he had written of her: “They say there is a young lady in New Haven who is beloved of that Great Being who made and rules the world, and that there are certain seasons in which this Great Being, in some way or other invisible, comes to

³Quoted in Murray, *Jonathan Edwards*, pp 69,70.

⁴Quoted in Murray, *Jonathan Edwards*, p 71.

⁵Quoted in George M Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards, A Life*, p 127.

her and fills her mind with exceeding great delight, and that she hardly cares for anything, except to meditate on Him – that she expects after a while to be received up where He is, to be raised up out of the world and caught up into heaven, being assured that He loves her too well to let her remain at a distance from Him always. . . . Therefore, if you present all the world before her, with the richest of its treasures, she disregards it and cares not for it and is unmindful of any pain or affliction. She has a strange sweetness in her mind and singular purity in her affections, is most just and conscientious in all her conduct, and you could not persuade her to do anything wrong or sinful if you would give her all the world, lest she should offend this Great Being.”⁶

Even if somewhat exaggerated, this was a tremendous tribute to young Sarah’s godliness. She proved to be a highly-competent wife and mother. She ensured that her children obeyed her; she believed that if children would not obey their parents they would never be brought to obey God. Their first child, Sarah, was born, in August 1728. She was the first of the seven daughters and three sons who made up the Edwards’ family. It is said that almost all of them showed signs of spiritual life.

If Edwards is famous for his theological writings and for the blessing that rested on his preaching during times of revival, we must bear in mind that he was a man of exceptional holiness. Possibly it was in 1737 that he wrote: “Since I came to this town, I have often had sweet complacency in God, in views of His glorious perfections and the excellency of Jesus Christ. God has appeared to me a glorious and lovely Being, chiefly on account of His holiness. . . . I have loved the doctrines of the gospel; they have been to my soul like green pastures. The gospel has seemed to be the richest treasure, the treasure that I have most desired, and longed that it might dwell richly in me. The way of salvation by Christ has appeared, in a general way, glorious and excellent, most pleasant and most beautiful. It has often seemed to me that it would in a great measure spoil heaven to receive it in any other way.”

He went on to speak of riding out into the woods one day for exercise. In a secluded place dismounted from his horse and began to walk on in meditation and prayer. “I had a view”, he wrote, “that for me was extraordinary, of the glory of the Son of God as Mediator between God and man, and His wonderful, great, full, pure and sweet grace and love, and meek and gentle condescension. . . . The person of Christ appeared ineffably excellent with an excellency great enough to swallow up all thought and conception – which continued, as near as I can judge, about an hour, which kept me the greater part of the time in a flood of tears I felt an ardency of soul to be, what I know not otherwise how to express, emptied and annihilated; to lie

⁶Quoted in Murray, *Jonathan Edwards*, p 92.

in the dust and to be full of Christ alone; to love Him with a holy and pure love; to trust in Him; to live upon Him; to serve and follow Him; and to be perfectly sanctified and made pure, with a divine and heavenly purity. I have, several other times, had views very much of the same nature and which have had the same effects.”⁷

Yet, as he looked back on his strivings after holiness in earlier days, he acknowledged that he was too much dependent on his own strength. “My experience had not then taught me,” he confessed, “as it has done since, my extreme feebleness and impotence every manner of way, and the bottomless depths of secret corruption and deceit there were in my heart.”⁸

The Uses of the Moral Law¹

2. To Unregenerate Sinners

John Colquhoun

1 Under the awakening influences of the Holy Spirit, it serves as a covenant of works to convince the unregenerate of sin. It shows them that as they are sinners – and so cannot perform perfect obedience to entitle them to life – it is absolutely impossible for them ever to attain to justification and salvation by their own performances. “By the deeds of the law,” says the Apostle Paul, “there shall no flesh be justified in His sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin” (Rom 3:20). “I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died” (Rom 7:9).

2. It reveals the wrath of God against them for their innumerable transgressions of it, and so impresses them with fear of eternal punishment. “The law worketh wrath” (Rom 4:15). It condemns every sinner who is under it to death in all its terrible extent, and so it awakens his conscience to expect infinite and insupportable wrath as the just recompense of disobedience to its righteous precepts. Hence the law, in this point of view, is called “the ministration of condemnation” (2 Cor 3:7). Thus, as a scourge, it troubles and torments the consciences of impenitent sinners, and renders them uneasy in a course of sin.

3. The law is of use likewise to urge or drive them to Jesus Christ, the only Saviour of lost sinners. Seeing it is the means of convincing sinners of their sinfulness, misery and utter inability to recover themselves, it drives

⁷Quoted in Murray, *Jonathan Edwards*, p 100.

⁸Quoted in Murray, *Jonathan Edwards*, p 101.

¹Reprinted, with slight editing, from *A Treatise on the Law and the Gospel*. The first article dealt with the use of the law to mankind in general.

them from confidence in themselves to the Lord Jesus for righteousness and strength. And thus it is their “schoolmaster to bring [them] unto Christ, that [they] might be justified by faith” (Gal 3:24). By demanding perfect holiness of nature, perfect obedience of life, and complete satisfaction for sin – which none of the children of Adam is able to afford – the law shuts them up to see their need of Christ, who has fully answered all these demands for those who believe in Him (Rom 10:4). It serves as a looking-glass in which they may contemplate the exceeding sinfulness and demerit of their sins in order that, despairing of life by their own works, they may feel the necessity of fleeing speedily to Jesus Christ, who has fulfilled a perfect righteousness for their justification.

4. It serves, at the same time, to convince them that they have those characters of sinfulness and misery under which the offers and invitations of the gospel are addressed to men. The offers and calls of the gospel are addressed to men as unjust, ungodly; as sinners, enemies, and persons without strength; as lost, dead in trespasses and sins, simple ones, scorners, fools, stout-hearted and far from righteousness; as backsliders and prisoners, as labouring and heavy laden, thirsting for happiness of any kind, spending their money for that which is not bread, and their labour for that which satisfies not, disobedient, gainsaying, rebellious, etc. Now the law, under the illuminating influences of the Holy Spirit, is of use to show sinners that these are their very characters, and therefore that they are the very persons to whom the Saviour is offered, and who are invited and commanded to receive Him with His righteousness and salvation. In this view, it is eminently subservient to the gospel.

5. Last, the law serves to render those of them inexcusable who, turning a deaf ear to its dictates respecting their sinfulness and misery, refuse to accept the offer of a Saviour, and of salvation by Him (Rom 1:20 with 2:15). And it not only leaves all who reject the divine Redeemer without excuse and under its dreadful curse, but it dooms them to greater – to redoubled – condemnation. “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (John 3:36). “He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know Him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto Me. I will recompense, saith the Lord” (Heb 10:28-30).

All the unworthy fears of awakened sinners arise from their keeping away from the cross.

J W Alexander

Christ in the Psalms¹

1. General Considerations

Rev Roderick MacLeod

When I was a young student in Stirling, I heard Rev D J MacDonald illustrate the process of sanctification with this anecdote: A woman was overheard praying on three particular occasions. On the first, she expressed herself thus: “O to know Him, to know Him, to know Him!” On the second occasion thus: “O to be like Him, to be like Him, to be like Him!” On the third occasion like this: “O to be with Him, to be with Him, to be with Him!” The topic of this paper will, I believe, be of great interest to all like-minded persons. If we are to be with Christ, we must be made like Him. If we desire to be like Him, we will also desire to know Him. Our work at this time comes close to the heart of this desire to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. I will seek to show that the doctrine of the Lord Jesus Christ as Mediator can be compared to the fragrance of the inspired pen of the sweet psalmists of Israel.

1. There is *a close relation between the written Word of God and the personal Word* – between the Bible and Christ. I would suggest that this is an important consideration in this investigation. The written Word is the revelation of the will of God for our salvation; in the personal Word we have the same, the light of the knowledge of the glory of God shining in the face of Jesus Christ, and “the love and the kindness of God our Saviour toward man” appearing in Him. The written Word is the written expression of the will of God. Christ, in His mediatorial Person, functions, states and relations, is the personal expression, image or representation of the will of God to us for our salvation.

Thus one would expect that much of Christ’s person, character, work and relations to His people would be found in the written Word of the Old Testament. The Saviour said, “Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me” (John 5:39).

2. *The doctrine of Christ is everywhere in the Scriptures.* The Word of God teaches us what we are to believe and what duty God requires of us. But the principal object of saving faith, and the only source of the spiritual strength and grace needed for gospel obedience, is found in the Lord Jesus Christ. If faith in Him is required both in the Old Testament and in the New, He must be held forth in both dispensations for faith to lay hold on. He is held forth more clearly in one than in the other, but not more truly.

¹An address given at a Day Conference of the Trinitarian Bible Society in Glasgow in September 2005.

He is once called the Messenger of the Covenant but, as all salvation is in Him alone, He might as easily be called the central Message of the Covenant and so of the Word of God. These things being so, one would expect to find Him speaking, or spoken of, in all parts of the Old Testament, not least in the Psalms. This accords with the testimony of the Lord Jesus Himself: "All things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning Me" (Luke 24:44).

3. *The infallible witness of the New Testament* testifies to the presence of the Messiah in the Psalms. It often testifies that a typical or prophetic statement in the Psalms is fulfilled in Christ, or in the events surrounding the life of Christ. It is certain that Paul and the other Apostles had no difficulty in finding Christ in the Psalms. The Book of Psalms was like the palaces of ivory filled with the sweet-smelling spices of the Person, office, work and relations of Christ. It is a deep mine from which the Apostles brought forth golden prophecies and types, which, in their Epistles, they applied to Christ. Without making an exhaustive list, it may be enough to say that of seven quotations from the Old Testament in Hebrews 1, six are from the Psalms. They all speak of the Messiah.

Neither can one fail to notice how often, in the Book of Acts, the Apostles referred to the Psalms. Peter testifies that the Psalms spoke of the betrayal of the Lord by Judas: "For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishopric let another take" (Acts 1:20). And on the Day of Pentecost, Peter proved from the Psalms that Christ was to suffer, die, rise again, ascend into heaven and be solemnly inaugurated on the throne of God. He referred in particular to David's words in Psalm 16: "Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, He would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; he seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that His soul was not left in hell, neither His flesh did see corruption" (Acts 2:30,31).

The Gospels? The Lord Jesus testified that the Psalms speak of Him: "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning Me" (Luke 24:44). He spoke of Psalm 110 as Messianic. He asked the Pharisees: "What think ye of Christ? Whose son is He? They say unto Him, The Son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call Him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou on My right hand, till I make Thine enemies Thy footstool?" (Matt 22:44). One might add other infallible testimonies, but we will leave this point with the suggestion that there are more quotations from

the Psalms in the New Testament than from any other Old Testament book.

4. ***Christ was Mediator*** in the darker dispensation of the Old Testament as surely as during the brighter revelations of the New. He who is the Prophet, Priest and King of the Church in the New Testament was the same in the Old. He who is the Apostle, Author of faith, Door, Mediator, bright and morning Star, Intercessor, Consolation, Foundation, Rock, Good Shepherd, the King, Leader, Captain, Teacher, Physician, Friend of sinners, High Priest of His people in the New Testament, was the same in the Old Testament – if less distinctly, yet not less truly.

When we read of the divine Shepherd in Psalm 23, for example, how can we explain the relation intended if we do not refer it to the Good Shepherd? Or when we read of God giving light, as in Psalm 27, how are we to understand this but in reference to the Light of the world, the Lord Jesus Christ? This observation, if one will admit its validity, as I feel one must, will open many fields in the Book of Psalms which bear to our souls the sweet fragrance of our Lord and Saviour.

5. ***The holy humanity of Christ***. In reading or singing the Psalms it is profitable to remember that Christ was truly man. As a holy and devout man, familiar with all the written Scriptures of the Old Testament, the Book of Psalms was His manual of praise.

6. The Holy Spirit used ***types and shadows*** to speak of spiritual things in the Old Testament. Writing on Exodus, Matthew Henry comments that Old Testament history is rather the *pattern* of heavenly things than the heavenly things themselves. May we not make the same general statement about David?

Christ is spoken of in the Old Testament by types. As this is an important term at this point in the discussion, let us define it. The Greek word *typos* is rendered in many different ways in the Authorised Version: “print” (John 20:25), “figure” (Acts 7:43; Rom 5:14), “fashion” (Acts 7:44), “manner” (Acts 23:25), “form” (Rom 6:17), “example” or “ensample” (1 Cor 10:6, 1 Cor 10:11, Phil 3:17, 1 Th 1:7, 2 Th 3:9, 1 Tim 4:12), and in the margin it is once translated “type”. The New Testament writers use the word with some degree of latitude; yet one general idea is common to all – *likeness*. A person, event or thing is so fashioned or appointed as to resemble another; the one is made to answer to the other in some essential feature.

The pattern or mould, into which clay or wax was pressed so that it might take the exact shape of the mould, is thought to be the source of the idea of a *type*. The word *type* is generally used to denote a resemblance between something present and something future, which is called the *antitype*. One writer gives a telling definition: “A type is a shadow cast on the pages of Old Testament history by a truth whose full embodiment, or antitype, is found

in the New Testament". The same writer observes that "much of the Old Testament would have only antiquarian value today if it were not for the types embedded in the text".

The main characteristics of a type, Louis Berkhof tells us in his *Principles of Biblical Interpretation*, are three: (1) There must be some notable point of resemblance between a type and its antitype. (2) There must be some scriptural evidence that a thing or person was designed by God to be a type; it is not an arbitrary, accidental or coincidental likeness that constitutes a type. He points out the difference between this last statement and the position of interpreters like Marsh, who insisted that nothing should be regarded as typical unless it was expressly so designed in the New Testament. (3) A type always prefigures something future. "A scriptural type and a predictive prophecy are in substance the same, differing only in form." It must then be of the greatest significance that David, the principal author of the Psalms, is universally held to be a type of Christ.

The points of resemblance between David and Christ are most striking. Not only is the promised Messiah often called "the son of David", He is actually called "David" (as in Jer 30:9, Ezek 37:24,25 and Hos 3:5). The eminent John Owen says, "The throne and kingdom promised to David for ever and ever, that it should be as the sun, and established for ever as the moon (Ps 89:36,37), had no accomplishment but in the throne and kingdom of his Son, Jesus Christ. Thus also many other things are said of him and his kingdom which, in propriety of speech, can no way be applied unto him but as he was a type of Christ, and represented Him to the Church."

The generally accepted rules which should govern the interpretation of typical Psalms are given by W S Plumer, the author of a well-known commentary on the Book: (1) Where a literal construction will stand, the furthest from the letter is commonly the worst. Let us in all cases admit the literal or primary sense of the Scripture. (2) This should not hinder us from also admitting in many cases the spiritual sense. A thing spoken of David may be literally true of him. But David was a type of Christ, and what he says primarily of himself may have a spiritual fulfilment in Christ. (3) We cannot apply to Christ passages that are obviously inappropriate to the sinless Saviour, such as those that ask for pardon, or for the subduing of sin, nor those that are penitential Psalms. "The truth is," says Plumer, "that nothing is of more importance to the interpretation of Scripture than good common sense".

Job was never more accepted of God than when he abhorred himself.

Blessed is the man that fears always, that is continually vigilant in secret and society; who considers that God's eyes are always upon him in order to judgement, and whose eyes are always upon God in order to acceptance.

William Bates

Mbuma Zending Meeting 2006

Rev Donald A Ross

The Mission day was held in the market building in Utrecht, which had been beautifully prepared. When we arrived, some were beginning to assemble and in a short time the large hall was nearly filled by an estimated 4400 people. The number was not as high as some years ago, when I recall 7000 assembling. However, this does not seem to have made a difference to the amount donated, last year having seen one of the biggest collections ever. The final amount for this meeting is expected to be in the region of £30 000.

Ds Tj de Jong, the Chairman, spoke first, from Proverbs 24:11: “Deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain”. While he referred to the financial needs of the churches, the schools and medical clinics, he emphasised that the greatest need was not physical but spiritual – to be reconciled to Christ – and therefore Christ commissioned the Church to preach the gospel of salvation. Ds de Jong asked that the greetings of those supporting the work of the Mission be conveyed to the Free Presbyterian Church. He mentioned also the sad death of one of the Mission’s friends, Miss Peta van der Ridder.

Rev D A Ross then spoke from the words: “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature”. His address is printed below.

Ds J Roos addressed the gathering from Matthew 28:9: “Behold, Jesus met them”. He pointed out that such a meeting is the greatest of all wonders, but God must first teach us the reality of our sin. It is at this point Christ appears with the peace of the gospel.

Ds Gerritsen then spoke from John 17:20: “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word”. Christ seeks the honour of the Father and, not only does He pray for His people, but teaches His people to pray in such a way that they too seek the honour of the Father. The Saviour prays that His elect will come to Him, and so there are those who praise Him for His love in dying for them.

After Ds Gerritsen’s address, Mr A B den Breejen told the story of a missionary, Johannes van der Kemp – particularly for the benefit of the young people and children. There were probably about 2000 of them present.

The final speaker was Ds B Reinders, who addressed us from Acts 28:31: “No man forbidding him”. He reminded us that, despite the resistance Paul experienced, he was enabled to preach the gospel of free grace. Mission work must continue because there are elect sinners whom the Holy Spirit will yet bring to salvation.

These addresses were spread over a period of about six hours, including

a short break, but interspersed with the singing of the Psalms of David. In an age when Psalm-singing in the Christian Church has been largely displaced by hymn-singing, it was wonderful to hear so many people singing heartily from God's appointed book of praise.

The next Sabbath brought an opportunity to preach in Utrecht to a small congregation of the Reformed Congregations in the Netherlands. On the Monday we visited the Barth families who have over many years supported the work of the Mission by sorting and dispatching clothing to Africa. On the premises of Willem Barth we saw 1000-kg crates neatly stacked and waiting to be sent away. It is not hard to imagine the amount of labour, time and money which goes into this work alone. May the Lord graciously bless all these activities in the Netherlands which, in one way or another, are an expression of the desire by many people for the success of gospel.

We had the opportunity of visiting the grave of the late Peta van der Ridder in the cemetery at Elspeet. Not so long ago she was active on the mission at Sengera, but now she lies here asleep in Christ. It was a great comfort to know that, because of her undoubted faith in Christ, her soul is now at home in glory and her body will yet join her soul to be for ever with the Lord. We returned safely to Scotland after receiving much kindness from Dutch friends, not least by Mr and Mrs Jan Voortman.

Address: The command, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," is among the last of the Saviour's directions to His Church while He was in this world. With the help of God there are several points I wish to bring to your attention.

We are familiar with the doctrine of the gospel; and there is not a more wonderful subject for sinners to contemplate. *Gospel* means good news, and there never was, and there never shall be, more blessed news for sinners than the gospel. At the birth of the Saviour, the angel told the shepherds: "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger" (Luke 2:10-12). Immediately after this intimation, a heavenly host of angels began to praise God for this wonderful gift of the promised Saviour. "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:13-14).

The gospel declares that Christ Jesus paid full obedience to the law of God on behalf of those who were given to Him by the Father to be redeemed by Him. He, the sinless one, took the guilt of their sin and offered Himself at Calvary to satisfy divine justice. "For the transgression of My people was

He stricken” (Is 53:8). Paul, writing to the Ephesian believers, speaks of the “mystery of the gospel” (Eph 6:19), and so the Son of God was given by the Father to die in the room of hell-deserving sinners, so that, in believing, they would be saved. “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

We are assured from the Scriptures that, although the Pharisees thought otherwise, the gospel really is for *sinners*. Christ said, “They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. . . . I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Matt 9:12-13). The gospel then is undoubtedly for the benefit of sinners, a truth which was confirmed by the Apostle Paul: “This is a faithful saying . . . that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief” (1 Tim 1:15). Yes, for the worst kind of sinner imaginable, even the chief. The gospel is God’s call to the wicked – and who among us is not by nature among the wicked? To us therefore, it is said, “Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon” (Is 55:6-7).

This gospel, our text tells us, is to be preached throughout the whole world. It was preached by the Apostles – and will be, to the end of time, by the ministers of Christ. In fact, the Church is to seek prayerfully for opportunities, in God’s providence, to spread the gospel far beyond its borders. Was it not because of this command that, away back in our history, missionaries came to our own lands and preached the gospel to our forefathers? Now we in turn are to strive to give the gospel to others.

All who hear the gospel are called to repentance and faith in Christ. They are all sinners in need of the Saviour and, since there is no other Saviour, He is to be commended as suitable for them. The gospel is a promise of salvation to sinners, a promise which is fulfilled to them when they believe in Christ as Saviour. Addressing sinners worldwide, He assures them of this salvation: “Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else” (Is 45:22).

While men are to preach the gospel, it is not in their power to apply it to the salvation of any sinner. Paul reminds us, “I have planted, and Apollos watered; but God gave the increase” (1 Cor 3:6). By the power of the Holy Spirit, the Saviour applies the gospel to the salvation of a sinner. He first enables the sinner to understand the exceeding sinfulness of sin and its dreadful consequences. The fact that “the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God” (Ps 9:17) becomes a terrifying reality. The

sinner then comes to comprehend the all-sufficiency of Christ as Saviour. Not only did Christ Jesus made perfect atonement for sin but sinners are called to believe in Him – to receive and rest on Him. The sinner is therefore convinced of his need to receive and rest on Christ alone for salvation. Such are persuaded and enabled by the Holy Spirit to do just this and they willingly trust in Christ for the forgiveness of their sins. To the believers in Thessalonica it was said: “Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance” (1 Thess 1:5). This continues to be the case with all who are effectually called by the Saviour.

This, however, does not take away from man’s obligation to obey the gospel. Every sinner who hears the gospel is commanded to believe it. To suppose that we have no duty to believe is to act contrary to the mind of Christ. He commends all who believe and condemns all who do not believe. He assures us that, if we believe, salvation is granted and that, if we do not believe, we are condemned. “He that believeth on Him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (John 3:18). The fact that we are unable to believe is our sin – and not an excuse, as we may suppose. As rational creatures, we ought rather to plead with God to deliver us from the sin of refusing Christ as our Saviour – to enable us to trust Him for salvation.

Unbelief of the gospel has solemn consequences. We quoted already the words of the Saviour: “He that believeth not is condemned already”. This is condemnation to a lost eternity. We may think of ourselves as upright, and not liable to the punishment of a lost eternity, while accepting that heathens, drunkards, immoral people, Sabbath-breakers, liars and many others will be finally lost. But let us also remember that those who will not believe the gospel of Christ will be sent to hell. During the Saviour’s ministry, cities which enjoyed gospel privileges were solemnly warned: “It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgement than for” the city that would not receive the messengers of Christ (Matt 10:15). How terrifying the word of God will be “when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God and who obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thess 1:7-8).

Dear friends, we have the privilege of knowing this gospel. If we truly appreciate it, we will want it to be sent to others. This is the gospel which you as a people strive to support by your regular contributions. Indeed many of you have done so, not only since you last met on your mission day, but over many years. Not everyone is called to preach the gospel; yet there is a need for many others to contribute towards the furtherance of the gospel.

Yes, for the support of those who preach, but also to support handmaids to the gospel such as schools and hospitals. In fact, there would be few such institutions on our Mission in Africa were it not for your liberal contributions over many years. These institutions bring sinners in contact with the gospel, so that they hear – some of them for the first time – the good news that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

Ministers who seek to fulfill the command, “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature,” are continually encouraged by your ongoing support. May the Lord graciously bless your every endeavour for the extension of His kingdom! “The Lord did give the Word: great was the company of those that published it” (Ps 68:11).

“Their Redeemer is Mighty”¹

A Sermon Outline by John Kennedy

Proverbs 23:10-11. *Remove not the old landmark; and enter not into the fields of the fatherless: for their redeemer is mighty; he shall plead their cause with thee.*

Let us enquire who are the fatherless, what their field is, and the fence around it.

The Fatherless:

- They cannot claim the right of children.
- They cannot fall back on a father’s love.
- Some have God as their Father but cannot lay hold of the claim.
- They are liable to feel lonely, needy and afraid.

The Field of the Fatherless:

- This is the portion set apart for them by their Lord.
- This was appointed for them in the covenant.
- In it there is provision of grace and glory.
- All things are theirs by the law of heaven.

The Fence:

- The divine purpose and sovereign grace.
- His infinite wisdom and faithfulness.
- His word and unchangeableness.
- None has a right to go across this fence.

Their Redeemer:

- The Lord Jesus Christ is their Redeemer.
- He is instructed with the care of them by the Father.

¹Preached in Inverness on 3 July 1882.

He proved Himself worthy of this trust through His blood.
 He is mighty to save by the power of His life.
 He will plead their cause for them in heaven and on earth.

Application:

What do you know of God as your Father?
 What is your field?
 Have you a Redeemer?

Book Reviews¹

The All-Sufficient God, Sermons on Isaiah 40, by D Martyn Lloyd-Jones, published by the Banner of Truth Trust, paperback, 149 pages, £5.75.

In these nine sermons, Lloyd-Jones proclaims fundamental biblical truths to the unconverted, on the basis of this great chapter of God's Word. The preacher presents his message conscious of "a great deal of misunderstanding and confusion as to what the Christian gospel . . . really is". "If we do not come to the Bible itself," he asks, "and if we do not believe its message, then how can we have a true conception of the gospel?" In the same vein he comments later: "Some people may wonder why I go on emphasising this need to look at Christ. I have one reason: it is that I find that a fatal error – the tendency to think of Christianity as something that you and I must *do* – still grips and holds the minds of people and robs them of the blessings of salvation".

However, one wishes that he had been more careful in pointing to the work of Christ when, for instance, he tells a mixed audience that it was done "for you". And at one point he goes too far by stating that someone who can only say, "I hope I am saved", shows that he is not a Christian – though this remark seems, in fact, to have been directed against a particular unbelieving attitude.

Lloyd-Jones had a thorough understanding of the way modern man thinks and lives, and he tailored his message to meet this mindset. Accordingly this would be a useful book for those, in particular, who have been influenced by that way of thinking.

Worship, Its Priority, Principles and Practice, by J C Ryle, published by the Banner of Truth Trust, booklet, 31 pages, £1.50.

This attractively-produced booklet is a chapter from the author's *Knots Untied* – a volume which had as its rather-unwieldy subtitle: "Plain statements on disputed points in religion from the standpoint of an Evangelical churchman". And the principles laid out in this booklet, on a highly-important subject, are indeed presented plainly.

¹Both publications reviewed here are obtainable from the Free Presbyterian Bookroom.

For instance, in the second section – in which Ryle sets out “to show the leading principles of public worship” – he draws attention first to the right object of worship, which is the Lord Himself. He then points out that true public worship must be “through the mediation of Christ”, and that worshippers must use their minds – they must know what they are doing. His two final points here are: worship must be from the heart, and it must be reverent.

In the final section, Ryle gives four “tests by which our public worship should be tried”: true spiritual worship will (1) affect a man’s heart and conscience, (2) draw a man into close communion with Jesus Christ Himself, (3) continually extend a man’s spiritual knowledge, (4) continually increase the holiness of a man’s life. In other words: “The best public worship is that which produces the best private Christianity”.

The booklet is, as we would expect, a solid, straight-forward exposition of the subject. But it follows the Anglican line that “nothing must be required of men *contrary to God’s Word*”, rather than the fully-Reformed position of the Regulative Principle: that nothing should have a place in public worship which does not have the authority of the Word of God. Also, for this edition, Scripture quotations have mostly been changed to the New King James Version, which puts Ryle into the unlikely position of addressing the Most High as “you”. Surely if the Authorised Version is good enough for Lloyd-Jones, it is good enough to be left unchanged in reprints of Ryle.

Protestant View

Britain and the Pope

At the beginning of June, Prime Minister Tony Blair had a 35-minute private audience with Pope Benedict XVI at the Vatican. Some information has been given about their conversation but a BBC correspondent has commented: “The big question is whether, in the course of this meeting, Mr Blair officially invited the Pope to England. The [Roman] Catholic Bishops of England have already asked the Pope to come – an offer politely turned down. But if, as was expected, Mr Blair did bring up the subject then that invitation would be much harder to ignore.” It seems clear, however, that the Pope will not visit Great Britain this year or next. Pope Benedict is an old man and does not seem to have the same degree of willingness as his predecessor to travel repeatedly to all parts of the earth, though visits to Germany, Spain and Turkey have been arranged for this year.

Many will have been saddened by the prime minister of a constitutionally-Protestant nation paying his respects to the Pope but will be thankful that a

papal visit is not to be inflicted again on this country in the immediate future. Many, on the other hand, will consider such attitudes to be sheer bigotry. But no. Scripture points to a “falling away” which can only have had its fulfilment in the papacy. Paul wrote: “Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God” (2 Thess 2:3,4). Calvin comments: “The day of Christ . . . will not come until the world has fallen into apostasy, and the rule of Antichrist has held sway in the church. . . . Paul . . . is not speaking of one individual [as the man of sin], but of a kingdom that was to be seized by Satan for the purpose of setting up a seat of abomination in the midst of God’s temple. This we see accomplished in Popery.”

He continues: Scripture represents God “as the Author of all holy observances; it teaches that righteousness and salvation are to be sought from Christ alone; and it assigns the means and the method. There is not one of these things which the Pope does not claim to be his own prerogative. He boasts that it is his right to bind men’s consciences with such laws as he pleases, and to consign them to eternal punishment. With regard to the sacraments, he either institutes new ones at his own whim, or corrupts and debases those which had been instituted by Christ. . . . He contrives means of attaining salvation which are wholly at variance with the teaching of the gospel What, I ask, does it mean to be lifted above all that is reckoned to be divine, if this is not what the Pope is doing?”

Where Scripture condemns, we should follow. So should nations and their governments.

Notes and Comments

Issues of Life and Death

A bill brought before the House of Lords by Lord Joffe, with the object of legalising “assisted dying”, has been blocked, delaying it for six months. The bill would have allowed doctors to prescribe lethal drugs to a terminally-ill patient in severe pain. The patient could then use the drugs to commit suicide, thus avoiding the need for the doctor himself to administer the drugs and thereby be directly involved in murder.

However, Lord Joffe has indicated that he will re-introduce this dangerous bill. In the debate he declared that patients should not have to endure unbearable pain, and we certainly agree that all possible steps should be taken

to alleviate pain and suffering. But, in the light of the Sixth Commandment, we cannot agree that any doctor has the authority to commit an act which is *intended* to bring about someone else's death.

The Government, with its hands-off attitude to such matters, has said it will not block a further hearing of the bill. But Lord Carlile's warning deserves attention: "Everybody in your Lordships' house knows that those who are moving this bill have the clear intention of it leading to voluntary euthanasia [when the doctor would directly cause the patient's death]. That has always been the aim and it remains the aim now." And Lady Finlay, a professor in palliative care, made the responsible comment: "Let us get on with working for patients to live as well as possible until a naturally dignified death, not taken up with becoming complicit with suicide".

Archbishop of Canterbury Dr Rowan Williams was among those who opposed the bill, saying that the cost of voting the bill through would be "disproportionately high to the benefit to certain individuals". Presumably the "benefit" would be an escape from suffering, but such a statement involves the assumption that there is no lost eternity beyond a Christless life in this world and demonstrates once again that the Archbishop's thinking is, fundamentally, not influenced by the Bible.

Disturbingly, an ex-member of the British Medical Association's ethics committee, Professor Len Doyal, has called for all forms of euthanasia to be legalised. He wants the law to be changed so that doctors could withdraw treatment even if patients cannot consent. In a generation that has lost sight of the existence of God and His authority over morals generally and, in particular, over issues of life and death, many people may well be afraid of how they will be cared for if those responsible for their medical treatment come to the conclusion that their quality of life is too low to justify keeping them alive. It may be that many more should draw up a living will to indicate that they wish all reasonable steps to be taken to preserve their lives.

Free Church Moderator's Loss of Confidence

One characteristic of the people of God is their confidence in the power of His Word. Jonah going to Nineveh, Paul to Europe, Patrick Hamilton to Scotland, William Carey to India – they all believed that the gospel was immensely powerful, and that if God chose, it would carry all before it. "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds" (2 Cor 10:4). They believed that their duty, whatever the outcome might be, was to proclaim God's Word, no matter what men might make of it and no matter what their changing fashions and opinions might be.

In his address at the recent General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland, the Moderator, Rev Donald Smith from Lima in Peru, sounded a very different note, remarkable for its lack of confidence. The essence of his speech was that the Free Church, like any other organisation, must adapt or become extinct: it is declining in many parts of Scotland, the world is moving on, and if the Free Church does not “become more relevant”, it will die. “Becoming more relevant” turns out to mean introducing hymns and musical instruments, finding public roles in the Church for women, producing a new confession of faith to embrace “all Evangelical opinions in the country”, and co-operating as widely as possible with other “church organizations”.

Mr Smith’s vision for the Free Church sounds rather like the Church of Scotland, which has not proved a powerful and “relevant” organization in modern society. The enfeebling of the Church which he is proposing, apart from being unscriptural, does not attract the secular Westerner and if anything it seems to repel those from other cultures, such as Muslims. Further compromise with bankrupt secular society would make the Church yet more despicable in their eyes. The gospel which turned the Roman Empire upside down was pure and biblical, and it is the same unchanging gospel that will bring down Islam and all the false religions of the world.

Mr Smith quotes the Reformation dictum that the Church must be “always reforming”, which he interprets to mean that it must be always modernising. Modernising, however, was hardly a concern of the Reformers. Clearly the real meaning is that the Church, like the believer’s soul, needs continually to be “renewed”: “Be renewed in the spirit of your mind” (Eph 4:23), “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me” (Ps 51:10). As Witsius said, it is the Church’s life, not her doctrine or practice, that needs reformation. The great need for the Church in Scotland is not conformity to the world, but “times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord” (Acts 3:19). “Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of you mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Rom 12:2). *DWBS*

Church of Scotland General Assembly – 2006

The General Assembly commenced in Edinburgh on Saturday, May 20, with public worship conducted by the retiring Moderator, the Right Rev David Lacey. After the installation of the new Moderator, Rev Alan D MacDonald, the Assembly was addressed by the Lord High Commissioner, Lord Mackay of Clashfern, as the representative of Her Majesty the Queen.

The item of business which generated the most heated debate was the proposal, from the Legal Questions Committee, to allow ministers to conduct

church services for same-sex civil partnership ceremonies. The Committee requested that the Assembly pass a Declaratory Act whose main provision would be: "A minister or deacon who conducts any service marking a civil partnership does not commit a disciplinary offence". In presenting the proposal, the Committee's convener stated that the UK Government's decision to establish civil partnerships meant that the Kirk had to give its ministers clear guidance. But, sadly, the proposed guidance was not from Scripture. A counter motion, prohibiting ministers from officiating at services for same-sex unions, was lost by just eight votes. In what was seen as a victory for the liberals in the Church, the Assembly voted by 322 votes to 314, with 122 dissents, to allow ministers to conduct such services. However, the decision must be approved by a majority of the Church's 46 presbyteries before it can be ratified by the next Assembly.

However, the mere fact that the Church of Scotland should be debating this issue is hardly credible. A Skye minister said in the Assembly that he had spoken to Church members worldwide who were "astonished" that the Assembly "should even be discussing this". But it is a shocking fact that at least two groups within the Church of Scotland, both founded by ministers, campaigned in favour of same-sex partnership services. One is Affirmation Scotland, which "is set to call for the admission of openly gay ministers", and the other is OneKirk, which, says the press, "backs gay blessings".

What is especially shocking is that the Assembly has rejected Scripture by its acceptance of such unions. One minister rightly commented in a letter to the press: "To understand God's views on homosexuality is very simple. He has written them down. You don't have to read between the Bible's lines. You don't have to deduce it. It is there in black and white. What we saw at the General Assembly on Tuesday was a rejection by the Kirk of clear biblical teaching."

This Assembly's decision was not too surprising to some, considering the failure of the attempt, in the 1993 Assembly, to prohibit ministers from conducting such services. It was proposed then: "In view of the recent publicity given to a Kirk minister's Service of Blessing on a 'marriage' of two lesbians, the General Assembly instruct all Church of Scotland ministers not to perform services of blessing on homosexual / lesbian relationships". The motion was defeated by 196 votes. It would be an encouraging sign in the present situation if the presbyteries of the Church stood up for biblical truth and rejected the Assembly's decision.

The Legal Questions Committee also proposed that the Assembly "note with approval the practical guidance offered to chaplains" in dealing with "the effects of the passing of the Civil Partnership Act 2005 on the military com-

munity”. That guidance was, in essence, “that it was a matter of conscience for the individual chaplain”. Again the guidance was based on worldly expediency and not on Holy Scripture.

Another area in which the Kirk has swerved from Scripture and compromised with the secularism of the age is the use of human embryos for research. In 1996 it pronounced: “If we accord to the human embryo the full rights of a person, then all research on human embryos must be morally wrong . . . the human embryo must be regarded as an actual person, and regarded as a person from the moment of conception”. This year’s Assembly has decided that embryos less than 14 days old may be used for stem cell research because they do not have the “moral status” of humans. Although it was acknowledged that for some in the Church “the embryo already has the same human dignity as a person who has been born”, the majority of the working group (which prepared the report approved by the Assembly) took the view that “the moral status of the human embryo is not established until some time into its biological development after conception.

While such decisions show that a considerable body of opinion in the Church is increasingly uncomfortable with Scripture and the official doctrinal standards of the Church, there are still those who strongly desire to retain as much as they still have of those standards. This was seen in the reaction to the Legal Questions Committee’s request that the Assembly instruct it “to consider the place of the Westminster Confession of Faith within the Church’s constitution”. The Committee said it raised this matter “out of a continuing concern that it is not satisfactory” that the Confession “should continue to be referred to as a ‘principal subordinate standard’, second only to the ‘supreme rule of faith and life’ of ‘the Word of God contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments’.” Thankfully, the Assembly rejected this request – by 72 votes. As far back as 1974, liberals in the Church attempted to change the status of the Confession from that of the “principal subordinate standard” to a “historic statement of the faith of the Reformed Church”. A return to the doctrines of the Confession and especially to Scripture itself – the *supreme* rule of doctrine and practice – is the need of the hour and the desire of the godly.

It was the desire of a Mr Melville Knox Martin, who stated in a petition to the Assembly that “the long-term, continuing decline in church attendance in Scotland is likely to contribute to a general increase, among the people of Scotland, of ignorance and misunderstanding of the Church’s doctrines;” and that “such ignorance and misunderstanding often act as barriers to belief.” He requested the Assembly to “ensure that greater emphasis is given to explaining to the people of Scotland that, for the Church of Scotland, the Word

of God as contained in the scriptures is the supreme rule of faith and life.” The Assembly’s broadcast update stated, “The Assembly felt that what Mr Martin was asking was not necessary.”

If ever there was a time when it was necessary for the Church of Scotland to explain to its people the supremacy of Scripture, it is today. Never, during the past 500 years, has there been such widespread ignorance of the content of the Bible, let alone of the fact that it is the only rule to direct us, personally and nationally, how we are to glorify God. Until Scotland and its national Church return to the Word of God, there can be no hope of halting our accelerating moral and spiritual decline. *NMR*

Litmus Test for the Church

On the day after the Church of Scotland General Assembly agreed to pass down to Presbyteries their recommendation on “blessing” civil partnerships, Professor George Newlands, Principal of Trinity College and Professor of Divinity in the University of Glasgow, contributed an article to *The Scotsman*. In it he suggested that “this issue is a litmus test for the Church’s future: to be open and generous, or to retreat into a corner. It is about power: will one group be able to dictate to the rest how to read the Bible?”

The article manifests the common confusion between the readiness of our Lord to receive sinners and save them from their sin and exhort them to “go and sin no more” and the idea that, however people live, they should be accepted for what they are and admitted to all the privileges of the Church, and even to office within it. It implicitly connects opposition to the affirmation and blessing of what the Bible regards as sinful relationships with what it describes as “homophobic abuse”, even while generously conceding that those who take an opposite view are not to be regarded as “inevitably unchristian or uncaring”. Professor Newlands wants those of completely opposing views on this matter, and no doubt on other fundamental matters of Biblical interpretation, to live and let live within the Church.

How the Bible is read is indeed basic to the problem, and the trouble is that many modern churchmen and theologians do not accept that the Bible speaks with consistency and clarity on the subjects with which it deals and that it is to be interpreted in its own light. What the Bible says regarding sin and salvation, and how God in His love deals with sinners, is clear enough – until the unbelieving scholar tries to read it in the light of his own un-biblical preconceptions.

The real litmus test for any Church, and for any professed Christian, is whether or not the Bible is allowed to speak for itself, and its authority is recognised and submitted to in belief and practice. *HMC*

Church Information

Synod Resolution on Divorce

The Synod of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, met in Glasgow on Wednesday, 24 May 2006, reaffirms its strong commitment to Chapter 24 of the Westminster Confession of Faith, "On Marriage and Divorce", and reminds all Kirk Sessions and Presbyteries of their duty to assert, maintain and defend the teaching of this chapter of the Confession, particularly when the Civil Magistrate has further weakened the law of the land relating to marriage and unscriptural divorce.

The Synod also reminds the people of the Church that the only two reasons for divorce allowed in Scripture are adultery and such wilful desertion as cannot be remedied by either the Church or the Civil Magistrate. To go beyond these two reasons undermines the divine institution of marriage, breaks down family and social relations and will incur the just displeasure of the Lord.

The Synod further expresses its most decided opposition to those parts of the Family Law Bill recently passed by the Scottish Parliament which further undermine marriage, make divorce easier and strengthen the legal rights of sodomites and those living in the sin of fornication. The Synod warns its people against lax views and practices promoted by this new law.

Editorial Board

During the meetings of Synod, Rev John MacLeod retired from the Editorial Board of this Magazine and Rev Douglas Somerset was appointed in his place. We are grateful to Mr MacLeod for his contributions to *The Free Presbyterian Magazine* and hope that he will continue to write for its pages.

New Publication

Free Presbyterian Publications are continuing to print the early volumes of *The Free Presbyterian Magazine*. Volume 9 is now available; the normal price is £16.50 but it is available from the F P Bookroom at £14.00 until August 31.

Acknowledgement of Donations

The General Treasurer acknowledges with sincere thanks the following donations:

College & Library Fund: A Friend, Newcastle, Ps 119:57, £40.

Eastern Europe Fund: Mrs A M, for children in Ukraine, £10 per Rev NMR.

Outreach Fund: Mr TLJ, Wales, for tract production, £100.

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