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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
on Wednesday 2 September 1925

EPHESIANS 1 v 6

To the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein
He hath made us accepted in the Beloved

I will read the entire sentence, of which the text is a part, beginning at the third verse. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the beloved".

This text is like the culmination of all that has preceded it. The Apostle, as usual in His epistles, opens this with the Apostolic, the fervent wish that grace and peace from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ might be given to and enjoyed by these godly Ephesians. To be interested in such a petition, such a wish, is no small mercy, and he then breaks out in this high praise of God. Blessing, honour, power, majesty, and glory, be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The God of our Lord Jesus Christ in respect of His humanity and His mission. The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ in Eternity. This God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ "hath blessed us" - these gracious Ephesians, with the Apostle - "with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." Your temporal blessings are but for a day; spiritual blessings are for eternity. O what fools we are and slow of heart to believe that spiritual things are better than temporal things, but the Holy Ghost does lay this upon the hearts of His people from time to time so that they, in a measure, realise the unspeakable blessedness of spiritual things, of having a part and lot in the matter of salvation, and that realisation puts temporal things into their proper nothingness. They are good for the purpose for which they are given, but they are for a moment. Light

afflictions are but for a moment, and temporal, and blessings are but for a moment. "The world passeth way and the fashion of it perisheth" These spiritual blessings are eternal life, eternal redemption, justification, sanctification, and all the good things that the Lord in His infinite love could devise for His people are included in this word - "all spiritual blessings in heavenly places". Earthly places are defiled places. Eden was soon defiled; so is the whole earth defiled. Heavenly places; beginning in the manifestation of God's love to a sinner in the new birth, never ending, and that person's being the guest of God. O it will be great to be the guests of God in eternity. "According" - as these blessings are in one, only one Person has them all. All the pleasure of God's goodness is in Christ, every good wish, every holy gift, every divine thing, that the Lord communicates to His church, He communicates from His beloved Son in whom the fullness of all is. Never expect good from yourselves. Never look for anything good in yourselves except as God puts it there. Nature is bad, fallen, desperately wicked. "According as He hath chosen us in Him". What does the Almighty, righteous God and Judge owe to you? What does He owe to me? What does He owe to any man, to all men? The Scripture answer is this, that He owes to sinners just that which His nature insists upon giving, that which His law gives - justice, condemnation. We lie under condemnation, and if God had not purposed in His love to save some people, He would have been glorious in His justice through eternity, and if He saves some, and not others, is our eye evil because He is good? He owes nothing to us but justice, which means, because we are sinners, condemnation. His choice then is infinitely gracious, and kind. Whom He will He chooses. "According as He hath chosen us in Him - that is Christ - before the foundation of the world" What for? We are slanderously reported to say, Let us do evil that good may come. This Scripture says "that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love." "Without blame" in the Scripture use of that word, is taken two ways. First with respect to a person's walk. Zacharias and his wife walked in a blameless way; in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord blameless. The Apostle Paul desires that the Philippians "might be blameless, and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nationholding forth the word of life" (Philippians 2 v 15/16) In the second place they are blameless in respect of their union with the Lord Jesus. His holiness is theirs,

His righteousness is theirs, His blamelessness belongs to them. and they are chosen to this. And this in the power of it - this may be known - causes them to walk humbly, and holily all the days of their life. If you walk improperly, may you never disgrace religion by professing it, but if you have grace it will keep you from sinning, wilfully at least. If you do fall into wilful sin, then you will understand what a Father's rod means, and what divine reproofs are in your conscience, but the people of God are chosen to be holy, and what a holiness they will have, I mean in the perfection and uninterrupted sweetness of it, when they reach that blessed home prepared for them from the foundation of the world. "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself" We are alienated from Him by the fall, we are enemies to Him by our sin. We have enmity against Him in our nature. The fall cut us off from God. We remain His creatures, but defiled, abominable creatures, but now grace has come in and has said concerning a number that no man can number, These shall be My children. After what pattern are they sons? After the pattern of His Own everlasting Son. He had only One Son, and He determined to have an infinite number of sons to be His sons - Predestinated unto the adoption of children. And this adoption becomes an experience sooner or later. Never forget that, that if you are born again you are a child, and this adoption to which you are predestinated is to become an experience in your hearts. "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts crying Abba, Father". And when you get that then you will understand that you have a name better than of sons and daughters to earthly parents, a name that shall not be cut off. And this adoption to which you are predestinated is according to the good pleasure of His will. This cuts off all pretensions, all merit, and every kind of thing that a man might present as a claim, and it puts the crown on the right head, and known and felt it brings each child to say: "Bless the Lord O my soul, and all that is within me bless His holy Name." You will do it of a sweet necessity when you get the Spirit of Adoption into your hearts. Then you will enter into that beautiful way as set forth by the Lord as containing the substance of all prayer - "Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name" Of all the utterances that ever you are or can be capable of, your tongue will never utter anything respecting yourselves more sweet, more wonderful, more humbling, and more honouring to God, than that, when you can say from your heart's

experience, "Our Father which art in heaven". It is a beautiful relationship, extensive in the care of it, exclusive in the love of it, extending to all your necessities, from childhood and through education to manhood in Christ. All your necessities included in this relationship of Father to His children. Wonderful in the love of it, that He should take a piece of hell and make of it a son to Himself. And the culminating point thus far in this chapter is the text - "To the praise of the glory of His grace wherein" - that is in His grace and by it; "He" - this heavenly Father of His people - "hath made us accepted" - acceptable to Himself - "in the beloved", that is in His Son Jesus Christ.

Let us look first at His grace. It means His favour. His favour which overtops and overcomes and removes all sin. This favour which could not be put off, or stumbled, or hindered, by all that it saw in the loathsome child cast out into the open field. " ... when I passed by thee thy time was the time of love; and I spread My skirt over thee". (Ezekiel 16) Thy time was a time of love, and I said unto thee, 'Live' and thou becamest Mine. Rutherford speaks about the imperious love of Christ, and here it is. Grace, it is a conquering thing. It conquers, it overcomes all prejudice, enmity, bitterness, wickedness, evil, and strong determination to do just as you will. It overcomes all. It subdues that imperious thing, the human will, that would have nothing of God if it were allowed to have its own way as it is indeed allowed in the great majority of men. But O, how wonderful it is to find this subdued. Not smashed to atoms, so as not to exist, but subdued. When a sinner is made, according to the covenant promise, willing in the day of Christ's power, it is then that the will, so wrong, so warped, and made so stubborn by the fall, becomes straight with the mind of God. When you come before Him as a guilty creature and through faith, and the Spirit's power, offer yourself up unto Him, it is an acceptable sacrifice, but if there were no will in the matter, what acceptableness could there be? With all the beasts that were slain under the Levitical dispensation, there was no efficacy, there was no will in any of them. When the dear Saviour came He pleased not Himself, but pleased Him who had chosen Him, and He said - "I delight to do Thy will". His will was straight with His Father's will. And when the grace of God in its wonderful efficacy, and invincibility lays hold of a sinner, that is wonderful, inasmuch

as it conquers the sinner. The new man rises, and the will, subdued and brought down, falls straight with God's, and you sing of this sometimes - "Willing to be saved by grace". "When shall I find", says one, and have not we also prayed with him

When shall I find my willing heart
All taken up by Thee

Happy the sinner who is conquered by this invincible grace. But the way of conquering is this, there is an alluring influence. "I will allure her and bring her into the wilderness". And the sweetness of Christ, the suitableness of Christ, and the greatness of Christ, His righteousness, His blood-shedding, and His efficacious intercession, these allure and bring the sinner into the wilderness, and this is the mighty grace of God. And not only this, but also this grace is exercised in the forgiveness of sins. "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious". How? "Forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin". O, grace is very sweet when it is expressed in the forgiveness of sins in a sinner's conscience. That is where forgiveness is. First in the merit of Christ in the heart of God, and then in the next place in the heart, in the conscience of a sinner. And how anyone blessed with true conviction from the Spirit can be happy and rest until he gets this, it is difficult to understand. Christ is exalted to give repentance and forgiveness and shall He not do this in those in whom is His own grace, His own life? O then, you who have guilt unpurged, seek this blessing, the forgiveness of sins spoken to your hearts, impressed upon your consciences. If your consciences are now friendly to you, but very troublesome - friendly because they speak honestly to you about your state; troublesome because they know that sin is there unpurged - seek this. "Christ has blessings to impart" Forgivenesses He has, and He gives them to His people. This is His grace.

Also His grace is manifested from time to time in discoveries or revelations that He makes of Himself by His Spirit to His people. They get on well who get manifestations of Himself to their souls. Vital religion does not consist in a number of correct thoughts in your mind. There may be, and it is good when there are, correct thoughts in the mind of a child of God. There are many thoughts that

are not correct, that will never bear the scrutiny of God's light, nor the searching of His eye, when He draws near. Many thoughts, wicked thoughts, vile, horrible thoughts. Wordly thoughts, covetous and proud thoughts, and high looks. These, these we may teem with; alas one knows too much of that. O, but when the Saviour comes and in the light of His Own countenance shines again and again; now on some truth respecting His Person, then on the truth of justification, then on the truth of sanctification; shines on some promise and puts it to faith in a way, in a moment, that will make you understand a little of the extensive nature of it, and how inclusive it is respecting all the possible needs of your soul and of time, then you say, I never saw it like this before. Of course you did not. It is in His light we see light and this is grace. He condescends to us and He is familiar with us according to that beautiful word in John - "Henceforth I call you not servants but friends, for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you" "The words Thou gavest Me I have given them".

Then also grace is manifested in the giving out of strength to His people. Strength to bear affliction, strength to submit to the will of God in painful dispensations. Strength to walk steadily under prosperity if you get any of that. Strength to do that which is pleasing in His sight. Strength to hold on in an evil time, to keep the Word of His patience. "Because Thou hast kept the word of My patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world to try them that dwell therein." Look for strength, those of you who feel weak, and remember where your strength is; in the Head, in the Lord Jesus. Strength to bear your daily trials, and to go through your daily difficulties. Strength to pray, to cast your care on the Lord. Prayer. O the people who pray do wonders and exploits, but it is praying in the Holy Ghost, and that is not in yourselves. Strength to believe when everything shall be contrary to faith; everything shall say that the way you are in cannot be right; when all providences perhaps shall seem to be very contrary to you and against your best interests; when perhaps you may be tempted to say, I cannot honour God in this difficult way because it provokes my nature, and brings out the worst of me. Strength to believe in such a path, to believe in the goodness, and the wisdom, and the love and the care of God for you. To believe that He is doing

the best for you; that though to you His way may be in the sea, and His path in the mighty waters, and His footsteps are not known, still to believe; to believe that though the ship must be broken, that though apparently its being broken is imminent and near, still you are in the hands of a good God. To believe what He told you, that He will never leave you nor forsake you. This is grace. Strength to love, love Him; when He smites, not to be offended; when He leaves you in prison, or in some dark dispensation, and does not pay you a visit for a time, nor send you a word, then to love Him. "Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in Me". And the connection shows that it was in respect of John imprisoned, and John's being left alone by the Lord for a time and not spoken to. Grace to hold on, even to the end. This is what the Lord has promised. Grace to contend with sin, not give way to it. When you yield to sin you bring trouble, you bring guilt, you bring stumbling to yourself. When you yield to sin, then you yield to your greatest foe, and you offend your greatest friend, the Lord Jesus, and He wont let it pass unnoticed. Grace to resist the world, the flesh, and the devil. The grace of God in these things shines. It is His favour throughout manifested in different ways. It is His goodness drawn out, as it is in the Psalm: "O continue Thy lovingkindness" - or, as you read in the margin "continue to draw out Thy lovingkindness" - to those that know Thy Name", and it is drawn out whenever grace comes, whenever a gracious influence is felt on your spirit, whenever you feel an attraction to the Lord, whenever you have an influence to call upon the Name of the Lord, coming upon your spirit; all this is grace. When the Scriptures are made sweet, when the promises are applied, when rebukes are administered, when precepts are set before you, and a longing rises in your heart to walk in those precepts; this is grace. When you get communion with God for a few minutes, when some sweet smile from Him falls on your heart, when you feel the sweetest attraction to the Lord Jesus, and in your heart can say - "I love Thy charming Name" - that is grace. And let me say this, here. When you have a hatred of sin that is universal, universal in respect of yourself, and you can sincerely look to the Lord and appeal to Him that He knows - as you, yourselves, believe He knows - you would be free from sin, and not its servant; you believe that "His servant you are to whom you obey", and now your heart can say, Now Lord, I would obey Thee, and not obey any sin; that master sin of yours that will never weary in its solicitations; to

resist that and hate it; this is grace. To be daily applying to the fountain for cleansing; this is grace. O, how sweet grace is, and the Apostle Paul wishes that these Ephesians might have grace, and he tells them that all that God has done for them in Eternity in giving them spiritual blessings in Christ; in predestinating them to the adoption of children; in choosing them to be holy and without blame before Him in love; all these things are just the effect of His grace, and are for the praise of His grace, and more. There is a beautiful graduation here - "To the praise of the glory of His grace".

Having said a word about grace, though a very feeble word, let us look at the glory of it. "The glory of His grace". And does it not lie much in this, that it is eternal, that it is free. Free grace, sovereign grace. How free it is. Nothing outside God ever influenced Him to give grace to any sinner. If anything outside God could have influenced Him then His grace would not have been free. We claim freedom; there is no man who is free in the truest, and highest, and deepest sense of that word. We, in our supposed freedom, are all the creatures of certain influences, and circumstances. We elect not to do a thing because circumstances, or our reasoning about the thing, may suggest to us, and perhaps prove to us, that it would be disastrous; so we elect not to do it. Or we choose to do a thing because it seems as if it would, if we did it, it would be to our advantage. Some reason influences us, some apparent good, or some apparent evil, will attract, or repel. We are not free. We talk about being free agents, Why, we are all servants to sin naturally, and in respect of our natural movements we are not free, as I have just said. But here our great, our gracious, and loving God is eternally free; and this is the glory of it. No price, no attraction. What was there in us to give the Creator delight? What could there be in a sinner to attract a holy God? And is it not glorious also in this, that it did devise a way of escape from the wrath to come, a way of quickening a dead sinner, of cleansing a polluted sinner, of justifying an unjust person, and of making a man in himself vile, meet - think of it, meet - to stand before purity. Meet to be the guest of God. Is not the glory of it in this too, that it sustains the great work that God fixed upon in Eternity, giving His beloved Son all that is needed for the Church; giving Him life for

the dead, righteousness for the ungodly, and grace for the polluted, and strength for the weak, and light, and eyes needed to the blind, and bread to the hungry, and water to the thirsty, so that the whole scheme of redemption is just in this gracious word "grace", and the glory of it therefore must be very great; beyond our comprehension, though we may, through grace, apprehend it, from time to time. The glory of grace is in this, that it brings us down into the dust of self-abasement, and though a man would be, by nature, ever ready to look upon something he has done, and in the spirit of Nebuchadnezzar say, This is the great thing that I have done, grace brings him to say, I am a debtor, a debtor to sovereign grace, a debtor to electing love, a debtor to the Suretyship of the Lord Jesus, a debtor to the fountain which He opened for sin and uncleanness, a debtor to the robe that He wrought out with infinite pain and skill to clothe the naked, and to justify the unjust, the ungodly. O, it is wonderful that grace should thus overcome all the prejudice, and the pride, and the enmity, and the bitterness, and the ignorance, and the death of the Lord's poor people, and some here know it. Blessed be God, we know it. And there is a glory in this too, that this grace raises sinners out of the dust and lifts them off the dunghill, and sets them with princes, even the princes of His people, and makes them inherit the throne of glory. You are not always in the dust, are you? You are not always embracing the dunghill, are you? Though you may often feel very far off, and very dead, it is not always so is it? There must be changes, changes for the better, as well as for the worst, in the Lord's people. Yes, sometimes it is as if He said to a child of His, Now I have built My house, I have hewn My seven pillars, I have killed My beasts, I have mingled My wine, Come, sit at table with Me. The effect is communion with Him. Sometimes He says to those who are depressed by a sense of their sinfulness, and overcome sometimes by their evil nature, Be clean, and they are clean, and they know it. And sometimes He comes to the vine and sees some branches that are too straggly and He does not cut them off, because there are fruit buds on them. What does He do? He nails them up to the wall, He prunes, He chastens, He trains, He nurtures. And this is the glory of His grace, it comes to a sinner who by nature would be every day ruining himself, and grace says, No. You have destroyed yourself, but in Me is your help. Grace, beautiful grace, does this. It comes to a barren person, one who has been foolish, and wandered far away, and it says

to him - I have heard him, I have observed him: "I am like a green fir tree, from Me is thy fruit found". And now says the happy sinner, It is no use to fumble in myself to find some goodness. My faith will go out and draw out from the God of truth, and the God of love. I will draw all from Him. It is the glory of grace in his heart, and he does perceive it in a measure, and while sometimes a person may say, I wish I were in a different position, I think I could honour God more if I had not such and such things to contend with, grace comes and puts that person into the mould of divine truth as Paul expresses it in the Romans - "God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine whereto ye were delivered" (Romans 6 v 17; marginal reading). And the sinner says: "Thy will be done" He says that the best thing for me is the way God is leading me. The best course for me in all things is prayer. Let me say again to you what I have often said, The best course - and you will perceive it when the Lord opens your eyes - the best course is for you on your knees all the day long. That is, to pray without ceasing. That is the best course. You will get on best in trouble when you can pray. And things are straight to your mind, not when you can straighten them out by your own hand, but when they are straight to your will by the grace of God. This is all glory. And then at times you look up, and look forward and anticipate that day and that act in which, and when, God shall bring forth the headstone, crying, Grace, grace unto it.

Now the praise of this. You sing to grace, "Sovereign grace o'er sin abounding". But, says the Apostle, there is the praise of this glory. Here is a great height when you can praise the glorious majesty of the kingdom. There is not only a kingdom, but there is majesty in the kingdom, and there is glorious majesty. So here there is grace to save the fallen, grace to comfort the troubled, grace to strengthen the weak, grace to guide the blind, grace to bring to an honourable finish. There is glory in this, and the glory is to be praised. O, to bless the Lord for what He has discovered to you, and what He has imparted to you by His good Spirit. Every act of faith, every motion of love, every sweet feeling of submission to God, every minute of holy enjoyment in God, must be to the praise of His glorious grace.

Every act of gospel obedience also shall be to the praise of the glory of His grace. We read in the Acts of the Apostles , as the effect of that wondrous sermon preached by the Apostle Peter on the Day of Pentecost, that the people were pricked, or pierced, or stabbed in their heart, and they said, What shall we do? And the Apostle Peter preached, as you know, in that sermon, the greatness of God in sending His Son, and, chiefly on that day, the goodness of God in giving the Holy Ghost. That was the burden of that sermon. The coming of Christ, and the death of Christ, he preached, but the burden of it was, having done all this, and being raised by the glory and power of the Father, that was shed forth, the promised Spirit was shed forth. Then the people were pricked and pierced, or stabbed, to their heart, and cried, What shall we do? And you know the direction of the Apostle Peter - "Repent, and be baptised every one of you in the Name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins....." (Acts 2 v 38). And what was said? "Then they that gladly received His word were baptised" and there were added three thousand souls that day to the church. *(That which follows in () may be omitted if desired)* (Up to that moment the number of the names was about 120. Then at once God increased that church by three thousand. So the people had grace to obey their Lord and Master and they arose and were baptised. And one can only say and believe that it was the effect of the efficacious grace whose glory was upon them, and to the praise of which they sang, as it were, by their obedience. It was upon them and they were baptised. Now what are we to say? May I say this, in the first place, we have not put the ordinance of Believers' Baptism in the Bible. It is here, we have not inserted it. It is the Lord's own commission to, first of all, His apostles, and then to all He shall call to be His ministers. And secondly, one would say this, when a person is born again and convinced of sin, and has a manifestation of the Lord Jesus, whatever he may feel, this is a truth, it is incumbent on him, as a child of God, to be obedient. Many have gone to heaven who were not obedient to this, but that does not in the least degree whatever remove the incumbent duty. I would say, why should we be afraid of it? His wisdom in allowing many of His people to walk to heaven without this ordinance, has no effect upon that fact in my judgement. Grace is sufficient for us, and I think that if some who fear Him had a sight of the Trinity in the ordinance, a sight that I once was favoured with, you would be very ready to say, Let me be baptised.

You would be ready to say, "Here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptised?" It is a very beautiful ordinance, but not for reason, not for pride, not for nature. You bring pride, and reasoning to it, you bring nature into it, and you spoil it. Bring fashion into it, bring custom, and you spoil it. But if you see it as given and laid down by the Lord Jesus Christ, who has not changed His mind about it, the canon of Scripture being complete, we ought to see its right, to see He has not changed His mind about it. When He said, Go and teach all nations, disciple them, and baptise them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, there was nothing temporary about it, except this, that it would end with time; not before. While there is a living soul, a living church on earth, this will be incumbent. Now what grace it is to be enabled to leave the world, and leave custom, and leave prejudice that is very natural, especially strong in some, and to leave reason, and everything else behind, and say, Now the Lord has blessed my soul, and I see in His holy word the ordinance of Believers' Baptism, and I do wish to follow Him in humble obedience, hinder me not. Then it is good, and we do believe, we who are a church here, that it has pleased God to influence our dear friend and sister in this way. It was a privilege to some of us to hear her speak last week of His goodness, and His teaching and His love to her soul, and so it is a great pleasure to see one of Zion's children walking in humble, grateful obedience to her Lord and Saviour, to express in this obedience the grace that Christ has given and the love that He has caused her to feel. He has given grace, and now the praise of it, and the glory of it is exhibited in this.)

"To the praise of the glory of His grace wherein He hath made us, accepted in the Beloved," agreeable to God. We all understand naturally something of what it is to have a matter, a person, or a thing agreeable to us so that we, so to speak, can take it to our bosoms, our hearts, and embrace it. Now transfer this to spiritual things, and bring a poor sinner who says he is corrupt, and ruined by the fall, and in his own painful experience. He comes in that condition of mind to the Lord. He condemns himself. He says, I am unprofitable, and I am worse than unprofitable, I am a vile creature and the Lord Jesus smiles on him, and, as it were, takes him up and presents him to His Father, and in Christ the Father sees this poor sinner without blame, and kisses him, and calls him His son, and the

sinner is acceptable, agreeable; nothing repulsive, nothing repellent in him to the eye of infinite holiness, and justice. You say, That is a great deal too high for you. My question to you would be this, Is it according to the Scripture? If it is, what then? God can bring it to you. You say, you cannot reach it. He can give it into your hand, the hand of your faith. Nay, He can put it into your heart. But I have a thousand fears, one says. Do not drive them away, or try to drive them away yourself, but rather do this - Ask the Lord to bring His goodness, and mercy, and love into your soul by the blood of the everlasting Covenant, and when He does that then you will have some experience of being accepted by the Lord, and if He accepts you, if you are agreeable, pleasing to Him, then your offering will be; the offering of Judah shall be pleasant unto the Lord. In whom? In His Son. The offering of a Gentile sinner is acceptable to God as that offering is made in Jesus Christ.

(That which follows in () may be omitted if desired)

(So here we are, a few people, many of us as we hope fearing God, now to obey Him in this holy ordinance of Believers' Baptism, and may He help us to honour Him in it, to praise Him in it, to trust Him in it, to love Him in it, and to feel that, though unworthy of it, He permits us, He graciously enables us, to follow Him.)

AMEN.