

# PERCEPTION

A Quarterly Magazine for Young People



"The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but  
the word of our God shall stand for ever."  
Isaiah 40. 8.

**SPRING 2015**

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**Cover picture:** *Bluebell time, Knott Wood, Harpenden, Herts.*

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## EDITORIAL

*“Among all this people there were seven hundred chosen men lefthanded; every one could sling stones at an hair breadth, and not miss” Judges 20. 16.*

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We never cease to be amazed at the small details recorded in the Word of God. Here were these seven hundred men - and they were *left-handed*.

We may be tempted to ask, Is that really important? Surely there were plenty of good slingers who were right-handed! But these were obviously men to whom God had given a special skill. They could “sling stones at an hair breadth, and not miss.” Several ancient writers tell us that the skill was taught from an early age. A mother would set her son’s breakfast on a post at a distance, until the stone struck it off. There must have been many hungry boys!

However, the story in Judges is a sad one. It appears that the tribe of Benjamin were hiding some of their own men who had committed a great sin. These wicked men had surrounded the house of a man who, with his wife, had sought a night’s lodging in Gibeah of Benjamin. The Benjamites had forced his wife and cruelly abused her all night, so much so that she died. The men of Benjamin were guilty of both adultery and murder.

The rest of the children of Israel sent a plea to the Benjamites to deliver up these men to justice. They refused. In fact, they gathered themselves together to go out to battle against the children of Israel. By harbouring these wicked men they were attempting to prevent the course of justice.

Now these seven hundred left-handed slingers were of the tribe of Benjamin. Why so many were found in this tribe we do not know. (How strange, when Benjamin means ‘A son of my right hand!’) But though they had been given this special skill, they used it to fight against their brethren. What a help they could have been to the children of

Israel, but instead they used their talents to fight against them.

There are many lessons in this twentieth chapter of Judges. Twice the children of Israel, with vastly superior numbers, went to battle against the Benjamites. However, the Benjamites won, and the children of Israel lost many thousands of men. The children of Israel took it for granted they would win. After all, were they not fighting a just cause? Surely God would give them the victory!

It was not until they went to the house of God, and humbled themselves in true sorrow and repentance for their sin that God gave them the victory. The city of Gibeah was destroyed with fire.

Perhaps we could spend a few moments thinking about left-handedness. Some time ago, an international group of scientists, led by a team from the Wellcome Trust Centre for Human Genetics at the University of Oxford, discovered a gene called LRRTM1 that increases the 'chance' of being left-handed. Although little is known about LRRTM1, the Oxford team suspected that it modifies the development of asymmetry in the human brain. Asymmetry is an important feature of the human brain, with the left side usually controlling speech and language, and the right side controlling emotion. In left-handed people this pattern is often reversed. Scientists now recognise the importance of understanding why people use one hand or the other to write, eat or throw a ball.

About 10% of people are left-handed, according to expert estimates, whilst others are mixed-handed, changing hands according to the task carried out. What causes people not to favour their right hand is only partly due to genetics - even identical twins, who have 100% of the same genes, do not always have the same handedness.

My own father-in-law (Mr. Oliver Pearce - some of you will remember him) was left-handed, but as a child was, rather cruelly, forced to write with his right hand. This left him with some of the most unusual writing we have ever seen. We used to say his letter 'O' was rather like an old fashioned threepenny-bit. In those days, left-handedness was seen as an affliction to be cured. True, there must be many difficulties to overcome - there is seldom a pair of left-handed scissors lying around, and we understand tin-openers are another problem.

We do not know why God, in creating man, has caused some to be



left-handed. However, we can be sure that there was some wise purpose in it. Our own theory, certainly just a personal view, is that if all of mankind were right-handed the left hand might become exceedingly weak. There may be other wise reasons why this is so, known only to our Creator. We do remember hearing that in a perfect string quartet the viola player should be left-handed! Another left-handed person told us recently that he felt he was better able to use the touchpad on a laptop than a right-handed person. It is not just dexterity, but a question also of strength. To test this, we suggest you try to mash potatoes with the opposite hand - you will soon find how much weaker that hand is.

MENSA, the organisation for exceptionally intelligent people, says that 20% of its members are left-handed - double the number you would expect. With the exception of George Bush the last five presidents of the US have all been left-handed!

Leaving all this aside, the point laid on our mind is this: if God has given us a skill, a particular talent, how we should strive to use it in a way that honours God. In the last edition of *Perception*, we mentioned the French musician Goudimel who set to music the French Psalms. What a blessing his gift was to the church of God in France. But what sin and evil we see in the music industry at large, even though many are so gifted in music.

Many people may feel they have no particular skills; in fact, they may feel to be very insignificant, or even hopeless, compared to others. But it may be that their skills are of a different nature. Are they to be the person to say a kind word? or perhaps to give a welcoming smile? My own Pastor often says, The world may not understand the doctrine of election, but it understands a kind word. It may be that you are the one who quietly works behind the scenes, a back-room boy (or girl) as we call them. These people are so useful, not there in the public eye, but willing to turn their hand to whatever needs doing.

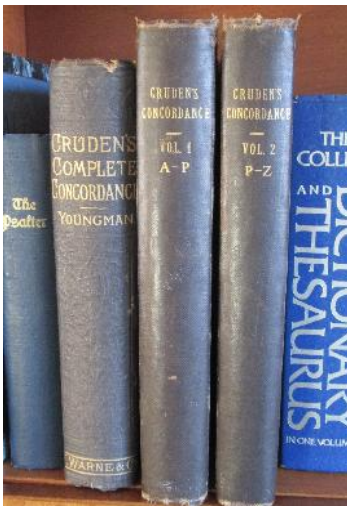
In our nature there is that awful heart pride, with its desire to be seen, its desire to be recognised. This is something the Lord tells us He hates (see Proverbs 8. 13). How the Lord Jesus warned against it, speaking of those who “love to pray . . . that they may be seen of men” (Matthew 6. 6).

The Apostle Paul recognised that in the church there were those of whom others had but little opinion. They were ‘nobodies’ as we say.

Paul calls them those “who are least esteemed in the church” (1 Cor. 6. 4). These people were thought by others to have no particular gifts. But Paul says that when difficulties arose, when it was necessary to judge the actions of others, *these* were the people to be asked to judge the matter. In them was found wisdom from an unexpected quarter.

Again, the Apostle Paul, writing to the Corinthians, refers to some who were “helps.” These certainly had no great gifts. But of what value they were. HELPS. Reading through church histories we have come across some who had great gifts but instead of being a help they proved to be nothing but a hindrance to the cause of God. How much better to be a humble “help” than a hindrance!

I expect many of you somewhere on your bookshelves will have a copy of *Cruden's Concordance*. Alexander Cruden took on the task



single-handedly of compiling a thorough concordance of the Authorised Version of the Bible. Cruden worked alone in his lodgings. He wrote out the whole thing by hand. The AV has 777,746 words, all of which needed to be put in their proper place. He wrote explanatory remarks on many of the words. Can we imagine the work involved in a project of this magnitude? But if I were to tell you this man was really mentally afflicted you may have some difficulty in believing it. Four times in his life he was institutionalised for madness. He did the most bizarre and incomprehensible things. He proposed to

women he had not even met. He petitioned the King to appoint him ‘Corrector of the People’ - an office unknown to the British government. For an hour he admonished brawling soldiers not to swear, hitting them each periodically on the head with a shovel!

Could God use such a man as this? It would probably be true to say that no-one in his right mind would ever have contemplated such an undertaking as preparing a concordance. But in spite of his madness, Cruden had talents that could be made use of, and God helped him to complete his mammoth task. What a blessing and how useful has his

Concordance been, and still is, to all Bible readers. The great preacher Spurgeon once wrote: “This half-crazy Alexander Cruden did more for the Church than all the Doctors of Divinity and Doctors of Law who ever existed.”



ALEXANDER CRUDEN, M.A.

Well, there is one thing all of us can do. We can pray about it. “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?” is a very good prayer indeed. We need the Lord to direct us into paths of usefulness, in what ever sphere He may be pleased to direct.

Some years ago, on our trips to the local shopping mall, there was a department store (now closed) with a restaurant where we often called in for a snack. I shall never the forget the young man who cleared the tables. He had an infirmity of some kind that made all his movements awkward, and he obviously had what today we would call ‘learning difficulties.’ But were ever tables cleaned like his! This young man put all his limited skills into doing his small part in running the restaurant to the very best of his ability.

He reminded me of the days of Nehemiah when the broken-down walls of Jerusalem were being rebuilt. We are given the names of many of the men who were responsible for repairing sections of the wall. No doubt they each did a good job according to their ability, but there was one man singled out by the Holy Spirit for special mention: “Baruch the son of Zabbai *earnestly* repaired the other piece” (Nehemiah 3.20). What a lot this little adverb *earnestly* tells us about the man. How he put his heart and soul into this important work! It is a similar word to *heartily*: “And whatsoever ye do, do it *heartily*, as to the Lord, and not unto men” Colossians 3. 23.



*The walls of Jerusalem*

May we be given grace to do the same, both in the things of God, and in our secular callings - regardless of whether our talents (as given to us by God) are small or great.

With greetings and best wishes to you all.

The Editor

**DOUGLAS EDWARD BRADFORD**  
(CONTINUED FROM WINTER 2014 PAGE 15)

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**Case laid before Ministry of Pensions**

I laid my case before the Ministry of Pensions under “War Disabled Officers” who seemed to give me some hope of a little help. I was requested to obtain an Eye Specialist’s certificate, also evidence from the Admiral in charge of submarines as to my service, which I promised to do.

I can never forget the feeling of calm repose given at this time and could leave the issue of all this in the hands of the dear Redeemer and I believe a willingness was given to leave my unknown, and, certainly at this time, dark, future in the hands of my Covenant God.

I duly obtained the required certificates which were as follows:

**Admiralty S.W.**

Lieutenant D. E. Bradford, R.N.R. served for four years in submarines during the time I was in charge of the Submarine Service.

In March, 1919 he was invalided out of the Service.

He was continually in oversea submarines on the enemy coast under the most trying conditions of service whilst the casualties were very heavy.

There can be little doubt that, in common with so many others, his health and eyesight have been permanently affected as a direct result of the continual strain which service in these vessels entailed.

Lieut. Bradford was perfectly fit when he joined and did excellent service. I have no hesitation in recommending his case as one deserving of very special consideration.

28 December, 1921

S. S. Hall

*Rear Admiral*



**Admiralty S.W.**

Lieut. D.E. Bradford, R. N. R. served under my orders on active service during the war.

During the time he was with me, he showed himself to be an able, zealous and efficient officer.

The work carried out by the submarines in the Harwich flotilla was more strenuous and dangerous than that of any other flotilla and the losses were much greater. It consequently imposed a very heavy strain on all those who continued serving in this flotilla as did Lieut. Bradford.

I understand he was invalided out of the service and has his eyesight permanently affected. There is no doubt that the excessive strain he underwent for so long was the primary cause and I strongly feel that his case is deserving of very sympathetic consideration.

14 December, 1921      A.K. Waistell Rear Admiral

31 Weymouth Street  
Portland Place, W.1.

This is to certify that Lieut. D. E. Bradford, who formerly had perfect sight, is becoming myopic and astigmatic.

As this has supervened upon his periscopic work whilst in a submarine, it is, in my opinion, possible and probable that his present eye disability has been largely due, if not solely caused, by the strain upon his eyesight and constitution whilst on active service.

12 July 1921  
Stroud Hosford, F.R.C.S. Hon. Surgeon  
Royal Eye Hospital

I duly sent these three certificates to the Ministry of Pensions (disabled Ex-Service Officers), who eventually awarded me with a temporary pension of £85 per annum.

### Seeking employment

Being married, and with my first child under three years, this amount would not take us very far, and I should have to find work. Things were very bad in the nation with much unemployment and post-war unrest. I was given a willing spirit to do anything or go anywhere if only I could find honest work.

I searched the Press every day to this end and one morning I saw there was an advertisement for an Ex-Service Officer to travel. An address in London was given, to which I proceeded. It was a newly-started firm in Chancery Lane to travel on a commission basis in ladies' blouses. At first my whole soul revolted against this, and all my pride (which I thought grace had subdued) rose up. However I soon saw this was wrong. I told the manager I had no experience but he said he was willing to give me a trial.

I started out the next day with a large case stuffed full with these garments. Very little success did I have, and after walking round London all day, weary and depressed was my condition. After about a month I was out of pocket and realised it was useless to continue and so gave in my resignation.

Soon after this I heard of an engineering firm in London who wanted Ex-Service men to operate acetylene plants to harden the tramway lines. On application I found this meant night work; however, I agreed to give it a trial. Work started at midnight and lasted until 5 a.m., during which hours the trams were off the road. I soon found it impossible to carry on as I could not sleep by day, so after about two months I gave it up.

I tried to cast my burden upon the Lord and sustaining grace was given. I lived very near the Lord in those days and read much of Doctor Gill and Owen and other Puritan writers. The immortal coal heaver (William Huntington) was often my companion, and one of his writings was made a word of caution respecting the ministry. His subject was the running of Ahimaaz and Cushie to inform King David of the death of Absalom. Cushie ran with tidings. And Joab said to Cushie, "Go tell the king what thou hast seen."



*William Huntington*

But Ahimaaz said to Joab, "Let me, I pray thee, also run after Cushite." And Joab said "Wherefore wilt thou run, my son, seeing that thou hast no tidings ready?" I said, "Lord, don't let me run before I am sent," and that request was heard.

In October, 1921 I obtained employment with the *Daily News* as a Supervisor of a party of canvassers. The work consisted in going round from door to door in outer London to obtain readers for this newspaper, and those who registered were covered by a very comprehensive insurance scheme. This work lasted about six months. I was now once more thrown upon the kind providence of God. My pension was now reduced to £1 per week, and with a wife and child to keep a heavy cloud hung over me. I seemed to obtain a little help from dear Mr. Cowper's hymn:

"Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;  
The clouds ye so much dread  
Are big with mercy, and shall break  
In blessings on your head."

Also at this time I was reading Mr. Huntington's *Bank of Faith* which seemed to be an encouragement to watch the Lord's hand to open a door for me. A very dear friend at the chapel where I attended seemed to take a great interest in my case and said I reminded him of Joseph, and felt God was with me and would in due time appear on my behalf. Years after his words proved to be true and he was the very instrument that was to be used.



### **Employment offered by one of the Deacons**

About May 1922, after a week-night service at chapel, one of the Deacons spoke to me. He was a Master Builder and he said he had heard that I was seeking employment and that he could give me work but felt I deserved something better than he could offer me, and had hesitated in approaching me. I remarked it was very kind of him to think of me, but feared I had no qualifications in his line of business, to which he replied, "Can you drive?" I answered, "Yes", at the same time wondering what was in his mind. "Well," he said, "I have bought another lorry. Will you drive it? It will be hard work and I feel you are too much of a gentleman for such work, and thus my hesitation in asking you."

I thought of dear William Huntington, humping coal from barges on to the Thames-side Wharf and dear Charles James in the Shropshire coal mines, both raised up to preach the everlasting Gospel of the grace of God. He went on talking for a little while but I hardly knew what he said as inwardly I was trying to ask the Lord for a word of direction and decision, and most wonderfully the words came:

“I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness” (Isaiah 41. 10). Then I heard my friend’s voice saying, “Don’t decide now, just think it over,” to which I answered, “I can decide now. I accept and believe strength will be given.” He looked surprised but said, “I believe it will be so,” and for four long years I proved it was so.

### **A remarkable experience**

About a month after starting the aforesaid work, I had a remarkable experience. I woke in the early hours of the morning with these words: “A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse” (Song 4. 12). I did not seem to take much notice of this and fell asleep again, but ere much time had elapsed I was again awakened with the same words but this time much more powerfully and arresting. I now lay awake for some considerable time thinking over this and wondering if it was the voice of God to me. As far as I could remember I had never read these words but felt they were the voice of Christ to His spouse, His church, but the question was, Were they for me? In thus musing again sleep overtook me, but wonder of wonders when I again woke up the same words, “A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse,” and I had no doubt it was the voice of my Beloved to unworthy me. I was given wisdom to keep this experience to myself and deal with God only.

These words were almost like a dream to me as they came in the night watches and like Joseph’s, they were to be tried, as we read in relation to his remarkable dream (which was the word of God to him): “Until the time that his word came: the word of the Lord tried him” Psalm 105. 19. It was many years (not less than twenty) that Joseph had to wait for the fulfilment of this word, like Jacob before him also. I do not presume to put my little experience on a par with these gracious characters, nevertheless I had to wait for over twenty years for the unfolding of the word given, as I will try to show later on.



What a strength this promise was to me at this time in my employment. I had to take long journeys with heavy loads of building materials. No comforts like drivers have today! The driving cab open except for a top covering, no heaters, no self-starters, no pneumatic tyres, no batteries and consequently just oil lights. Strange as it may seem I was not unhappy, as I was alone with God.

### **The Word confirmed**

But to return. I now had to plead with God that He would confirm this wonderful word. As I have already mentioned, I had to take long journeys which meant it was not often I could get to the evening services at chapel. It was about four weeks after the gracious Spirit had applied these words to my soul that during the day they seemed remarkably renewed and opened up. Doctor Watts' words in his hymn dealing with the Church as the "garden" of Christ (Gadsby's Hymns 363) were very sweet especially verse 2:

"Like trees of myrrh and spice we stand,  
Planted by God the Father's hand;  
And all His springs in Zion flow  
To make the young plantation grow."

What a sweet hope there seemed to be that such a one as myself was a plant of my Heavenly Father's planting. During this day I seemed to have such a desire to get to the service in the evening, and to this end I asked the Lord to help me through my work. I did not get home very early and knew if I was to be at the chapel in time, I should have to go without changing my clothes, which I did. The minister was in prayer so I did not go in but stood at the door and listened.

The first words I heard him say in his supplication were, "May we be as a garden inclosed." To write what the effect these words were to me is impossible! I can only say my soul stood still in holy awe and expectation. After the prayer I crept into the back scat. The hymn being sung, the minister said, "I desire as helped to speak from the first clause in the twelfth verse of the fourth chapter of the Song of Solomon: 'A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse'." This almost overcame me as I realised that this was an answer to my request that the Lord would confirm this word to my soul. The text was very nicely opened up, it being pointed out this was a special love message from Christ the Bridegroom to His Bride (spouse) and it was the marriage bond that

neither time nor eternity could separate. How this also confirmed the word given to me when I came before the church, that *nothing* (as laid out in Romans 8. 38, 39) “shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

I came out of the service during the last hymn feeling too full to speak to anyone. I now asked the Lord if there was anything else that might be interpreted from this wonderful message to my soul. Had it any application to my exercise in regard to the ministry which was much in my mind? Would He give me some indication that my thoughts in this solemn matter were from Him, or for ever dismiss them from my mind?

### **Conveys the experience to his Pastor**

I thought it would be a kindness and an encouragement to my Pastor to tell him of this experience, as evidently the Lord had used him as an instrument to confirm the word to me. Well, one evening I summed up courage to call upon him. The Lord took away all fear of man and I was enabled, as everything was fresh in my mind and the sweetness of the visit was still with me, to speak freely. My Pastor seemed very impressed and thought it a very remarkable and clear confirmation. After a little more conversation, he suddenly looked at me and said, “I believe the Lord is going to enclose you for Himself.” Not being clear as to what was in his mind I asked what he meant and he said, “For the ministry” and added, “but keep that to yourself, and watch the Lord’s hand in the matter. It may be a long time unfolding” (indeed it was 23 years) “and you will have much to learn to qualify you for such a solemn office.” No further remarks were made, he asked no questions as to my thoughts on the matter, and I said nothing, and kept my secret to myself.

### **Felt unfit for the ministry**

I can never forget my journey home that night and the cogitations of my mind. I tried to tell the Lord what a poor, weak, nervous creature I was - so unfit to speak in public. Also my unfitness for so sacred an office. Nevertheless I knew the Lord called sinners to preach to sinners. I resolved more than ever now that, as helped, I would never give the slightest clue to my “thoughts of heart.” I felt it would be a mistrust of God, and like Samson, in a discovering of our secrets to others, instead of waiting for the Lord to lay it on the minds of His people. I wanted

more evidence of a more distinct call of God.

Soon after this experience the words of the inspired apostle Peter seemed to be much with me: "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you." I concluded from this that what the Lord had done for me was to be tried, but how or in what way I was perfectly ignorant. I tried to ask that whatever it was I might be given grace to "resist steadfast in the faith."

### **Journey to Maidstone**

I have already mentioned that I had to take long journeys in my lorry. One of these was to Preston Hall, Maidstone, where my master was building a chapel and, as he did quite a lot of this class of work, I did not give much heed to this particular building. I went down to this place quite often with loads of material and on one occasion had to collect from a firm in London some goods which were to be very carefully handled. Amongst these were silver candlesticks, candles, wine cups, chalices and ornaments of the virgin Mary. As I drove away it crossed my mind - what had images of the Virgin Mary to do with a chapel? Perhaps there was a mistake and I had been given the wrong consignment, so I pulled up and consulted the invoice, which to my great amazement said for the "R.C. chapel, Maidstone."

I shall never forget this journey down to Maidstone and the solemn thought that passed through my mind. God had shown me most clearly by the Scriptures that popery was the great "Anti-Christ" and the pope was the "man of sin ... 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" (II Thess. 2. 4.).

As a professing Christian I knew the Word of God exhorted me to have nothing to do with that blasphemous "harlot church" and the words came very solemnly into my mind - "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you" (II Cor. 6. 17). This convinced me that I must have nothing more to do with this contract and must tell my master, even though it might mean the end of my employment. But my Heavenly Master spoke to me with these words - "But he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God" (Luke 12. 9).

**The outcome**

I thought about my employer, how solemn was the position. We were both members of a Strict Baptist Chapel in London, and he held the solemn office of a Deacon. He had certainly been kind to me and I respected him, but my conscience told me I must not let this stand in the way of being faithful.

It was with some trepidation when next morning I asked to see my master, but mercifully while waiting all fear of man was taken away. He received me kindly and asked after my family and then said, "What can I do for you?" I told him very briefly the exercise of my mind and added that I could no longer take any material to the Roman Catholic Chapel that he was building, and as I spoke his face went ashen grey. There was a pause after which he said: "Oh, the job is not mine, my manager quoted for it." I said, "It's in your name and I have seen you on the site" to which he made no reply. Another pause and then, "What do you want me to do?" to which I said, "My conscience will no longer permit me to carry goods to this temple of Satan."

After this I quite expected to be given a week's notice, but his reply to this was, "I respect your honesty and would not have you do anything against the dictates of your conscience. I will give instructions that you are no longer to be sent to this job. Let it be the end of the matter." I thanked him but added, "I fear this will not be the end," and it was not. Through another source the whole matter came to light and before the Church. A Church Meeting was called but my master did not appear before them, and the Church withdrew from him.

Painful indeed was this experience to me being so young in the way and equally so to have to record it.

*TO BE CONTINUED*

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**MATTHEW HENRY**

The great preacher and Bible commentator was not in favour of long sermons. He once said: "If it be good, it need not be long. If it be bad, it *must* not be long." He had the gift of expressing much in a few words.

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## THE WONDERS OF CREATION: WATER

Frank Hayden

There are many things in our world that the Lord has created for our benefit, and among these are the following:

- 1 The perfect distance of our sun from the earth so that we have warmth without being baked.
- 2 The gravitational effect of the moon in causing tides which prevent the vast oceans becoming stagnant.
- 3 The salt content of the oceans that provides a cleansing affect.
- 4 The canopy of the ozone layer in the stratosphere some 20 to 30 kilometres above the earth. This layer shields us from 97 to 99% of the ultraviolet light from the sun that, if it were allowed to reach the earth's surface, would severely damage all life.



The evolutionists would tell us that all these factors came about by pure chance. But there is one thing that I would set before you which is virtually impossible to judge as being by chance because it is practically unique. I refer to the fact that the most abundant liquid on the earth, i.e. water, is the same as other substances in that it becomes more dense as it comes colder - BUT, only down to four degrees Celsius. Mercury, for example, expands as the temperature rises, thus causing the thermometer to read a higher temperature, and contracts when the temperature falls. This is the case for most liquids throughout the liquid state.

At four degrees Celsius water becomes *less* dense. As it cools below this temperature, ice floats on water, as is exhibited by floating icebergs. Now what are the consequences of this phenomenon? If water continued to increase in density as it froze, the ice would sink, and in cold weather all the lakes and the seas would gradually freeze from the bottom up and continue to do so, killing all aquatic life. As it is, all ice is formed on the surface of the water because it is *less* dense than the water underneath and it actually provides an insulating jacket. Considering that some 70% of the world is covered with water, and contains billions of living creatures, one can only stand amazed that the Lord brought about this wonderful design feature in nature to preserve life. Only God could have made this happen because there is no evolutionary cause involved.

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## THE FIVE POINTS OF CALVINISM

### *The Fourth Point - Irresistible Grace*

CALVINISM AND ARMINIANISM	
	
<b>John Calvin 1509-1564</b>	<b>Jacobus Arminius 1560-1609</b>
<b>The Fourth of the Five Points of Calvinism</b>	<b>The Fourth of the Five Points of Arminianism</b>
Irresistible Grace <i>When God calls the elect, they cannot resist the call</i>	Resistible Grace <i>God's call can be resisted and salvation rejected</i>

In many ways the doctrine of irresistible grace is the doctrine most difficult to ‘defend’, if ‘defend’ is the right word at all. (God’s Word never needs defending.) There are many texts quoted by the Arminians that appear to support the view that God’s call can be resisted and rejected. Here are a few examples:

- “I have called, and ye refused” (Prov. 1. 24).
- “Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost” (Acts 7. 51).
- “How often would I have gathered thy children together... and ye would not” (Mat. 23. 37).
- “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men” (Titus 2. 11).

From this, says the Arminian, we can see that God offers salvation to all men, and man must then make his own choice. He must either receive or reject Christ. After all, does not John 1. 12 say, "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God." Yes, God offers salvation to all men.

But how wrongly Arminianism puts salvation in the power of *man*.

"Have you any room for Jesus -  
He who bore your load of sin?  
As He knocks and asks admission,  
Sinner, will you let Him in?"

That man's free will can limit the Spirit in the application of Christ's saving work makes man more powerful than almighty God. Until the sinner responds, the Spirit cannot give life. The Lord Jesus said to the Sadducees: "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures." The Arminian does not see that in the Scriptures the term 'call,' or 'calling,' or 'called,' is used in two senses. One denotes an external, the other an internal, call. In Matthew 20. 16 we read, "For many be called, but few chosen." This is an external call. In Romans 8. 30 we read, "Whom He did predestinate, them He also called." This is an internal call.

Scripture makes it plain that it is *God* who starts the work. The Lord Jesus said, "Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you" (John 15. 16). The Apostle James said, "Of His own will begat He us with the Word of truth." This work of regeneration is irreversible. It can never be lost, as it is "hid with Christ in God" (Col. 3. 3). God Himself is the preserver of it. He is the author and finisher of it (see Heb. 12. 2).

"No, it was not the will of man  
My soul's new heavenly birth began;  
Nor will nor power of flesh and blood  
That turned my heart from sin to God."

When God calls, it is not a proposition to be received or rejected, but rather:

"The appointed time rolls on apace,  
Not to *propose*, but *call* by grace:  
To change the heart, renew the will,  
And turn the feet to Zion's hill."



*Site of Calvin's House in Geneva showing proximity to St. Pierre's Cathedral where Calvin preached daily.*

The doctrinal system of Calvinism stands or falls as a whole. All five points are related. For example, if one believes in the doctrine of election, it is impossible to believe that God's call to any of His elect people can finally be rejected. Mr. J. H. Gosden, in his book *What Gospel Standard Baptists Believe*, wrote: "If the initial step in the recovery of man from his dreadful fall and alienation from his Creator is attributable to the free choice of the sinner's will, then all Scripture doctrine falls to the ground."

We firmly believe that all God's predestinated people will be irresistibly called and finally saved. Not one will be lost. "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out," said the Lord Jesus. At another time He spoke of His sheep, for whom He laid down His life. "Them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice." Note the word 'must.' "I MUST bring." "And they SHALL hear my voice." No man can resist the mighty power of God when put forth in the salvation of sinners.

As we consider these wonderful truths, may we never forget that they came at a cost:

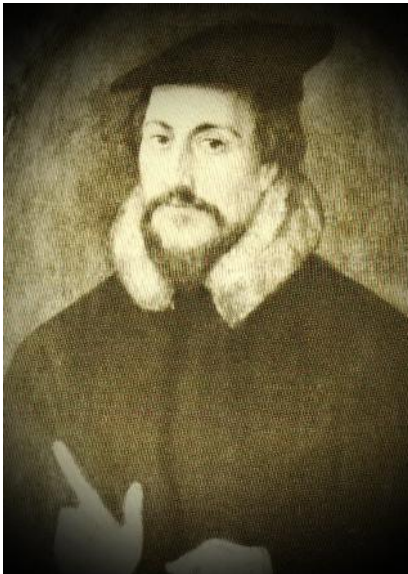
“But none of the ransomed ever knew  
How deep were the waters crossed,  
Nor how dark was the night the Lord passed through  
Ere He found His sheep that was lost.”

The Church of England, in its Article 17 on Predestination and Election, declares it to be “full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly persons.” So, too, is the doctrine of irresistible grace.

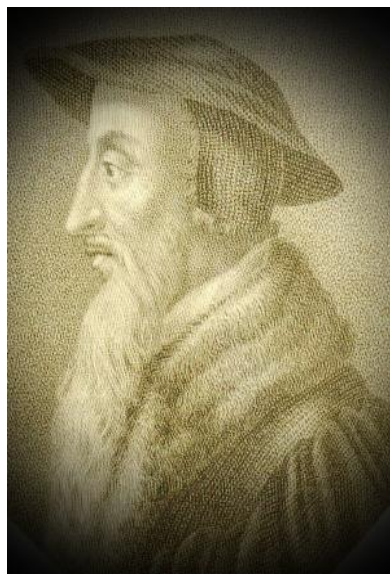
And in case any fear their name might be left out, think over hymn no. 333 in the Young People’s Hymnal. We personally know of one godly deacon and one young girl to whom it was much blessed.

“If I ask Him to receive me,  
Will He say me nay?  
‘Not till earth, and not till heaven,  
Pass away.’”

There can be no more encouraging text than this: “I will in no wise cast out.” *Blessed be God.*



*Calvin as a young man*



*Calvin as an old man*

## THE SMITHFIELD MARTYRS

*Last quarter we gave a general account of Smithfield and the martyrs commemorated in this area. This quarter we give an account of the second martyr mentioned on the plaque on nearby Bart's Hospital.*

**JOHN BRADFORD** (*adapted from Foxe's Book of Martyrs*)

### Birth

John Bradford was born at Manchester in Lancashire. His parents brought him up in learning from his infancy, until he attained such knowledge in the Latin tongue, and skill in writing, that he was able to gain his own living in some honest employment.

He became servant to Sir John Harrington, a treasurer to King Henry the Eighth, and King Edward the Sixth. Harrington had such experience of John Bradford's skill in writing, and also of his faithful trustiness, that he used his faithful service above all others.

But the Lord, who had pre-ordained him to preach the gospel of Christ, called this, his chosen child, to an understanding and partaking of the same gospel. For then Bradford did leave his worldly affairs and, after a just account was given to his master of all his doings, he departed from him; and gave himself wholly to the study of the Holy Scriptures.

### Leaves London for Cambridge

To accomplish his purpose the better, he departed from London and went to the university of Cambridge. His diligence in study, his profiting in knowledge and godly conversation, so pleased all men, that within one whole year after that he had been there, the university did give him the degree of a master of arts.

Immediately after, the master and fellows of Pembroke Hall did give him a fellowship in their college with them: yea, that man of God, Martin Bucer, so liked him, that he oftentimes exhorted him to exercise his talent in preaching. Unto which Bradford answered always, that he was unable to serve in that office through want of learning. To the which Bucer replied, "If thou have not the *finest manchet* bread [eaten only by the rich], yet give the poor people *barley* bread, or whatsoever else the Lord hath committed unto thee."

While Bradford was thus persuaded to enter into the ministry, Dr. Ridley, that worthy bishop of London, and, later, glorious martyr of Christ, called him to take the degree of a deacon. This being done, he

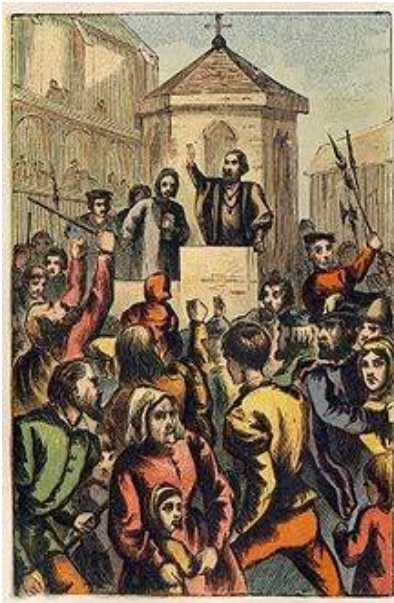
obtained for him a licence to preach, and did give him a prebend in his cathedral church of St. Paul's.

In this preaching office, by the space of three years, how faithfully Bradford walked, and how diligently he laboured. Sharply he reproved sin, sweetly he preached Christ crucified, earnestly he persuaded to godly life.

### **Death of godly young King Edward**

After the death of blessed young King Edward the Sixth, when Queen Mary had gotten the crown, still continued Bradford diligent in preaching, until he was unjustly deprived of his office, and his liberty, by the Queen Mary and her council.

The circumstances were these: on the thirteenth of August 1553, in the first year of the reign of Queen Mary, the popish priest, Master Bourn, then bishop of Bath, preached a sermon at Paul's Cross in London, setting forth popery abroad, that it moved the people to no small indignation, being almost ready to pull him out of the pulpit. Neither could the reverence of the place, nor the presence of Bishop Bonner, nor commands of the mayor of London, whom the people ought to have obeyed, stay their rage.



*Bradford appeasing the riot*

At length Master Bourn, seeing the people in such a mood, and himself in such peril, (whereof he was sufficiently warned by the hurling of a drawn dagger at him, as he stood in the pulpit,) and that he was put from ending his sermon, fearing lest (against his will) he should there end his wretched life, desired Bradford, who stood in the pulpit behind him, to come forth, and to stand in his place and speak to the people.

Good Bradford, at his request, was content so to do, and there spake to the people of godly and quiet obedience: whom, as soon as the people saw him, so glad they were to hear him, that they cried with a great



shout, “Bradford, Bradford; God save thy life, Bradford!” - well declaring not only what affection they bare unto him, but also what regard they gave unto his words.

After that he had preached a little unto them, eftsoons [13th C - soon after] all the raging ceased, and in the end each man quietly departed to his house. Yet in the mean while (for it was a long time before that so a great multitude could all depart) Bourn thought himself not yet full sure of his life till he were safely housed, notwithstanding that the mayor and sheriffs of London were there at hand to help them. Wherefore he desired Bradford not to depart from him till he were in safety: which Bradford, according to his promise, performed. For while the mayor and sheriffs did lead Bourn to the schoolmaster’s house, which was next to the pulpit, Bradford went at his back, shadowing him from the people with his gown, and so set him safe.

The multitude that remained behind, were not a little grieved in their minds that so good a man as Bradford should save the life of such a popish priest who so openly railed against King Edward. One gentleman among them said these words: “Ah Bradford, Bradford, thou savest him that will help to burn thee. If it were not for thee, I would assuredly run him through with my sword.”

### **Preaches at the Bow Church**



*St. Mary-le-Bow*

The same Sunday in the afternoon, Bradford preached at the Bow Church in Cheapside, and reproved the people sharply for their behaviour. [The church of Bradford’s day was destroyed in the great fire of London, and rebuilt to a design by Christopher Wren. St. Mary-le-Bow is the church of ‘Oranges and Lemons’ fame.]

Three days after, he was sent for to the Tower of London, where the queen then was, to appear there before the council. There they objected against him for preaching. By them he was committed first to the Tower, then unto other prisons, where he remained until by death (which he suffered for Christ’s cause), he obtained the heavenly liberty, of which neither pope nor papist could ever deprive him.

From the Tower he came to the King’s Bench in Southwark: and after his condemnation, he was sent to

the Compter in the Poultry in London. In these two places, for the time he remained a prisoner, he preached twice a day continually, unless sickness hindered him. Here also the sacrament was often ministered. The keepers so well did bear with him, that commonly his chamber was well nigh filled with good folks attending. Preaching, reading, and praying was his whole life.



***The Poultry Compter prison.*** A contemporary account describes the prison: “the mixture of scents that arose from mundungus (an offensive dark Spanish tobacco), foul feet, dirty shirts, stinking breaths, and uncleanly carcases, poisoned our nostrils far worse than a Southwark ditch, a tanner’s yard, or a tallow-chandler’s melting-room. The ill-looking inmates, with long, rusty beards, swaddled up in rags, and their heads covered with thrum-caps or thrust into the tops of old stockings.

He did not eat above one meal a day; which was but very little when he took it; and his continual study was upon his knees. In the midst of dinner he used often to muse with himself, having his hat over his eyes, from whence came commonly plenty of tears dropping on his plate.

Very gentle he was to man and child, and in so good credit with the prison keeper, that he had licence, upon his promise to return again that night, to go into London without any keeper to visit one that was sick, lying by the Still-yard. Neither did he fail his promise, but returned to his prison again, so constant was he in word and in deed.

Of personage he was somewhat tall and slender, spare of body, of a faint sanguine colour, with an auburn beard. He slept not commonly above four hours in the night; and in his bed, till sleep came, his book went not out of his hand. His chief recreation was in honest company, and comely talk, wherein he would spend a little time after dinner at the

table; and so to prayer and his book again. He counted that hour not well spent, wherein he did not some good, either with his pen, study, or in exhorting others. Commonly once a week he visited the thieves, pick-purses, and such others that were with him in prison, unto whom he would give godly exhortation, to learn the amendment of their lives. And, after that, he would distribute among them some portion of money to their comfort.

### **Troubled by dreams**

The night before Bradford was had to Newgate, which was the Saturday night, he was sore troubled divers times in his sleep by dreams, how the chain for his burning was brought to the Compter gate. He dreamed moreover that the next day, being Sunday, he should be had to Newgate, and on the Monday burned in Smithfield; as indeed it came to pass.

Now he, being vexed with this dream, about three o'clock in the morning he waked him that lay with him, and told him his unquiet sleep, and what he was troubled withal. Then, after a little talk, Master Bradford rose out of the bed, and gave himself to his old exercise of reading and prayer, as always he had used before; and at dinner, according to his accustomed manner, he did eat his meat, and was very merry, nobody being with him from morning to night, but he that lay with him.

### **Heavy news**

In the afternoon, as they two walked together in the keeper's chamber, suddenly the keeper's wife came up, as one half amazed, and seeming much troubled, being almost windless, said, "O Master Bradford, I come to bring you heavy news."

"What is that?" said he.

"Marry," quoth she, "tomorrow you must be burned; and your chain is now a buying, and soon you must go to Newgate."

With that Master Bradford put off his cap, and lifting up his eyes to heaven, said, "I thank God for it; I have looked for the same a long time, and therefore it cometh not now to me suddenly, but as a thing waited for every day and hour; the Lord make me worthy thereof!"

And so, thanking her for her gentleness, he departed up into his chamber, and called his friend with him. When he came thither, Bradford went secretly himself alone a long time, and prayed: which

done, he came again to him that was in his chamber, and took him divers writings and papers, and showed him his mind in those things what he would have done.

After they had spent the afternoon till night in many and sundry such things, at last came to him half a dozen of his friends more, with whom all the evening he spent the time in prayer, and other good exercise, so wonderfully, that it was marvellous to hear and see his doings.

### **His prayer of farewell**

A little before he went out of the Compter, he made a notable prayer of farewell, with such plenty of tears, and abundant spirit of prayer, that it ravished the minds of the hearers. Then he put on himself a clean shirt that was made for his burning by one Master Walter Marlar's wife, who was a good nurse unto him, and his very good friend.

At his departing out of the chamber, he made likewise a prayer, and gave money to every servant and officer of the house, with exhortation to them to fear and serve God. That done, he turned him to the wall and prayed vehemently, that his words might not be spoken in vain, but that the Lord would work the same in them effectually, for his Christ's sake.

Then beneath in the court, all the prisoners cried out to him, and bade him farewell, as the rest of the house had done before, with weeping tears.

### **Carried to Newgate**

They carried him to Newgate at about eleven or twelve o'clock in the night, when it was thought none would be stirring abroad: and yet, contrary to their expectation in that behalf, was there in Cheapside and other places, (between the Compter and Newgate,) a great multitude of people that came to see him, which most gently bade him farewell, praying for him with most lamentable and pitiful tears; and he again as gently bade them farewell, praying most heartily for them and their welfare.



*Newgate prison*

Now, whether it were a commandment from the queen and her council, or from Bonner and his adherents, or whether it were merely

devised of the lord mayor, aldermen, and sheriffs of London, I cannot tell; but a great noise there was over-night about the city by divers, that Bradford should be burnt the next day in Smithfield, by four of the clock in the morning, before it should be greatly known to any. In which rumour, many heads had divers minds; some thinking the fear of the people to be the cause thereof: others thought nay, that it was rather because the papists judged his death would convert many to the truth, and give a great overthrow to their kingdom. So some thought one thing, and some another.

The next day, at the said hour of four o'clock in the morning, there was in Smithfield such a multitude of men and women, that many thought it was not possible that they could have warning of his death, being so great number, in so short a time, unless it were by the singular providence of Almighty God.



*John Bradford, Martyr*

Well, this took not effect as the people thought; for that morning it was nine o'clock of the day, before Master Bradford was brought into Smithfield; who, in going through Newgate thitherward, spied a friend of his whom he loved, standing on the side of the way, unto whom he reached his hand over the people, and plucked him to him, and delivered to him from his head his velvet night-cap, and also his handkerchief, with other things besides.

And after a little secret talk with him, and each of them parting from other, immediately came to him a brother-in-law of his, called Roger Beswick, who, as soon as he had taken the said Bradford by the hand, one of the sheriffs of London, called Woodrofe, came with his staff, and brake the said Roger's head, that the blood ran about his shoulders; which sight Bradford beholding with grief, bade his brother farewell, willing him to commend him to his mother and the rest of his friends, and to get him to some surgeon betimes: so they, departing, had little or no talk at all together.

Then was he led forth to Smithfield with a great company of weaponed men, to conduct him thither, as the like was not seen at any man's burning: for in every corner of Smithfield there were some,

besides those that stood about the stake.

Bradford then, being come to the place, fell flat to the ground, secretly making his prayers to Almighty God. Then rising again, and putting off his clothes unto his shirt, he went to the stake.



*The burning of John Bradford and John Leaf*

As he was tied to the stake, he held up his hands, and lifted his eyes to heaven, and said: "O England, England, repent thee of thy sin! Beware of idolatry, beware of false Antichrists! Take heed they do not deceive." And there he suffered joyfully and constantly, with a young man of twenty years of age, whose name was John Leaf, a prentice.

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### THE SAFE CHANNEL

A ship was passing along a dangerous stretch of coast where thousands had made shipwreck. A passenger said to the captain, "I suppose you know every rock and sandbar along this coast." The captain, looking earnestly at him, said, "I know where they are *not*." Yes, in that lay the safety of those who had committed their life to his keeping.

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## **THE LORD'S DAY - A MEDICAL POINT OF VIEW** **by Professor Verna Wright, MD, FRCP**

*Professor Wright passed away in January 1998 at the age of 69. He was a Professor of Rheumatology at Leeds University, and Co-Director of the Bioengineering Group for the study of human joints. The Lord's Day Observance Society, some years before his death, published this booklet on the medical aspect of Sabbath observance. We are indebted to the Society for permission to print extracts from the booklet. Obviously some references, particularly those relating to legislation, are out of date.*

'Hurry, Worry, Bury' has been the epitaph suggested for many people in this 20th century.

The increasing number of patients taking tranquilizers; the rising incidence of stress diseases; the frequency of attempted suicide, which has reached epidemic proportions: all reflect sadly on our modern society and demand an answer.

I have no doubt that a proper regard for the Lord's Day would help to ameliorate these problems. Speaking as a physician there are good reasons physically, mentally and spiritually why we should set aside the first day of the week as a special day to the Lord. The ancient promise still holds true: "If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it" (Isaiah 58. 13,14).

### **Physically**

There are natural, in-built laws which govern human behaviour. An obvious example is that you cannot continue to work without sleep indefinitely. After a certain number of hours you fall asleep whatever you are doing. In a torture situation, where people are forcibly kept awake, there comes a breaking point when they crack up catastrophically.

There are many examples of 24-hour cycles in the body (called

circadian rhythms), showing the natural functioning of the body on a daily basis. Your temperature varies by two degrees; many chemicals in the blood stream alter in their concentration; and your ability to concentrate fluctuates in a cyclical manner. You can test the last by keeping awake all night - around 6 a.m. you begin to 'wake up,' even though you have not been asleep!

Similarly, there are weekly cycles. It is significant that the natural split of the year is in lunar months (4 x 7 days) rather than calendar months. From time to time societies have tried to extend the working week to eight days or ten days. Each attempt has failed. The natural variation is six days' work, one day rest. The body cries out physically one day in seven for rest and change.

At the University of Leeds we have measured for several months in a working man the 17-oxogenic steroids in his urine. These chemicals are breakdown products of the hormones from the adrenal gland. High volumes occur with stress and activity. There was a weekly rhythm of these chemicals in the urine. The lowest levels were on a Sunday. It is not clear whether this was an inherent rhythm, or whether it was a reflection of decreased stress and activity. Whichever it was, it demonstrates the beneficial effect of a weekly day of rest.

This is one reason why responsible Union leaders are opposed to Sunday trading. [Written 1980's] They recognise that their members need a day of rest. Once legislation permits the opening of shops on a Sunday as a general principle, storekeepers who do not wish to open seven days a week will be forced to do so if they wish to remain competitive. The burden of extra work will fall on the employees - not only must this mean higher prices, but shop workers will be subjected to even more unsocial hours and physical pressure. [Professor Wright's predictions have come to pass.]

### **Mentally**

Said the poet:

"What is this life if full of care  
We have no time to stand and stare?"

He appreciated that to get the best out of life we needed time to relax mentally. We need time to unwind from the tensions of the week, whether these are produced by the frustrations of a repetitious job, or by the demands of an administrative position. Doctors have to treat many



illnesses which are categorised as ‘stress diseases.’ These include peptic ulcer, muscular rheumatism, migraine, hypertension (raised blood pressure), and coronary heart disease. Stress is not the only factor. Very often there is a constitutional predisposition, shown by a family history of the same condition. Nevertheless, as the sufferers are only too well aware, stress plays an important part in precipitating attacks. Animal experiments by Professor Hans Selye, a pathologist of Montreal, have provided confirmatory evidence, suggesting that these stresses affecting the mind produce many hormones from the adrenal glands, and these in turn harm the body.

God’s provision of a day of rest helps to combat the harmful effects of a week of stress. The verse of Sir Matthew Hale, a former Lord Chief Justice, remains even more true today than when first written:

A Sabbath well spent brings a week of content  
And health for the toils of tomorrow;  
But a Sabbath profaned, whate’er may be gained,  
Is a certain forerunner of sorrow.

As a University teacher I warn my students against over-studying before exams and in particular advise them not to revise on Sundays. The most striking and sad case we had was a student who worked throughout Sunday, and took amphetamines to keep himself awake as he remorselessly revised through the night. He sat down to the exam on Monday and spent three hours covering sheet after sheet of paper with nothing but his name.

The brain is an amazing computer which God has programmed to need one day’s rest in seven. That is not a rash analogy. There is suggestive evidence that most dreams are the computer ditching rubbish. Your own experience will tell you that often the solution to a problem comes when you have laid it on one side and you are relaxing - then out of the blue the answer comes to your consciousness. The computer has been working, uncluttered by the additional data and signals you are trying to feed it. That is why Archimedes leapt out of his bath shouting ‘Eureka!’ It was whilst relaxing in the warmth of the water that his great principle came. Intense, single-minded, unremitting concentration is not the best stimulus for creative thinking. We need that one in seven time to set our mind on other things.

## Spiritually

To live as if man is just a body and a mind is to be guilty of unutterable folly. It leads to futility and frustration. It has driven many of the most 'successful' to suicide. It flies in the face of overwhelming evidence. Man has a spiritual dimension to his nature. Indeed he is distinct from the animal creation in being made in the image of God. For his spiritual well-being he needs one day in seven to concentrate on this vital aspect of his character. As Prince Charles commented in a recent after dinner speech at the Royal College of Physicians, "We can too easily forget that 'healing' and 'holy' come from the same root."

Since God has made us He certainly knows what is best for us as individuals and as a society. No one quibbles with the prohibition on stealing, lying, coveting, murder, nor even with the command "Thou shalt not commit adultery" despite our permissive age with its epidemic of venereal disease and broken homes. Why then should we argue with the command that we are to keep holy the Sabbath day?

A man told me it was needlessly restrictive. It is no more needless than the law which forbids you to drive up the right hand side of the M1, or to mainline with heroin for pleasurable purposes. Restrictions are necessary for our welfare and the benefit of others. True freedom is not the liberty to do what you like, but the ability to be what you were meant to be and the power to do what you ought. Physically, mentally and spiritually there are bounds within which we must live. Within that fence we have an almost endless variety of possibilities for freedom. A man said to me recently, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. Surely that means man can do what he likes on a Sunday."

May I illustrate the problem and solution in this way. I am driving along a clear road early one morning. As I approach a set of 'keep left' bollards, a child darts out from the pavement. The only way I can avoid the child is to drive to the right of the bollards. I do so unhesitatingly because the bollards were made for man, not man for the bollards. Yet as a general rule I still keep to the left of the bollards. Jesus Himself delineated the two clear areas of exception: works of necessity and works of mercy. I will go into hospital to see a patient of mine who has developed a medical problem on Sunday, but I will not accept invitations to teach general practitioners taking postgraduate courses on the Lord's day.

“But I thought we lived under grace, not under law,” another man said to me. It is true that our salvation is entirely of grace. I may keep the Sabbath meticulously, but it will not save me. I trust entirely on the redeeming work of Christ upon the cross for my salvation, not pleading a single good deed to merit God’s favour. Justification is by faith alone.

But that does not mean I ignore the law. Apart from being my schoolmaster to lead me to Christ, it provides the guide rails for my Christian living. Indeed the teaching of Jesus sharpens the law; it doesn’t dispense with it. Adultery, says Jesus, is now in a look, not just an act. Murder comes down to the harbouring of hatred in the heart.

Nevertheless, the motive for keeping the law is different. May I illustrate again. I drove to a friend in Norfolk who lived in a stately home. In the built-up areas I restricted my speed to 30 mph (especially when I saw a police car in my rear view mirror)! As I turned into the drive leading up to the hall, no speed limit applied, since I was off the main road. Nevertheless I kept well below 30 mph, because I knew my friend appreciated those who drove slowly through the grounds. Love was an even more powerful influence in keeping me below the limit than the law.

God has made it perfectly clear what He desires as far as the Sabbath day is concerned. Out of love for Him I wish to obey.

### **Conclusion**

From a medical point of view, one day set apart for rest and worship is best for man physically, mentally and spiritually. The Creator God, who made man in His own image, certainly had man’s welfare at heart when from the beginning of creation He instituted the weekly Sabbath. The fourth commandment underlined its importance. We ignore the Sabbath at our peril. We keep it to our inestimable benefit.

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### **“CASTING ALL YOUR CARE UPON HIM”**

It is well to know and feel that there stands on record the dear Lord’s gracious command to cast all our care upon Him for that He careth for us. How often we ‘cast’ it, but do not ‘leave’ it, there: as it were, rolling it upon Him for the time being, but taking it away from Him, and bearing it again just as before.

*Canon Richard Hobson of Liverpool*

### **BURNING THE BUSHEL**

A poor woman in the country went to hear a sermon wherein, among other evil practices, the use of dishonest weights and measures was exposed. With this discourse she was much affected.

The next day the minister, according to this custom, went among his hearers, and calling upon the woman, he took occasion to ask her what she recollected of the sermon. The poor woman complained much of her bad memory, and said she had forgotten almost all that he had delivered; "But one thing I remembered," she said, "I remembered to burn my bushel."

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### **BURIAL OF A MUCH-LOVED WELSH MINISTER**

The funeral cortege left early that fine Tuesday morning. After all, there were thirteen miles to go.

It was 15 June 1841 that the sad procession left the farmstead at Y Fron, Llangefni on the Isle of Anglesey. Before the coffin rode a number of carriages carrying ministers and doctors. Then, behind the hearse, carriages carrying the family. Afterwards, forty ministers riding in twos; followed by about forty carriages. Then one hundred and fifty horse riders in twos: and a huge throng walking in fours. By the time the procession reached Beaumaris, it was a mile and half long. An estimated 10,000 people had joined the throng that wished to pay its respect. There was a further mile and half to go.

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Who could it be that demanded such respect?

John Elias was born on 6 May 1774 at Crynllwynbach Farm in the parish of Aberch, not far from Pwllheli on the Llyn Peninsula, North Wales. He was born as John Jones. This was far too confusing, and when he was 19 years of age, it was suggested he adopt as his surname his father's first name, Elias Jones, which he did.

In 1795, at the age of 20, he began to preach the gospel, and great power attended his ministry. He said, "I saw myself very deficient in my views of the glory of Christ and experience of His love. But God bore with me, and supported me in a wonderful manner. After I was received to preach, I was called every Sabbath to various places in the country. The people were filled with curiosity to hear such a young man

preach, so that I had no rest.”



*Llanfechell Church*

The Lord provided for him a godly wife, Elizabeth Broadhead. They were married on 22 February 1799 at Llanfechell Church. Richard Jones, also a preacher, was best man. The newly-weds made their home in Llanfechell. Elizabeth was well-educated, the eldest of nine children. Her parents bitterly opposed her marrying a penniless Methodist preacher. Later, they

came to love and respect him. In the same year as his marriage, he was called to preach in Anglesey.

Many remarkable answers to prayer were given to him. For example, in 1830 horse races were to be held the same day as the Methodist Association meeting. Elias's spirit was much moved within him at the thought of it, and he prayed to the Lord most earnestly in the morning of that day to put a stop to them. The sky became so dark soon afterwards that they were obliged to light the gas in most of the shops in the town. It began to rain very heavily about 11 o'clock, and continued to do so until 5 o'clock the next day. The multitudes on the race ground were dispersed in less than half an hour, and did not reassemble that year. It seems the rain was confined to that vicinity.

The couple were blessed with four children. John was born in 1800, and Phebe was born in 1801. An infant daughter was born 18 April 1804 but died a few days later. Then Elizabeth, now 49 years of age, gave birth to an infant son on 31 January 1819 who died the same day.

John Elias worked in Elizabeth's family shop, Y Siop Fawr. There is a document referring to him as 'grocer.'

The time came for Elizabeth to be taken from him. She died 2 April 1828 aged 59 years, and was buried at Llanfechell. John Elias said, "She was a beloved, faithful and industrious wife, a careful and tender mother, and a sincere Christian."

Two years' later he was provided with a second wife. On 10 February 1830 he was married to Anne Bulkeley. He remarried without telling his children, or his great friend Richard Lloyd, or any other

Methodist ministers. His children were rebellious, especially Phebe. The marriage took place in Liverpool - we wonder why.

Eventually they left Llanfechell to live the rest of their days at Y Fron, Llangefni. Sadly, in 1832 John Elias was involved in a horse and carriage accident, from which he never fully recovered. The following is an account of the accident: "Three of us were travelling in a two wheeled covered cabriolet, drawn by one horse. Two lads got behind the carriage, and jumped off as we descended the hill, upon which the shaft gave a loud crack. We leaped out. I sustained no injury, but alas! I saw Mr Elias laying on the ground insensible having fallen upon his head. He was put into an armchair lent by a neighbour. Mr Williams, surgeon at Bala, speedily arrived, bled him, and administered some stimulants to him. Through the mercy of God Elias gradually recovered and was able to use his pen slowly."

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The evening before the funeral the Rev. William Roberts of Amlwch preached an appropriate sermon at Llangefni chapel to a crowded congregation. His text was 2 Kings 2. 11-14. In the Welsh Bible, Elijah is rendered *Elias* which imparted additional effect to the words in the 14th verse, "Where is the Lord God of *Elias*?"

The congregation made efforts to sing. So overwhelmed were they with grief, they were obliged to desist. They 'hung', as it were, 'their harps upon the willows' and 'sat down and wept.'



*Beaumaris Green - here the choir sung*

The following morning, when the coffin was brought out to the door of the house, Philippians 1. 18 - 24 was read, after which the sad procession began slowly to make its onward way. Between twelve and one o'clock, the procession made its appearance at the Menai Bridge. Then on to

Beaumaris. On Beaumaris Green, the choir of the Calvinistic Chapel, Bangor, drew up on either side of the road, singing a funeral hymn while



*Beaumaris Harbour - every ship half mast*

the assemblage passed through. The ships in the harbour lowered their flags to half mast. Every shop in the town was closed. And the blinds of the houses were drawn. They continued towards the village of Llanfaes. Here, at St. Catherine's church, he was buried. The

churchyard was secluded and peaceful, a scene of beauty, the site of an ancient monastery of Franciscan friars. His wish was to be buried next to Richard Lloyd of Beaumaris, a Methodist minister. After reaching the Church, the services were solemnly read by the Rev. H. Griffith.



*Llanfaes Church. The upright tomb is that of John Elias. In the foreground is that of his friend Richard Lloyd*

His tombstone is one side Welsh, the other English, both today almost unreadable. However, one phrase can still be read: "Resting all his hope on the cross of Christ."

The epitaph ends with the words:

*He finally triumphed over death,  
and sleeps in Jesus,  
on the eighth day June, 1841;  
in the sixty-eighth year of his age.*

Writing shortly before his death he said: "I have nothing to say of myself, but of my sinfulness, vileness, and great misery; but I would be happy to speak of God's goodness, mercy and grace towards me. This is the poor man that was raised out of the dust, and the needy

man that was lifted out of the dunghill, and set with princes, even with the princes of his people. If any good has been done by my imperfect labour, God in His grace has performed it. To Him belongs the glory; I was as nothing. If God took me to be an instrument in His hand, to bring some sinner or sinners to Christ, this is an unspeakable privilege. It will be a joy to me, in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain neither laboured in vain.”

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What kind of a preacher was John Elias? The Rev. D. Charles, grandson of the celebrated Thomas Charles of *Mary Jones and her Bible* fame, wrote the following description:

“As a preacher, he was powerful and persuasive. He simplified everything, and set all truths forth in their clearest light, so that a child could understand him. His sermons invariably reached the heart. In all my journeys through Wales, I have not heard of any one Minister whose preaching has been so universally blessed to the conversion of sinners, as that of John Elias. In almost every country place, village, or town, you can find some person who will ascribe his conversion to one of his sermons. This I have witnessed in very many cases. You know that we are accustomed to very powerful preaching in Wales: indeed I may say, with truth, there is no ministry on earth that can compete with the Welsh, in solidity, warmth and energy. Yet John Elias was remarkable among the Welsh. Some of his sermons, which I heard while yet boy, are still fresh and vivid on my mind, while thousands of other sermons have passed into oblivion. I can never forget the extraordinary effects produced upon the multitudes assembled at Bala Association, about seven years ago, when he was preaching from Isaiah 6. 10. There was not, I believe, a dry eye in that vast assembly on the occasion. The preacher wept and prayed in the pulpit; multitudes fell down as dead and every countenance seemed filled with terror and dismay.”

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### **A FEW THOUGHTS ON PROPHETS - TRUE AND FALSE**

Adapted from *My Wanderings in the East* by John Gadsby

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About 8 o'clock in the evening, the men suddenly stopped and moored the boat, and, without giving us any notice, all went on shore.



I said to my companion, “There’s something up here. The men are all off. Let us go and see what it is.” Leaving the boat entirely unprotected, we clambered up the bank, and saw, at a little distance, the light of a fire. We found our men had formed a semicircle in front of it, while, on the opposite side, there sat a man, without a particle of clothing upon his person. He sat upon his heels, his elbows on his knees and his head in his hands, his eyes rolling about. Two or three times he stood up, and then he reminded me of the maniac amongst the tombs. The man was prophesying to our boatmen; or rather, to translate the word into English, he was telling them their fortunes.

For upwards of 20 years this man had not moved 20 yards from the spot upon which we saw him, neither had he a rag upon his person, night or day during the whole time. These prophets are never left to die of want. All they need is supplied by the people. I believe that hundreds would have parted with their last penny for his support, if necessary. And to this Zechariah refers in chapter 11 verse 17, when he calls such characters “*idol* shepherds.” That is to say, they are made idols of.

How did the widow of Zarephath know that Elijah was indeed a prophet? Assuredly by his dress. The distinctive outward mark of a prophet was that he wore a garment of sheepskin, or goatskin. The former Elijah wore; and this is what is called, in 1 Kings 19. 19, his mantle. In confirmation of this, we read, in 2 Kings 2. 8 that “he took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters;” but the Septuagint translation reads, “he folded up his sheepskin.” Therefore it is that Elijah is called a “hairy man;” (2 Kings 1. 8) the meaning of which is that he wore a hairy garment, the badge of the prophet.

When one of these prophets dies, he bequeaths his garment to some favourite, and that man is at once recognised as his successor. “The



spirit of Elijah doth rest upon Elisha,” said the sons of the prophets. That is, Elisha has become Elijah’s successor. All the customs which belonged to the true prophets were followed by the false, and have been handed down to the present time.

But there were false prophets in Elijah’s day as in the present day; and these false prophets wore hairy garments, in imitation of the true prophets. Hence it was that the widow of Zarephath was not sure that Elijah was a true prophet until he had raised her son to life; and then she said, “Now by this I know that thou art a man of God.” What? Was she not sure of it when the barrel of meal and cruse of oil failed not? No; that might have been done by sleight of hand, at which many of the Orientals ever were adept; but the widow knew that God would not raise the dead to life by means of any false prophet.

These false prophets, wearing the sheepskin, are referred to in the Zechariah 13. 4, wearing a “rough garment to deceive.” That is, making people believe they were prophets when they were not. “Beware of false prophets,” said the Redeemer, “who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.” Doubtless they had been bad characters before they assumed the dress of the prophets; and their being called “ravening wolves” would prove that they had not changed their occupation, only their dress, to enable them to deceive more effectually.

I need hardly say that all the pretended saints of whom I have been speaking, like monks and friars, live upon the foolish charity of others. Sometimes we find them with a drum and a horn; and as they go about the villages with the music, the people run up to them, and give them what they require; and when anyone has given to them liberally, they blow the horn to his praise. I think Matthew 6. 2 refers to some such custom; for the margin reads, “When thou doest thine alms, cause not a trumpet to be sounded.”

I have seen some of these prophets also with bags round their necks in which they deposit what is given to them, if not required for immediate use. One I saw with the skin of a kid for a bag. These bags are the scrips mentioned in Matthew 10. 10 and other parts of the Gospels, which the disciples were commanded not to take with them. They were to trust to the Lord’s kind providence from hand to mouth.

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## **A FEW CURRENT MATTERS**

### **Funeral services**

It is shocking to hear of funeral services taking place in churches where the most awful pop songs and worldly music are sung and played. We welcome moves, from whatever quarter, which attempt to restrain this God-dishonouring trend. We were, therefore, pleased recently to learn that the Roman Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth has issued some guidelines for funerals which state: "Only readings from the Sacred Scriptures and only music with words that express the paschal mystery of the Lord's suffering, death and triumph over death may be used in church. When choosing music to be played at the funeral, please take care that the texts are related to the readings from Scripture." The guidelines go on to say, "Sometimes people request secular songs and music to be played in church. The Church does not usually permit this, as secular songs and poetry often do not accord with the Church's faith and her joyful hope in the Lord's resurrection." We commend this attempt to maintain traditional values in banning personal eulogies, non-biblical readings and pop songs from funeral services. May many Protestant churches follow this lead.

### **2015's Extra Second**

The year 2015 will be one second longer to compensate for the gradual slowing of the rotation of the Earth. The extra second is needed because the Earth's rotation is slowing by around two thousandths of a second per day and needs to catch up with atomic time. The tiny adjustment will be made at the International Earth Rotation Service based in Paris. The 'leap second' will be added at midday on June 30 which will have 86,401 seconds, instead of 86,400 seconds.

### **A lone voice**

The first female bishop was ordained at York Minster at the end of January. As the Archbishop of York, Dr. John Sentamu, asked the congregation if it was their will to ordain the Rev. Libby Lane as Bishop of Stockport, the Rev. Paul Williamson stepped forward and declared: "No. It is not in the Bible." Dr. Sentamu continued by reading a prepared statement that the consecration of a woman as bishop was "now lawful under the law of the land." Man's law is now above God's law it seems - "But I suffer not a woman to teach" 1 Timothy 2. 12.

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## BLUEBELLS

Britain has some of the finest bluebell woods in the world - in fact, 50% of the world's bluebell population is found in Britain. As daylight hours increase in April, the bluebell races to bloom before the leaf canopy becomes too dense. Surely nothing can beat a bluebell wood in spring! So valuable is the bluebell it is protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981).

- In the Bronze Age, people used bluebell glue to attach feathers to their arrows
- The Victorians used starch from crushed bluebells to stiffen the ruffs of their collars and sleeves.
- Bluebell sap was used to bind pages to the spine of books.

But have we thought of that wonderful organ of sight given to us by the Creator? How kind of God to enable us to enjoy those deep violet blues, and all of nature's wonderful range of colours! The eye is the most remarkable part of our body. There was a case recently of a young evolutionist scientist, who, as part of her training, completed an in-depth study of the human eye. The more she learnt, the more she became convinced that such complexity could never have happened by an evolutionary process. Her views changed completely and she became an ardent Creationist.

It is estimated that the human eye can distinguish 10 million colours. A top quality SLR camera may have a 20 megapixel sensor. One estimate (if it was truly possible to measure it) is that the human eye has a resolution equivalent to 576 mp! How much God's work exceeds man's. The image formed by the cornea is projected onto the retina. Within the retina are buried receptor cells consisting of 120 million rods and cones, which transmit signals to the brain by the optic nerve.

Wonderful though the works and beauties of nature are, there is one sight that exceeds them all, which all of God's people will see one day. We will leave Job and Isaiah to tell us of it:

"Yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another" Job 19. 26.

"Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty" Isaiah 33. 17.



# PERCEPTION

A Quarterly Magazine for Young People



"As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth." Psalm 103. 15.

**SUMMER 2015**

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**Cover picture:** *Wild Flower Meadow, Butterfly World, St. Albans*

# PERCEPTION

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## EDITORIAL

*“The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: which indeed is the least of all seeds” Matthew 13. 31.*

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The first chapter of the Bible tells us of God’s wonderful acts of creation. Amongst those acts, on the third day of the world’s existence, God created plants that would yield *seeds*. “And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed” (Genesis 1. 29).

We notice first that the provision of seed-bearing plants is one of God’s gifts - “I have *given* you.” The provision is not limited to the benefit of man, but to all God’s creatures, both man and beast. In this context we take herbs to be any plants used for food, flavouring, medicine or perfume. It is worthy of note that before God created man, He created the food that was needed to provide nutritional support for the body. It speaks much of God’s mercy and kindness to mankind that there is such a vast variety of food available, something to suit every palate, and to provide enjoyment and satisfaction. How often do we hear someone say, “I love my food,” we trust not in a gluttonous sense but rather as an expression of genuine appreciation of what God has provided.

Our text this time is from one of the parables of the Lord Jesus. In Matthew chapter 13 we find no less than six parables, which were delivered at the seaside from a ship, while “the whole multitude stood on the shore.” This presents us with an interesting mental picture of the many people listening in rapt attention to the wonderful words that proceeded from the mouth of One of whom it was said, “Never man spake like this Man.” Of course, some were offended at His teaching (as they are today), as later in the same chapter we read of those who said scornfully that they knew His father the carpenter, His mother Mary, and His brothers and sisters - so how was it possible that *this* Man had all this wisdom?

A parable is a story intended to instruct. We remember a story when facts we may forget. In His parables the Lord Jesus chose familiar objects, everyday things around us, or everyday happenings such as losing something to communicate spiritual truths. A parable differs from an allegory like Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* where a journey is used to explain something else. But it is a solemn thought that sometimes the Lord Jesus spoke in parables to hide the truth from the hearers because of their unbelief (see Luke 8. 10).

The Lord Jesus referred to the mustard seed as being a very small seed, "the least of all seeds", and no doubt the people of those parts knew of nothing smaller. Today it is generally accepted that the



smallest seed in the world is that of a Tree Orchid found in Brazil, known as *Sophronitis purpurata*. Over a million seeds would easily fit into a teaspoon! Some time ago in Bethany, opposite the entrance to the tomb of Lazarus, we found a woman cultivating the mustard tree in her back garden and making a little money from selling the

seed in tiny pots to tourists. (We have always regretted not buying one.)

Before considering the parable told by the Lord Jesus, we will say just a few things about seeds. First of all, what is a seed? Perhaps this seems a very basic question, but the more we look into the structure and properties of seeds the more we realise how complex they are. Essentially, a seed contains an embryo plant and a food source. It is a living, breathing organism, even though it usually appears inert or even dead. If the seed runs out of food it will die - and a dead seed is of no value whatever.

Scientists explain how, when a seed has access to water, it takes up that water and this in turn creates a biochemical change in the seed which starts the process of germination. The food source is made



available to the embryo, which then starts to grow.

Have you ever wondered how many different kinds of seeds there are in the world? Well, this is impossible to answer. What we can say is that the Millennium Seed Bank at Wakehurst in Sussex stores over two billion seeds at -20 degrees Centigrade in bomb-proof vaults. The aim is to save plants from all round the world for future generations which may otherwise die out. They tell us that four plant species face extinction *every day*. So far, 10% of the world's wild plant species have been saved here.



*The Millennium Seed Bank, Wakehurst Place in Sussex, owned by the National Trust, but managed by Kew Gardens. Open to the public every day.*

So how are we to understand the meaning of the parable about this tiny seed, the mustard seed?

There are several different explanations given. Many feel the parable is speaking of the growth of the church that was planted upon earth, the church itself being the grain of mustard seed. Others interpret it that Christ Himself is the mustard seed, or that Christ is the one that sowed the seed, whilst others feel that the central meaning is the burning heat that is shut up in so small a grain, and that the mustard seed was chosen for its fiery qualities. Others tell us that the birds in the branches represent Satan who comes to destroy the seed.

Let us look at it in slightly different way. When God begins a work of grace in the soul, it is as if God puts into our heart a tiny seed. Perhaps that seed causes us thoughts we have not had before - are these things we hear at chapel really true? Or perhaps it causes us to look round at the Lord's people and to think, I wish I was like one of them. We may have the first serious thoughts about the Lord Jesus Christ, and a desire that we might know Him more. It may, at first, be only a tiny wish, not a strong wish, but if God plants the seed there in your heart, it will grow into something much larger.

I hope it will not be thought out of place to relate something from my own experience. When I was teenager, a Saturday evening Bible class was begun at Clifton chapel. It was taken by that dear servant of God, Mr. E. Woodcraft, who our older readers will remember. Month by month he was going through the Psalms, and had reached at least Psalm 100 when sadly he passed away before completing the task he had set himself. The meeting was not a young people's meeting - it was for all ages. I have to confess, I just did not want to go. Fancy sitting in chapel on a summer Saturday evening when I could be out and about with my friends! However, to please my parents I went, reluctantly. One evening, looking round on the assembled meeting, the thought came, "These people *want* to be here. It is no hardship to them to be in chapel this summer evening." Then another thought followed: "I wish I was like them." It was only a little wish, but *the seed had been sown*.

The Bible uses the word *quicken* to mean to give life. "You hath He quickened," says the Apostle Paul writing to the church at Ephesus. There can be no life unless the Holy Spirit gives it. Just as the tiny mustard seed will grow one day into a tree, a tree large enough for the birds to live in, so will there be a growth, a gradual growth in the soul. One wonderful truth is that, when God begins a work, He will finish it. "He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1. 6).

May it please God to plant within us each that seed, that we may grow in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The beautiful hymn, number 250 in the Young People's Hymnal puts it so well: "The knowledge of Christ is more precious than gold."

With greetings and best wishes to you all.

The Editor

**DOUGLAS EDWARD BRADFORD**  
*(CONTINUED FROM SPRING 2015 PAGE 14)*

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**A marked man**

As time went on I was to prove that I was a marked man in the business. In the office there was a man who each day allocated the work we drivers had to do and I now found the hardest jobs were my portion. However this was good for me as it gave many a journey to the Throne of Grace for daily strength, and wonderful indeed what strength was given. But what was harder to bear was this man's manner towards me and the unbecoming language he used in addressing me. Once he cursed me and this was overheard by another who reproved him, but it only seemed to make him harder.

This went on for a long time and I felt it would be necessary to try and obtain easier work, but where could this be found? Things were bad and much unemployment.

The following incident I record as I seemed to see the hand of God in it. I received my orders one morning from this man which were heavier still and I must have shown my feelings by the expression on my countenance. He said, "You are not in the Navy now. What you've got to do is to learn to put your pride in your pocket." For a moment I felt the rushing tide of anger rising, but my God checked it and I said, "Thank you for your advice, I hope my 'pocket' will be big enough to hold all my pride!" He turned to me and for the first time a smile came over his face, but no remarks, but to me the words came, "A soft answer turneth away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger." How the grievous words already on my tongue had been stilled. From thence onwards this man's attitude was altogether different towards me.

"Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord" (Psalm 107. 43).

**Exercises concerning the ministry continue**

As already mentioned, driving a builder's lorry in the early twenties was very different from today (1974). I found it hard going and had to ask for daily help. However, there was one consolation that, except for loading and unloading, I was on my own and I was favoured to have a measure of meditation and communion with my Covenant God.

The exercise of the Ministry was never far from my mind and one day when passing through Slough I saw a little tin Gospel Hall and with great earnestness I said, "Lord, give me a little place like that to preach in." I believe that prayer was heard, albeit twenty-two years passed before the answer was given, and then not a tin hall but a nice chapel. Thus we learn by experience:

"God moves in a mysterious way  
His wonders to perform."

### **A remarkable blessing**

It was in January, 1923, that I had a very remarkable blessing and I have always called it 'My Elephant and Castle blessing' because it was in the vicinity of this crowded London thoroughfare where it took place. It was early forenoon, bitterly cold and snowing hard. I was feeling very low in spirit and very cold. I was to call at an Ironfounders for rails and gates, and having loaded up I felt it would be impossible to drive any distance without a hot drink, so I pulled up by a Lyons Tea shop (no parking restrictions in those days!) and ordered a glass of hot milk and sat down.

I suddenly seemed entirely to lose sight of my surroundings, and was given such a sight of Christ on the cross and the two thieves on either side, and the blest Redeemer gave me such a look, which I cannot describe, but can never forget. The effect of this upon me was remarkable. My whole spirit revived and I felt strengthened in body and soul, and I vowed a vow and said, "Lord, if ever I am allowed to speak in Thy Name, Thyself and Thy cross shall be all my theme."

How long this sweet experience lasted I just cannot say, but when I came back to earth my glass of milk was cold. This did not trouble me as I felt my heart was warmed with 'Heavenly heat.' Under the influence of this wonderful view of Christ I imagined I could easily, by plain persuasion, convince others, but being very young in the way I had much to learn.

### **Appointments**

In February, 1924, I was asked to serve on the Committee of the Surrey Tabernacle Benefit Society, which was founded in the year 1843. I mention this appointment, it being one of the links in the chain of God's wonder-working providence to unworthy me:

“His providence unfolds the book,  
And makes His counsels shine;  
Each opening leaf, and every stroke,  
Fulfil some deep design.”

In September of this year I was elected as Deacon of the Strict Baptist Church which I was led to join as already related.

No further door in providence being opened I still had to continue driving my lorry. What daily strength was given, otherwise it would have been impossible to continue. However, much exhaustion was often experienced after a specially hard day. There was one consolation: I was much on my own, and in my journeys I was sometimes much favoured in having sweet meditations with my gracious Covenant God.

The savour of my ‘Elephant and Castle’ blessing remained much with me during the four years I was on the road. The view that was granted then of the Cross of Christ made up much of my meditations during these years, and I believe was God’s way of preparing me for the Ministry.

### **Leadings to appointment as Assistant Secretary**

About June, 1926, after an evening service, the Secretary of the Surrey Tabernacle Benefit Society asked if I would come and see him one evening as I was very much on his mind in a certain matter. This gentleman (and he was one naturally and graciously) had always taken much interest in me and had tried without avail to find some better employment for me. He said I reminded him of Joseph. All I could say was that if Joseph’s God was my God all would be well. An interview was arranged when he unfolded his mind.

He said, “I have now reached the age (76) when I must seriously think of laying down my office of Secretary in favour of a younger man.” After much prayer he was fully persuaded I was the man. But as the work of the Society was complicated (at that time there were over 900 members and half of these were under the National Health, then administered by Friendly Societies) he thought a period of not less than six months would be necessary under his tuition to pick up the work. He was prepared to offer me half of his salary which would be about £3 per week. Of course, it would mean the giving up of my present employment. How did I feel about it?

I replied that it was not the giving up of my employment or the salary (which he had said was very poor) but my felt inability for this type of work. However, he was confident that the Lord would be my Helper. I felt it was impossible to give an answer to the weighty matter, and requested a week's grace to consider it and ask the Lord to give a word of direction, to which he readily consented and then most graciously offered up prayer.

I shall never forget leaving his house that night. It was a glorious mid-summer evening and I sat down in a nearby park like one in a dream, and I said, "Lord, art Thou turning my captivity?" and then so clearly the words came, "The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad," and this settled the matter that I was to venture in faith and accept the kind offer of my dear old friend.

### **The appointment tried**

During the week that followed I was much exercised as to how I was going to live on £3 per week with a rent for the small house we occupied of £1 per week and a wife and child to support. The word that I felt the Lord had given me was sorely tried and I sought for a further sign. My mind seemed to be led to the experience of Gideon and in my simplicity I told the Lord that the word He had given me seemed a sign like Gideon received, when the dew was on the fleece only, but it was dry upon all the earth. I said, "Lord, let it now be dry only upon the fleece, and upon all the ground let there be dew."

Then in answer to this petition came the reply: "Bread shall be given him, his water shall be sure." In the strength of this promise, at the end of the week I was able to tell my friend I was ready to be his Assistant Secretary. We rejoiced together at the goodness of the Lord.

### **A six-month probationary period**

In August, 1926, I commenced my probationary period of six months. During this time I had many errands to the Throne of Grace for help. My friend was most patient towards me and was like a father. His conversation was most profitable and his mind was often on the things of eternity, which gave me the solemn impression he would not be spared much longer, if indeed for the six months, which proved right.

At the usual monthly Committee Meeting in January 1927, he was seized with a stroke from which he never recovered, and entered into the joy of his Lord shortly afterwards. His last words (at the meeting) were

“It is finished.”

I was not at this meeting as my mother, who lived with us, was gravely ill, and that same night she also “Joined the ransomed throng,” her last words being, “The light of His countenance,” which seemed to illuminate her peaceful face. I had travailed in soul many years for my dear mother who was a deeply exercised person, the burden of her prayers being, “Lord, tell me I am Thy child,” which she kept repeating in her last hours, between her great sufferings and heart pangs (angina). John 14 was read to her about an hour or so before the end, “Let not your heart be troubled” etc., and after that she had no more pain and died with the above words on her lips. It was my custom every Saturday night for years to read to Mother out of the Word of God and converse thereon. I was not a minister in those days; nevertheless I believe Mother was a seal in advance.

### **Three burials**

The next morning I went as usual to my friend’s office, which was in his house. I had no knowledge of the solemn event of the night before. His poor wife opened the door and I shall never forget her face as she said, “Father has had a stroke and is dying and longing to see you.” I must pass over my feelings and the awful shock.

As I entered his bedroom and gazed upon him it was only too evident that the hand of death was upon him, the whole of his left side was paralysed, and it was apparent the end was not far off. He was trying to say something and for some while we could not understand what it was but I seemed to catch the word “Shepherd.” I picked up his Bible and commenced to read the 23rd Psalm and I could see by his face that was what he wanted. After prayer I could tell there was something else he wanted read and one seemed to catch the word “hymn.” I asked his dear wife what was his favourite hymn, and she said Toplady’s number 472 (Gadsby’s Hymns):

“When languor and disease invade  
This trembling house of clay,  
'Tis sweet to look beyond our cage,  
And long to fly away.”

As we read this beautiful hymn he lay perfectly calm and his breath that had been most laborious completely ceased and his end soon came.

Now it seemed the Lord was going to strip me of all earthly props.

Two days after this it pleased the Lord to call the Chairman of the Society from time to eternity. He had served the Society for many years and was held in great respect for his integrity of character and godliness.

This was a busy time of the year with much sickness among the members, and all the accounts to be prepared for audit. I can never forget how I had to lay these things before God for help and wisdom, and to His great praise alone I can say much help was given. Nevertheless it was a time of great trial. Still, through mercy, I was able to rest upon past help and sweet promises which made sweetness mingle with the trial.

“Say Christian, didst thou ever meet  
A trial, great or small  
Without one drop of honey sweet,  
To mingle with the gall.”

The next week was a time still remembered. On Monday dear Mother was laid to rest at West Norwood Cemetery, then Tuesday our dear Secretary and Wednesday our esteemed Chairman, both at Nunhead Cemetery. [Southwark, south east London. One of the seven Victorian cemeteries in London and the second largest.] Each of these dear saints await the resurrection morn when God will “change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself” (Phil. 3. 21).

### **Elected Secretary**

In the following April at the Annual Meeting of the Society I was elected Secretary, which office by the grace of God I held for 40 years, and in looking back one has to repeat the word given that summer’s evening at the commencement of this long period: “The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad” (Psalm 126. 3).

The house that I rented was very small and my office very cramped and the Committee felt I should have a larger and more comfortable residence. I had no means whatever to purchase a house, which they did not expect. Their intention was for the Society to purchase a house and that I should repay Capital together with Interest on the outstanding Capital which was a perfectly legal transaction.

There was a new estate being developed in the locality where the proposed house stood. Now I had many fears about this change because the Lord had been very good to us in our little home and enabled us to



pay our way. I knew this would be an added expense, but it seemed to be an opportunity to purchase a home I could call my own, but I believe it was a snare, which alas it proved to be.

### **Change of residence**

It was in the autumn of 1928 that the move was made and it was a beautiful morning. Everything was packed up and we were waiting for the removers to come, and during this time I opened my Bible and read Genesis 28 and the first clause of verse 15 seemed to come with some power and comfort: "And, behold, I am with thee ... whither thou goest," and verses 20 and 21: "And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on ... then shall the Lord be my God" seemed to confirm the words given a few years before, as already related: "Bread shall be given him; his water shall be sure" (Isaiah 33. 16). I then felt convinced the step I was taking would be overruled by my kind and merciful Covenant God.

I was in poor health when we moved into our new home. I had just finished having all my teeth extracted due to poisoning of the gums, which was considered to be due to my Submarine Service. This had left me in a very weak condition, yet in this I proved, blessed be His name: "I am the Lord that healeth thee" (Exodus 15. 26).

Time rolled on and after a year in our new home God blessed us with our second child. I was now beginning to realise that my former fears were right and that the financial upkeep of my home was proving to be a great burden, which I tried to cast upon the Lord and pray that a way might be opened.

### **Further providential trials and mercies**

A friend at the chapel owned a lot of property in and around London and asked me if I would care to be his agent and collect the rents on commission, which I thankfully agreed to do. I think for about six months I carried on this business and it was a help, but I had to give it up as, with my secretarial work, it proved to be too much.

Again I had to cast my burden upon the Lord and watch His hand. I told the Lord (not presumptuously) that the earth was His, the gold and silver and the cattle upon a thousand hills, also all hearts were in His hands. How remarkably I was to prove the truth of this petition.

A day or so after this I received a letter from my aunt who, as

already related, had been so good to me when my father died. She expressed a wish to see my baby boy and the new home and the visit was arranged. Aunt showed much interest in my home and work, and in the course of conversation remarked, "How do you manage to maintain this with your small salary?" I then told her the position and my anxious concern. Imagine my amazement when suddenly she said, "Would it be any help if I bought this house off your Society and then charged you a small rent? It so happens I have some stock due for repayment in a few days." I thought of my prayers about the gold and silver and all hearts in the Lord's hands. I felt for a moment too overcome to answer and heard my kind aunt saying, "Don't worry about giving an answer now; think it over and let me know what you feel about it." I said, "No need to think it over, the answer has been given, I accept your wonderful offer."

### **Dark days**

What close dealings by prayer with God I had in those days, and how kind He was to hearken to my poor requests and grant such timely help. With the burden of the house now off my shoulders I hoped things would be easier, but I had to experience the words of good Bunyan:

"The Christian man is seldom long at ease -  
When one affliction's o'er another doth him seize."

In the early summer of 1931, my little boy was not very well and one evening I was carrying him in my arms, when suddenly my mind was arrested with these words: "For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the Lord" (Psalm 12. 5). Inwardly I said, What does this mean? and then followed the lines of Medley's hymn:

"When trouble, like a gloomy cloud,  
Has gathered thick and thundered loud,  
He near my soul has always stood;  
His loving-kindness, O how good!"

And sure, the storm soon broke - Church trouble.

It is not my intention to go into this sad business only to say that as far as it concerned myself in September of that year I was compelled to resign my office of Deacon.

These were sad, solemn and dark days and in addition to this my

wife's health was in a poor way, and I could see my days in London were numbered and I should have to seek the quietness of the country, but how this could be possible was beyond my comprehension and it all seemed like a great mountain. I tried to lay my case before the Lord, and the words He had given me some years back when leaving my former home were brought to my memory: "And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest."

I told the Lord that I was completely in the dark as to what way to take, but He knew, and that my future pathway was open to Him. While thus employed in laying my case before my kind covenant God, the following words came with sweetness and comfort to my distracted and troubled spirit: "And I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them" (Isaiah 42. 16).

Now all my fears were stilled under this remarkable promise and how wonderfully and experimentally I was to tread it out in those "paths" at the moment unknown. Then of course there was the house (which belonged to my aunt). Would she be willing for it to be sold? Resting upon the promise I felt the Lord would "straighten" this out.

### **A way made**

Well, the weeks passed and there seemed no signs of a way being made and I had to prove that if God gives a promise it will be tried! Now that hideous monster of unbelief raised his ugly head saying, "How can you break up your nice home and leave your friends and relations behind? How can you think of taking all the Society's work into the country?" "Ifs", "buts" and "hows" were hurled at me.

About this time it came into my mind that I would go and see my aunt who, under God, had been such an earthly benefactress to me. What I chiefly wished to know was how she would react to the idea of selling the house. I felt if she was willing to sell, it would be a sign that the way would, in due course, be made clear for the removal out of London. That journey from West Norwood to Ealing (where my aunt lived) is unforgettable. I wanted a sign for my future movements, and asked the Lord that, if my aunt was willing to sell the property, it would be a sign that I was to move out of London, but if otherwise it meant remaining. Well, I unfolded my case and much kindness and sympathy

was manifested by my relation. I then approached the vital matter of the sale, to which the good lady said, "Sell by all means and I will put the money on deposit to build another house if or when you may want so to do."

On my return home from Ealing the promise given seemed to revive and be re-applied, especially that clause: "I will lead them in paths that they have not known" (Isaiah 42. 16) and I was persuaded the way would soon be made clear. About a week after this, it would be the end of September, I awoke with these words: "This is the way, walk ye in it." The words followed me all day and seemed to distract my mind from my work, and I felt very soon something was going to transpire, and indeed the very next day the "unknown path" was to be made clear.

### **A new house suggested**

A friend who knew a good deal of my providential trials, and solemn Church trouble, called to see me. In the course of conversation on these things, to my amazement (but why?) he said, "I know of a house in Baldock (Hertfordshire) that you could rent, but you must close with the owner by the end of next month. Time is short; put your house in the hand of an agent at once for sale."

I expressed my thanks but said, "It is already in the hand of an agent," and the question being put, "Who was that agent?" I said, "The Lord." "Yes," was the answer, "but you must use the means." "True," I said, "this shall be done tomorrow morning and a board put up THIS HOUSE FOR SALE," and it went up with this prayer: "Lord, send the buyer" and faith was resting on the promise recently given - "This is the way, walk ye in it."

At about 5 o'clock in the afternoon of this selfsame day there was a ring at the front door, and I said, "Lord, is this the buyer?" and so it was! As I let the gentleman in, I felt the Lord had sent him, and as I showed him over the property this was confirmed, for he showed how pleasant and attractive the house seemed to be. The price? Oh yes, he was willing to give the original figure! How grateful I was at this, as my aunt would lose nothing in the sale. To the question, "Could you complete by the end of next month?" he replied strongly in the affirmative. And so the confirmation went on. "This is the way."

I put the legal transaction in the hands of the Society's Solicitors, and when the settlement came the charge was "one shilling." Thus the

Lord went before me in the way, taking up all the “stumbling blocks” out of the way.

### **Preparations for moving**

The three weeks that followed were taken up in preparation for the great exodus. What a time of anxiety and testing of faith it was, and the “accuser of the brethren” did not leave me alone. There was not only the domestic side in the packing up of my home, but the business side, the working of the Society. Notices had to be sent to all the members (then over 800) and the various public bodies in which the capital was invested. Alternative banking arrangements had to be made and the final report given to the Committee. At times it all seemed a high mountain but I proved the truth of the Lord’s word to Zechariah: “Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain.” The three weeks seemed to pass all too quickly and the last weekend arrived. There was a little matter that had to be done, but how often in little things God speaks, and this I was to prove.

The house at Baldock that I was to rent had to have a name and I was very exercised about it. Several names seemed to be suggested but did not abide, but one day it was remarked, why not call it “Ebenezer?” I thought of the wonderful historical setting of this word: “Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.”

*TO BE CONTINUED*

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*Notes on the Surrey Tabernacle Benefit Society:* The Society was formed in 1843 to provide sickness and death benefits for men, and death benefits for their wives. Those receiving benefit had to declare that they were believers in the doctrine of God’s free and sovereign grace. By 1863 the Society had 920 members. Payment at that time was £1 per week, with a £15 grant on a member’s death, and £7.10s on the death of a member’s wife. The Society continued until 1974. Some records of the Society are held in The National Archives and others by the Strict Baptist Historical Society.

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**PERCY JOHN HENRY TOPPING**

Born 26 March 2015

Died 4 April 2015

Aged 9 days

Address given at Bethel Chapel, Luton by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,  
on Wednesday, 22nd April 2015 at the funeral service.

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Readings: Mark 10. 14; Job 19. 25-27; Job 1. 21; Psalm 23;  
Jeremiah 31. 15-17; 1 Corinthians 15. 20-26, 51-57.

Hymns: Sovereign Ruler of the skies (Tune: Chester).  
Around the throne of God in heaven (Tune: Singing Glory).

Beloved friends, there is an exceedingly beautiful verse in the gospels, and it is this: “And Jesus called a little child unto Him.” And that is the reason why we are here today. *Jesus*. It is the desire of Adrian and Rhoda that the crown might be put on the head of the Lord Jesus today for what He has done and the help that He has given to them, for the gift of dear little Percy, and the sweet hope that now he is for ever with the Lord.

There is a great mystery in it – why a tiny child should be born into this world and almost immediately taken out of it. We cannot understand the Lord’s ways. He does work in a mysterious way, but it is not mysterious to Him, and we know this: that the Lord Jesus makes no mistakes, and that all that He does is not only in a way of infinite wisdom and divine sovereignty, but also in grace, also in love. It is the Lord Jesus who has been so kind and so gracious to Adrian and Rhoda at this time – the answer to their prayers, the answer to the prayers of so many of the brethren, sweetly proving that the consolations of God are not small; that miracle of grace that the world knows nothing of, that in the depths of sorrow, through the sanctifying influence of the Holy Ghost the divine Comforter, the Lord’s people can know peace, and they can be satisfied that what the Lord does is right.

But our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ died and rose again. In dying and rising again He took the sting from death, the victory from the grave for all His people. What a death His was! We have to say:

“Thine was a bitter death indeed,  
 Thou harmless, suffering Lamb of God!  
 Thou hast from hell Thy people freed,  
 And drowned destruction in Thy blood.”

And beloved friends, that is the ground upon which we believe in infant salvation – not on the grounds of innocence, because death is the result of sin and all sin in Adam our federal head. “Sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” It is on the grounds of the merit and finished work of the dear Redeemer that we believe today that dear little Percy is in heaven.

I am sure many of you will be familiar with that well-known word. It has appeared in our magazines over the years. I think originally it was found on a gravestone in Bunhill Fields, and it is this:

“Bold infidelity, turn pale and die.  
 Under this stone a baby’s body lies;  
 Say, is he lost or saved?  
 If death’s by sin, he sinned, for he lies here;  
 If heaven’s by works, in heaven he can’t appear;  
 Ah reason, how depraved!  
 Revere the Bible! (sacred page) the knot’s untied;  
 He died, for Adam sinned; he lives, for Jesus died.”

But that beautiful word: “Jesus called a little child unto Him.” “‘Tis but the voice that Jesus sends, to call them to His arms.” And this is what seemed very beautiful to me: “Jesus called a little child *unto Him*” – unto Himself. Well, you say, dear little Percy, where has the Lord Jesus called him to? To die; to the grave; to heaven; *to Himself*. There are many very blessed descriptions of heaven in the Word of God, but I am sure there is nothing more blessed than this: being called to Himself, to His loving arms. That is what Stephen saw, the martyr Stephen. It was a bitter death; it was a terrible death. O but he said, “Behold, I see ... the Son of man standing on the right hand of God” – the only time we ever read of the Lord Jesus standing after His death and resurrection. He “sat down on the right hand of God,” because His work was eternally finished. But it appears that when a sinner saved by grace enters into heaven, the dear Saviour stands there, waiting to receive him. So it is this: unto Himself, His loving arms.

“‘I’ll take these little lambs,’ He cries,  
And fold them to My breast.  
On the sweet bosom of My love  
They shall for ever rest.”

It truly is, “Safe in the arms of Jesus, safe on His loving breast.”

Dear Adrian and Rhoda, I thought about a word for you also, and it came to me like this: this same Lord Jesus, that stormy sea, that tempest, that ocean, but Jesus lovingly, sovereignly, majestically walking over it right where His disciples were and right where you are. “Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.”

It just remains for me to speak a word of loving warning to each one present, old and young. We read there is “a time to be born, and a time to die,” and the Word of God does not promise any time in between. With dear little Percy there were only nine days in between. With many there are many years in between. But it is still that point: “It is appointed ... once to die, but after this the judgment.” O may it be your concern and mine to be made right, to be made ready, that that day may not come upon us unawares.

“Then O my God, prepare  
My soul for that great day;  
O wash me in Thy precious blood,  
And take my sins away.”

The Lord Himself be with you all.



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***Adrian and Rhoda:*** Before we learnt that Percy’s condition was so complex that it was inoperable, we both felt persuaded of the Lord that He was calling Percy to Himself, and we were made willing to give him back to Him that gave him, and not to forbid him, by those words in Mark 10. 14: “Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.” The bitter cup of sorrow in losing our dear little son has been sweetened by the Lord’s presence and blessing. The sting has been removed, feeling assured that Percy has fallen asleep in Jesus, and been taken to glory in those kind arms. “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? But thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

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**THE FIVE POINTS OF CALVINISM**  
*The Fifth Point - Perseverance of the Saints*

<b>CALVINISM AND ARMINIANISM</b>	
	
<b>John Calvin 1509-1564</b>	<b>Jacobus Arminius 1560-1609</b>
<b>The Fifth of the Five Points of Calvinism</b>	<b>The Fifth of the Five Points of Arminianism</b>
Perseverance of the Saints <i>Those saved can never be lost - they are eternally secure</i>	Falling from Grace <i>Believers can freely turn from grace and lose their salvation</i>

There is much misunderstanding of this - the last - of the five points of Calvinism arising from the word itself: 'perseverance.' In everyday speech we use the word to mean a continuing effort in spite of many difficulties, obstacles or discouragements in the way. Many people feel a better word would be 'preservation' as 'perseverance' gives the concept that it is through our own efforts that we shall be finally saved.

This is, of course, the exact opposite of what is intended. The people of God are said to persevere *because* they are preserved.

"Preserved in Jesus when  
My feet made haste to hell."

Amongst the texts quoted by the Arminians that appear to support their view that it is possible to fall from grace are the following:

- “Ye are fallen from grace” (Galatians 5. 4).
- “Shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?” (1 Cor.8.11).
- “Lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway” (1 Cor. 9. 27).
- “Even denying the Lord that bought them” (2 Peter 2. 1).
- “Cursed children” (2 Peter 2. 14).
- “Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness” (2 Peter 3. 17).
- “And be not moved away from the hope of the gospel” (Col. 1. 23).
- “Lest ye fall into condemnation” (James 5. 12).
- “If any of you do err from the truth” (James 5. 19).

The Arminians consider that the selected passages refer to the children of God. In their view a child of God can become an “accursed child.” They are able to produce a list of about forty texts which they claim to show that those that God has once enlightened may fall away and lose their salvation. Quoted are the parable of the sower (believers for a while only), the pruning passages (“if a man abide not in me etc.”), the Hebrews passages (those enlightened, if they fall away etc.), apostasy passages (disciples drawn away, those who make shipwreck of faith), and the Revelation passages (the lukewarm, “I will spue thee out of my mouth”). All of these passages, they claim, are in opposition to the doctrine of eternal security.

Scripture must be interpreted by Scripture. We base our firm belief in the final perseverance of God’s people upon the Lord’s own words: “I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand” John 10. 28. We conclude that it is totally impossible for God’s elect, having once received the grace of God, wholly to lose it, or finally to perish. The words we have quoted are really an oath and promise of God: *“They shall never perish.”*

We do, of course, readily admit that God’s people may at times backslide, perhaps to a great degree, so that to all appearances they may seem to have deserted their profession. But if truly amongst God’s elect, they will be brought back, perhaps by painful experience. Also,

it may please God to hide His face from His people for a time, but not for ever. If the Church were not preserved, the promise of the Spirit to be with her for ever would be untrue (John 14. 16). “The Lord will not forsake His people for His great name’s sake: because it hath pleased the Lord to make you His people” (1 Samuel 12. 22).

A soul once regenerated can never have that act of regeneration revoked. Eternal life is unlosable. It is “hid with Christ in God.” All the elect will eventually arrive safely in glory. There will be difficulties. There will be enemies in the way. But as God has provided for them an eternal inheritance, He will keep them by His power. As Christ has “gone to prepare a place for” each one for whom He died, He will one day Himself receive them to occupy their place for ever.

Many years ago I knew a man who was brought up in a Strict Baptist chapel in the south of England. In due course he applied to join the church and was accepted. After some years he was appointed a Deacon, and to all appearances served the office well. Then his wife died. After a while (perhaps in his loneliness) he joined a choir, as he was very fond of singing. The choir sang a mixture of music, and I remember him telling me some of the songs he sang. He then remarried, his new wife making no profession of religion. He moved away and there, after some years, he died, seemingly with no religion left (though we do not know of his deathbed). Now we would not be his judge - but what are we to make of cases like this? Unless he was given repentance at the last, we have to conclude that this may have been a solemn case of deception, and that he never was truly a child of God.

All of our readers will find this to be extremely solemn, and heart-searching. How often, like the apostle Paul, we fear that at last we shall be a castaway and prove not to have been right. How far a man can go in a profession of religion, but it all comes to nothing! How we long to be sure that “the root of the matter” is found in us. If we are *truly* concerned on this point, we may take courage, as good desires are not found in our hearts by nature.

We will close with Christ’s own words: “And this is the Father’s will which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day” John 6. 39.

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## THE DEATH OF JOHN CALVIN

As we conclude our series on the five points of Calvinism, we thought it would be timely to write a little on the death of Calvin.



*Interior of St. Pierre's*

The quarten fever had raged in Geneva for two years. It was a mild form of malaria and caused a fever that recurred at approximately three-day intervals, and Calvin caught it in 1559. Shortly after recovering, he aggravated his already troublesome lung condition by overstraining his voice preaching in St. Pierre's.

This brought on a violent fit of coughing at home afterwards, so violent that he broke a blood-vessel in his lungs and had a bad haemorrhage. From this time his delicate health declined.



*Carried through this door*

He suffered great pain, and was weakened more and more by pulmonary tuberculosis. By the beginning of 1563 'he was often carried to his duties in a chair or on horseback.' Added complications were gout, bladder stones, and ulcers. The pulpit at St. Pierre's (St. Peter's Cathedral) soon knew him no more. He preached his last sermon on 6 February 1564, but was unable to finish it due to a violent cough.



*His chair*

On 6 April 1564 he wrote to his friend Bullinger, "My lungs are so full of phlegm that my breathing is difficult and short. A stone in my bladder has been very troublesome for the last twelve days. I have an ulcer in my haemorrhoid veins that tortures me."

At this time, in public prayer, he said: "We have already entered in hope upon the threshold of our eternal inheritance, and know that there is a certain mansion for us in heaven." On Easter Day he partook of the

Lord's supper in St. Pierre's. He continued to dictate letters from his bed, and discussed with ministers some revisions to the French New Testament. When urged to rest he said, "What! would you have the Lord find me idle when he comes?"

On 25 April he made his will. There was not much to leave. Even the Pope (Pius IV) said of him, "Money never had the slightest charm for him."



*Calvin's deathbed*

The next day the ministers met at his house, and he delivered his last message to them. "I am so weak," he said, "that I faint when I am put to bed, and all the time I cannot get my breath." His request to the ministers was this: "I pray you make no change, no innovation. People often ask for novelties. All changes are dangerous and sometimes hurtful."

He sent a letter to his dear friend William Farel: "Since it is God's will that you should outlive me, remember our friendship. I draw my breath with difficulty, and expect each moment to breathe my last. It is enough that I live and die for Christ, who is, to all His followers, a gain both in life and in death."



Farel (now 75 years old) went to see him for the last time. After this, Calvin asked that the people should pray for him, rather than visit him.

For another fortnight he lingered in great pain. He tried still to work. He repeated verses from the Psalms. Frequently he was heard to say from Psalm 39, "I opened not my mouth because

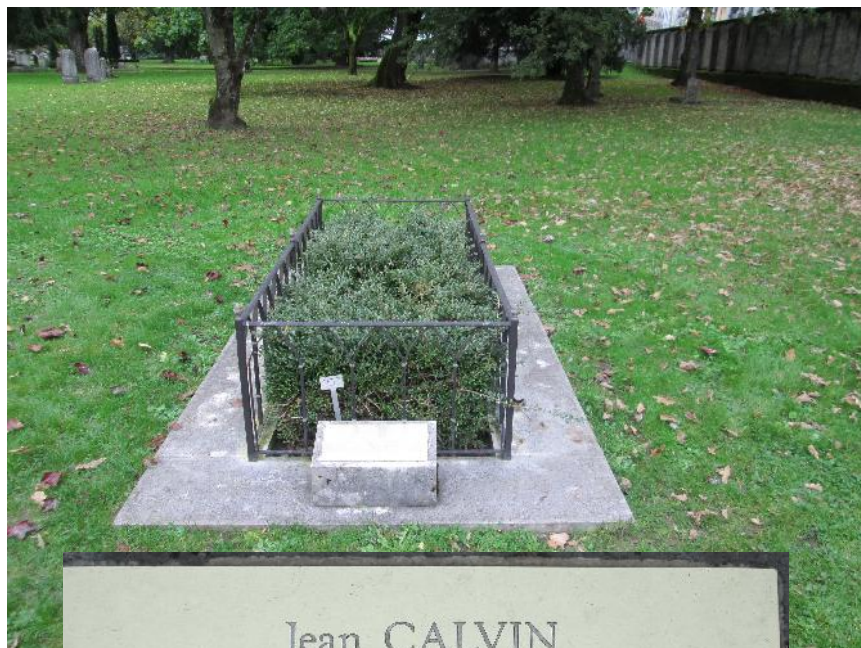
Thou didst it.” He was in command of his mind until the end.

His friend Theodore Beza, who had shortly before left him, was called back at 8 o’clock, but he found the master departed.

On Saturday, 27 May 1564, the *Registre de Conseil* reported, “Today about 8 o’clock in the evening, *le sponsable* (respected) *Ian Calvin* has gone to God whole and entire in sense and understanding. Thanks be to God.” He was 54 years of age.

He was buried the next day, Lord’s Day, 28 May 1564, in the common cemetery, the *Cimetière des Rois*, also known as *Cimetière de Plain Palais*, without a tombstone, as he himself had wished. His body was to be sewed into a white shroud and laid in a simple pine coffin.

And there he lies today, awaiting the resurrection morn.





## LIFE-GIVING FUNGUS

Fungi (the plural of fungus) seem to be neither plant nor animals, but they are among the largest living organisms on the planet, stretching for miles underground! This unseen network of fine, branching threads are called *hyphae*. They are grouped together in a cobweb-like net called a *mycelium*. The only part of this vast organism that we see is its fruit: the mushrooms and toadstools that appear in our woods and fields every autumn. These fruit release millions of spores which are blown away by the wind, or carried off by animals which like to feed on the fungus. If these spores land in a suitable spot, they grow into new fungi.



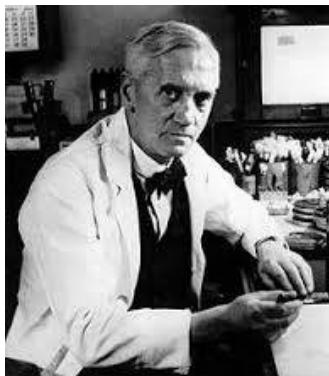
*Left: Death cap. Right: Fly agaric. Both are dangerously poisonous, and should never be eaten.*

Fungi can be found almost anywhere, though they prefer damp places where they can find nutrients from the soil or from other decaying materials such as rotten trees. Fungi have an important job to do in the woodland as they break down dead leaves and wood and return nutrients back into the soil.

Through God's mercy, it has been possible in more recent times to harness the properties of fungi for the good of mankind. The treatment of many diseases, and the success of modern surgery, depends largely upon the use of antibiotics. These are chemical substances able to destroy harmful germs, and many such substances are known.

The story of penicillin is well known. It is sometimes said that penicillin was discovered by accident. Rather it was due to the keen observation of Sir Alexander Fleming, who first saw the meaning of something which must have happened many times before to other bacteriologists. In 1928 he was growing lots of bacteria known as *staphylococci* on agar plates. They say his laboratory was very untidy,

and sometimes he was a bit slapdash. Before going on holiday he made two mistakes. He had not put all his plates in bleach to sterilise them, and he left the windows open. When he came back from holiday he found that most of the plates were mouldy.



*Sir Alexander Fleming*

He noticed that although there were many bacteria growing on his plates there was a clear ring in the jelly around some of the spots of mould - no bacteria were growing there. But instead of just throwing his preparation away he set himself to find out exactly what had killed the bacteria.

He was actually growing a culture of bacteria which commonly cause boils, and they had formed little colonies visible to the naked eye on a shallow dish of jelly. The mould which had attacked the jelly was a green one like that which grows on old cheese or damp stale bread. It belonged to the same family as the common green mould, *Penicillium*, but was of the rather uncommon variety.

He suspected that the mould, a lowly kind of fungus, was producing some substance which spread slowly through the jelly and was a poison to the microbes. The next step was to analyse the jelly and extract the mysterious substance, but this proved a very difficult task.

Not only was the substance present in very minute amounts but it was likely to be so complex in structure that the usual methods of extraction would destroy it. Boiling, for instance, was ruled out, and to make matters worse it had to be extracted in a very few days because it rapidly lost its power. It would not keep, even in the fridge.

At first it was possible to prepare only a weak solution of the substance. By 1934 Fleming had given up on penicillin, and began other work. However, in 1938 scientists from Oxford University decided to do some work on penicillin, and managed to isolate a reddish-brown powder which was so enormously powerful that they thought they had at last obtained pure penicillin. They infected eight



*Mould on newly-opened jar of Marmalade*

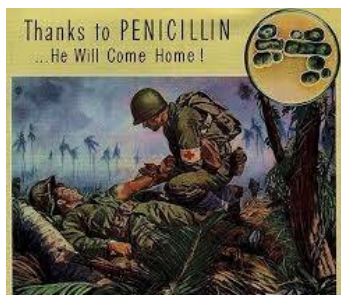




mice with bacteria which would normally kill them. Four mice were given penicillin. The four treated mice stayed healthy, but the other four died. They then went on to treat a 43 year old policeman named Albert Alexander dying of a blood infection. He was given penicillin for five days and was well on the way to health again when the penicillin ran out. The infection came

back and Albert died. We can understand now why our doctors always say: "Finish the course."

Some of the first of this type of anti-germ substances to come into use were the sulphonamide drugs, the most famous of which was known as "M and B 693". It was discovered by Lionel Whitby at the British firm May & Baker Ltd and logged in their Test Book on 2 November 1937. Until this drug was discovered about twenty pneumonia patients out of every hundred died. Famously, it was successfully used to treat Winston Churchill's bacterial pneumonia in 1942. He said: "This admirable M&B, from which I did not suffer any inconvenience, was used at the earliest moment and, after a week's fever, the intruders were repulsed." In 1944, it was also used to save a lion named Nero from pneumonia! The drug could either be taken in tablet form or the powder could be placed in wounds. It was used so widely during the Second World War that May & Baker had difficulty keeping up with demand.



The most effective nutrient base for growing penicillin was maize. The penicillin loved it and the yield was far greater when used. However, it was not commonly grown in Britain. During the war the United States government pushed industry into producing penicillin to meet the demands of the military.

Penicillin was by no means the answer to all anti-septic problems. Although it destroys many kinds of bacteria, tuberculosis, influenza and whooping cough, for instance are unaffected by it. In the early days, it

was unstable and its antibacterial activity short-lived. Most of the penicillin administered was rapidly cleared from the body by the kidneys - scientists would reuse penicillin extracted from urine.

After the discovery of penicillin, science extended its search for other lowly fungi to fight diseases against which penicillin was not effective. One such mould found was *Streptomyces griseus*, and this is used in the manufacture of streptomycin. This antibiotic has proved very effective in the fight against that dreaded disease tubercular meningitis, that is, infection of the membranes of the brain by the tubercle bacillus.



The greatest concern today is the increase in bacteria resistant to antibiotics. One of the most feared infections in hospitals today is MRSA (methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*). Efforts are under way to find new antibiotics that are effective against such drug-resistant bacteria.

Many of God's gifts to mankind seem to have been reserved for use until now, in the last times. The Scriptures (Book of Daniel) tell us that at the time of the end "knowledge shall be increased." There have, of course, always been fungi on the earth, but it is only of recent years that their powerful properties have been harnessed for medical use. So although we must be thankful for what can now be done to combat disease, may these wonderful advances in medical science be a reminder to us that we are living in the last times.

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**Miss Norah Harwood** was Matron at the Brighton Bethesda Home for 28 years from 1951 - 1979. She kept notes on many of the residents; the following being fairly typical: Miss Wilcox was a poor little person, at times most distressed mentally. One morning, during a bad turn, I went into her room expecting to see her in great distress, but found her lying peacefully in bed, and she smiled and said, "'I shall sleep sound in Jesus, And in his likeness rise.' I shall. He has told me so." She had spent much of her time in a mental hospital, but she had a good religion and we believe it is well with her now. She died in November 1961.

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## IN PERILS

by John Chandler

*Eleven-year-old John Chandler set off in 1849 with a party of Strict Baptists from Brighton for a new life in the Melbourne district of Australia. His extremely interesting autobiography has recently been republished by Gospel Standard Trust Publications under the title Forty Years in the Wilderness. Hundreds of footnotes have been added which greatly enhance the interest and value of the book. The following extract is taken from the chapter "In perils."*

### **Saved from a lightning strike**

I once passed through Castlemaine, and as I went up Barker's Creek, it got very dark. The day had been very hot and sultry, and I had wet all my blankets and covered up my butter to keep it from melting. I crossed the creek at Harcourt, and drew up under a big red gum tree to camp. A storm was brewing and there was not a breath of wind. Not a living being had I seen for more than an hour, and no camps about.

The stillness and loneliness seemed oppressive. I began to take out my horses, for I had two, and one was on an outrigger. A thought came into my mind that I would go to the next tree, so hooked up my horses again. It was so dark that I had to do everything by feeling.

I went about forty yards and took my horses out, but before I could get them covered and tied up, there came on a fearful storm. The thunder roared, the lightning flashed, and the noise and echo from the granite mountains around were terrible. I heard a noise amidst it all like a thousand pieces of board being broken, and then the rain came down like a deluge.

The creek, which I had just crossed and was only eighteen inches deep, now became a roaring torrent that nothing could cross. It swept away the bridges and the Chinamen's gardens, and one life was lost at Campbell's Creek.

I could do nothing for more than an hour but hold my horses' heads, as the poor things were so frightened. I got drenched to the skin - even my boots were full of water - and as all my blankets were wet, I had to soak in it till the morning.

The lightning had struck the tree where I first stopped, and had torn a piece right out of the centre, about two tons weight, and it fell right

across where my cart had stopped. If I had remained there I would have been crushed. O the goodness and mercy of our God!

“Not a single shaft can hit,  
Till the God of love sees fit.”

The storm passed over during the night, and it was fine in the morning, but you could see the effects of it everywhere by the great gullies it had torn across the roads. All my food was spoilt, and I could get nothing till I got into Bendigo.

I stayed with some of the brethren there, and we had some good times together recounting the Lord’s mercies.

### **Accident on a steep and rocky hill**

Going down the Porcupine Hill one trip, it was very steep and great



*“Great granite rocks to go over”*

granite rocks to go over, my horses’ backband broke and they made a bolt. My shaft horse fell, and my horse in the outrigger kicked his swingle-tree right over his head, and that came across his knees, so he fell too. I fell right onto the shaft horse, and

all the boxes of butter and eggs came tumbling on top of me. It was a regular smash. The articles falling stopped the horses from running away, which would have been fearful down that steep hill among those rocks. I was not hurt much, but had some difficulty to extricate myself from the boxes and horses who were struggling to get up.

I was all alone, and no one near. It took me a long while to get my horses clear. My harness was much broken, but an old carrier has many resources. My shafts were not broken, and my butter and eggs were knocked about a lot, but I came off better than I expected.

### **Pinned to the earth**

As I was coming down from Bendigo, I stopped late at the Coliban River. It was very dark and raining hard. It was near the place where the man offered me a loaded pistol one morning. I drew alongside the river, intending to camp for a while, and bait my horses and then go on. I took my horses out, and then went to the back of the cart to see that my propstick was safe, when the propstick slipped and the cart tipped back on me pinning me to the earth. I could not move, and the water



*"I was near the river"*

was running under me. I was near the river, and if it kept raining all night I would be drowned before morning, for the river would be all around where I was, so cried out as loud as I could for help. The Lord in His providence had two men camping about two hundred

yards higher up. They heard me, but thought someone had fallen into the river.

They came running down, and soon pulled the cart off me and helped me up. I then put my horses in and went to their camp. They gave me a pannican of hot tea, and I got something to eat and fixed my horses. It still continued to rain very hard. Poor fellows, they got wet through, and there was hardly room for us three to lie down in the tent as it was so small. I scraped the mud off me, and we sat down all night. I started early next morning, and got home safe about twelve o'clock that night.

### **Heavy loads**

I may state here that I broke my axle three times through taking too heavy loads, twice on the plains, where there was no one to help me, and once at the corner of Collins and Swanston Streets where I had too many to help me. I would rather be where there was no one, for I hate a crowd. I have mentioned these deliverances so that I could give my

gracious Lord thanks for His mercy in preserving me so many times. "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord" (Psalm 107. 43).

*(We are very grateful to Mr. Graham Hadley, who has recently visited Australia, for the photographs of the typical terrain John Chandler would have had to negotiate.)*

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### IDLE WORDS

*"But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment" Matthew 12. 36.*

Using digital voice recorders over an eight-year period, researchers at the University of Arizona studied how many words hundreds of American and Mexican college students spoke over several days. The students carried the voice-activated recorders for almost all of their waking hours, about 17 hours a day.

It was found on average that men speak 7,000 words a day - but women speak 20,000 words a day! That is the equivalent of 7,300,000 words a year!

What a solemn thought that is. How many idle words have we spoken today? How many did we speak yesterday? How many did we speak on the last Sabbath Day?

One day, every one of those idle words will come to light at the day of judgment. The word of God says we "shall give account thereof" - not give *an* account thereof. It is easy to give *an* account of our words and actions, perhaps putting our own slant on them by way of excuse or justification. No - at the day of judgment it will be as it really was.

Our marriage service expresses it well: "As ye will answer at the dreadful day of judgment, when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed." There will be no excuses for idle words then.

We are told in James' epistle that the tongue is a "little member" - just a small part of our bodies. But he goes on to remind us "how great a matter a little fire kindleth." One spark can set on fire a mansion!

No wonder David said: "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips."

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### WHAT WE SAY

Words are things of little cost,  
Quickly spoken, quickly lost;  
*We* forget them, but they stand,  
Witnesses at God's right hand;  
And their testimony bear  
For us, or against us, there.

Oh! how often ours have been  
Idle words and full of sin,  
Words of anger, scorn or pride,  
Or deceit our faults to hide;  
Envious tales or strife unkind,  
Leaving bitter thoughts behind.

Grant us Lord from day to day,  
Strength to watch and grace to pray,  
May our lips, from sin kept free,  
Love to speak and sing of Thee;  
Till, in heaven, we learn to raise,  
Hymns of everlasting praise.

*From an autograph book belonging to the mother of Miss Mary Watts  
who died in the Harpenden Bethesda Home in April 2015 aged 96 years.*

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### SHOUT IT

Dr. William Robinson, lecturing at Columbia Theological Seminary in Georgia, would ask his students: "Who is the head of the church?" His students were somewhat in awe of 'Dr. Robbie,' although he always called them 'dear brother.' If they answered correctly, but softly, "Jesus Christ is the only head of the church," he would reply with a booming voice, "Don't *say* it, dear brother, *shout* it."

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### NATIONAL SERVICE DAYS

*A short while ago, one of our ministers preached from 1 Chron. 4. 9 - 10 concerning Jabez and his prayer "that Thou wouldst keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me." During the course of his sermon he exhorted the younger members of the congregation to make a stand and to pray their way along as they leave home to go to college, university or employment, and spoke of some personal experiences from his National Service days. At the Editor's request, he kindly wrote these out for us, and has added one or two more.*

I received my call up papers and entered the RAF for National Service in November 1958. I can remember thinking that morning, "Well, there does not seem to be anything for me in religion, so I might as well give it all up." So I left my Bible at home and set off to RAF Cardington in Bedfordshire.

Now, looking back, I hope I can see a little of the Lord's goodness, love and mercy to me. I very soon found that I was alone; nobody seemed to want my company, and I certainly did not want theirs. What I did want was a Bible - if only I had brought one with me. However, at the end of the first week, I was able to purchase one from the RAF church on the camp. I can remember finding a quiet place that evening and reading from my Bible. I do not remember what I read, but it was a great comfort to me to have a Bible.

After one week, I was moved to RAF Bridgenorth in Shropshire for eight weeks' training. From here I was able to get to chapel at Sedgley each Sunday, with the exception of one Sunday in December, which I shall never forget, nor do I wish to. I was on duty in the cook-house and in the washroom, and washing up hundreds of plates etc., and I was all on my own, but feeling very cast down because I was not able to get to chapel on this Sunday. There was something I liked about the late Mr. J. E. Field's ministry, and I wanted to hear him.

Here I was then in this washroom of the cook-house, when, I believe, the Lord spoke these words to me: "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness." It was a word which came with some degree of power. I had never experienced or received the like of it before. It gave me some hope that perhaps, after all, the Lord did care for me. As soon as I had finished duty, I went back to the billet and got my Bible out. It took me a long time to find these words, not knowing



my Bible, but when I did find them, I wept, because I did not hear the remainder of the verse, and the Devil said, “You never will be filled with righteousness.” Some years later I heard one of the Lord’s servants, Mr. R. J. Moore, preach from this text, which was a very sweet and special time to me.

There is another Sunday I wish to mention. As I have said, I managed to get to Sedgley Chapel whilst stationed at Bridgenorth, and on the sixth weekend of my training my very kind friends said to me, “We shall quite understand if you do not get here next week.” I was a little puzzled by this remark and asked what they meant by it. They explained that the last weekend, I would find that I would not be allowed out of camp, and said, “It always happens. We never see the RAF lads here the last Sunday they are at Bridgenorth, and, what’s more, they do not tell you until mid-day Saturday.”

Well, I went back to camp that night and thought, “Well, I shall try and pray about this and see what happens.” So on and off during the week I tried to pray that I might be able to get to the chapel next Sunday, in spite of what had been told me, which I had no reason to disbelieve. Saturday mid-day came, and the whole of the ‘flight’ (between sixty and seventy of us) were lined up outside of our billets. Out came the sergeant. He was a Scotsman and a great big man, well over six feet tall, and a voice that filled us with fear, who then spoke to us as follows: “Now lads, generally for this last weekend we confine you all to camp, but we are not going to do that this weekend. In fact, if any of you can get home you are free to do so, but just make sure you are back in camp by 10 o’clock Sunday night.” He then went on to say, “I do not really know why I am doing this.” I quietly thought to myself, “I know why,” and there was some joy in my heart that my poor prayers had been heard, and I would be able to get to Sedgley Chapel tomorrow after all.

I went to Sedgley the next day, to the surprise of my friends, who said, “Well, I think you are the first one that has ever been here on the last Sunday whilst at Bridgenorth.” I was not strong enough to tell them about my poor prayers. Sadly, I am unable to remember the text on that Lord’s Day, but it was like many meals we each have, very satisfying. I do remember how the Lord’s dear servant prayed for me on the evening of that Lord’s Day. Oh, how lovingly he committed me into

the Lord's hand, asking the Lord to be my protector, and to guide all my steps. It is now 56 years ago, and I can still remember the sweetness of that prayer.

I was stationed at RAF Uxbridge after the eight weeks' training, and occasionally I went to Ponsard Road Chapel (sadly now closed) in north west London on a Wednesday evening. The late Mr. F. Windridge was the pastor there in those days. I can remember two occasions particularly, although I cannot remember the text on either occasion.

The first occasion Mr. Windridge seemed to find me out, and cut me all to pieces. Truly all my righteousnesses were as filthy rags, and he made me feel it. I returned to Uxbridge pleading for mercy. I now realise it was not the minister, but rather the Lord.

The second occasion was sometime after, when I went again, wondering, "Could there be any mercy for such a one as myself?" The dear old man read and prayed as usual, then gave out his text, and then started his sermon as follows: "There may be someone in here tonight that is saying that the Lord has never shown any mercy to me." I could have cried out "Yes! He has never shown me any mercy." "Well," said he, "isn't it a mercy that you are here in this chapel tonight, and not in a deserved hell?" I had never thought of matters like this before, and so yes, after all, I had received mercy from Him, for which I hope I tried to thank Him.

### **Standing firm and being acknowledged by others**

One other little thing I would mention about my RAF days. As has already been mentioned, I was stationed at RAF Uxbridge in the Queen's Colour Squadron. Our billets there were of quite a good standard, brick-built and in three floor blocks. Each floor was divided into twelve rooms, with three men in each room. The names of the other two lads in the room I was in were Harry and John, and I was always called Dick. Uxbridge camp was right on the edge of the town, which was quite a busy place, plus a number of picture houses/cinemas.

Early one evening some of the other lads came into our room and asked Harry and John, "Are you coming to the pictures tonight?" I cannot remember their answer now. Then one of them turned to me and asked the same question: "Dick, are you coming to the pictures tonight?" knowing full well what my answer would be. But then one

=of these room mates said, “What? If Dick went to the pictures the end of the world would come.” Nothing else was said. On that occasion I did not have to give an answer. In looking back at this event, I hope I can see the prayer mentioned above of Mr. Field was answered, when the Lord was indeed my protector.

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### A MOTHER’S PRAYER ANSWERED

In the time of the American Civil War (1860), which began following the election of Abraham Lincoln as President, a Yankee soldier, a member of Cole’s Maryland Cavalry, was wounded. The poor man was carried as a prisoner to Andersonville, Georgia.



*Yankee Cavalry Soldier*

Fever set in and one night the doctors gave him up as hopeless. But the next day, to their surprise, he was greatly improved. When the war was over and the prisoner returned to his home, he told the incident to his sisters. They immediately got out the calendar and, checking the time, said, “That was the night our mother walked the floor all night praying for you.”

What an encouragement for parents, when their children leave home, to continue in prayer for them. May the Lord grant answers as He did to Hannah: “For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of Him.”

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### GIVE THEM THE OLD HYMNS

The Bishop of Chester, assisting at the Lord’s Table in St. Nathaniel’s, Liverpool, was noticed, whilst singing the second hymn, to have tears trickling down his face. After the service, he said to the vicar, “Give the people the old hymns and tunes. Give them over and over again. I do not think there is anything out of heaven, like a whole congregation praising God.” (*Approximately 1870.*)

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### CLIFTON CHAPEL



Clifton chapel in Bedfordshire has become quite well-known since the annual meetings of the Gospel Standard Societies have been held there in recent years. Those who sat in the gallery at this year's meeting may have noticed that the back part of the gallery has been much improved by the addition of a number of excellent pews which have replaced the old swing-back pews, although some of these remain.

The six pews were a gift from the chapel of the former Bedford High School for Girls. This school was one of several private schools in Bedford run by The Harper Trust. It has now merged with the Dame Alice Harpur School in new premises and renamed as the Bedford Girls' School. As the Trust is a registered charity, they were not able to sell the pews, but could transfer them to a place of worship without any payment by the new owner.



Included in the gift were a lectern, a display cabinet, and a two-manual pipe organ which is being tuned and put into order by Mr. David Lawson's grandsons.

The chapel building was erected in 1853, although a Strict Baptist church was first formed in Clifton in 1844. By the time the chapel was built there were in the region of 140 members. The three-sided gallery was erected a few years later through the kind help of the readers of *The Little Gleaner* and *The Sower*. The gallery, which seats 180, was packed for the evening service of this year's annual meeting - mainly occupied by the many young people attending. Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom preached the annual sermon, and the hymns were given out by Mr. J. Cottington, the vice-Chairman of the Gospel Standard Societies.

## AN UNEXPECTED DONATION

*We are grateful to a friend who has sent in this interesting account.*

Most of our readers will know of the work of the Savannah Education Trust (<http://www.savannaheducationtrust.org>), the Christian charity which provides education to needy areas of Ghana. The Lord has wonderfully provided for this cause, and donations sometimes come in from unlikely sources. During a conversation recently the background to one of these mysterious donations came to light!

I work for a large German company, owned and run by a man who has, it seems, no fear or true knowledge of God at all. This man once admitted to a group of his staff, including myself, that he was often left to use swear words when making internal company presentations. He said that he knew it was a bad habit, one he wanted to be rid of, and offered to donate 500 euros every time one of us heard him use such words. Well, despite his good intentions, he still continued to use coarse language from time to time, but it seems no one took him up on his offer. A few months later, I was at a seminar where he was one of the speakers, and sure enough, his old habit was still evident, and he again used a swear word when making a point. Immediately I reminded him of his promise to pay a fine, he smiled, and asked what the charity should be, and was quite surprised to hear about the Savannah Education Trust, but promised to make the donation that same day.

Around two years later I met one of the trustees of the charity, and after a while I asked him if he ever received a 500 euro donation from an unknown German source, and was told that this money had indeed been paid! How amazing that the Lord can use a sinful man to provide for His work!

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## A FEW CURRENT MATTERS

### **Sale of £1 coin**

A rare £1 coin dating from 1643, a year after the start of the English Civil War, has recently been sold by auction for £46,000. The legend on the back of the coin was from Psalm 68. 1: "Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered." The coin had been handed down through several generations and the owner had no idea of its value.

**M&S bans use of the word ‘Christ’**

The words ‘Christ’ and ‘Jesus Christ’ have been labelled offensive by Marks and Spencer. The words may no longer be used as part of written greetings with online purchases of flowers. However, ‘Allah’ remains an acceptable word. Former Archbishop of Canterbury, Lord Carey, said: “If Christ becomes an offensive word in a Christian land, then all of us should be alarmed.”

**The Turin Shroud**

The Shroud of Turin is a centuries old linen cloth that bears the image of a crucified man, that millions believe to be Jesus of Nazareth. Is it really the cloth that wrapped His crucified body, or is it simply a medieval forgery?

The Turin Shroud went back on public display on April 20th for the first time since 2010. Before the display opened more than one million people had already made reservations to see it. When on display five years ago it was seen by around 2.5million people. The 4ft-long cloth will be displayed until June 24th in a climate-controlled case in Turin’s cathedral, with the Pope planning to visit on June 21st.

The authenticity of the shroud is highly doubtful. With such idolatry we are reminded of good King Hezekiah: when the people began to worship and show undue reverence to the brasen serpent, “he brake in pieces the brasen serpent that Moses had made.” He called it “Nehushtan” - just a piece of brass.

**Oldest person dies**

The world’s oldest person died in April a few weeks after celebrating her 117th birthday. The Japanese lady, Misao Okawa, was born 5 March 1898. She married and had three children. Her favourite food was noodle soup! Her husband died in 1921. Less than a week later the new title-holder, American Gertrude Weaver passed away at the age of 116. There are now only three known people living born before 1900, the oldest of whom is Mrs Jeralean Talley, who was born on 23 May 1899. Speaking of her long life, she said, “It is the Lord. Everything is in His hands.” Moses tells us that “the days of our years are threescore years and ten” - any extension is borrowed time, a gift granted by God.

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Who made the golden buttercups,  
 And taught them how to grow?  
 Who kept them through the winter time  
 Down underneath the snow?  
 Who made the pretty daisies white?  
 And gave them hearts of gold?  
 Who told them in the summer time  
 Their petals to unfold?

Traditional hay and wildflower-rich meadows have been disappearing at an alarming rate, 97 per cent of this precious habitat having been lost since the 1940s. Wildlife Trusts are passionate about restoring wildflower meadows. They support scarce and declining species of flowering plants and support busy insect life. Thankfully, over the past twenty years there has been renewed interest in wildflower habitats. Old, mismanaged wildflower meadows have been restored and new meadows created. A wildflower meadow can be described as one of our summer's spectaculars, simply bursting with colour, buzzing with insects and alive with animals.

- Plant diversity attracts butterflies, birds and most important, bumblebees.
- Flowering plants add a changing palette of colour to urban environments.
- Opportunities for education and recreation abound.
- A wildflower garden can bring the countryside into a town.

More home gardeners are recreating these beautiful habitats. Patience is needed: creating a beautiful meadow from seed will take 3 to 5 years, but it will go on improving over 15 to 20 years. Our hymn at the top of the page asked five questions. The same hymn gives the answer:

'Tis God the heavenly Father good,  
 Who made and cares for all.  
 For birds, and bees, and shining stars;  
 He knows if one should fall.  
 And if He cares for little things,  
 And tells them what to do,  
 He surely loves His children more,  
 And watches o'er them too.





# PERCEPTION

A Quarterly Magazine for Young People

*In this edition:  
Remembering the 600th anniversary  
of the death of John Huss*



"And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb,  
and by the word of their testimony; and they loved  
not their lives unto the death." Revelation 12. 11

**AUTUMN 2015**



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**Cover picture:** The City of Prague and the John Huss Memorial.

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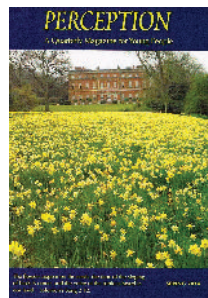
## EDITORIAL

*“Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned?”  
(Proverbs 6. 27).*



*The devastating fire at Clandon Park*

Many of us were shocked earlier this year to hear of the devastating fire at the 18th-century National Trust property at Clandon Park, near Guildford, Surrey which broke out on Wednesday, 29th April. You may remember that the property, with its wonderful display of daffodils, featured on the front cover of *Perception* in Spring 2014. Sixteen fire crews grappled with the fire for many hours to bring it under control. During the First World War the property was used as a military hospital, where more than 5000 patients were treated. Now, completely gutted and virtually all of its valuable contents destroyed, it awaits whatever restoration may be possible, a victim of *fire*.



In recent times many other iconic landmarks have been badly damaged by fire, such as the seaside piers at Hastings in 2010, and at Eastbourne last year. Both of these Sussex piers were designed by the same engineer, and built in the early 1870's. For over 140 years they had withstood the forces of nature, the battering of the sea and sometimes violent storms - but their severest damage was inflicted through the effects of *fire*.

Although fire is highly valued by mankind, at the same time nothing has been more feared. Most of us have seen those huge metal shutters in country mansions that were used at night, after the fire had died down, to seal off the fireplace to ensure that not even the smallest spark could escape. How often have we read about some historic church where the information begins, "An earlier church stood on the site, but this was destroyed by fire in 1348 . . ." or words to that effect.

In old people's homes, including our own Bethesda Homes, much time is spent in fire training. One of a Home's most important documents is the *Procedure in event of fire*. Many changes have had to be made to buildings such as fire doors, the fitting of intumescent sealing strips that keep out smoke, and fire alarms that have to be regularly tested, all to protect us from *fire*.

Through the ages fire has been used in warfare. In the Bible we read on more than one occasion of cities being totally destroyed by fire. "And it came to pass, when David and his men were come to Ziklag on the third day, that the Amalekites had invaded the south, and Ziklag, and smitten Ziklag, and burned it with fire" (1 Samuel 30. 1). Even Samson avenged his enemies when his three hundred foxes destroyed the Philistines' standing corn by means of firebrands fixed to their tails. In more recent times, on the night of Sunday, 29 December 1941 the City of London was largely destroyed by incendiary fire bombs dropped by the Germans. This resulted in a 'fire watchers scheme' being set up, and in certain buildings it was compulsory to have someone on guard twenty-four hours a day. The duty of a Fire Guard (as they became known) was to watch for the fall of fire bombs in the area for which they were responsible, with the aim of stopping small fires becoming big fires.

It is said that fire is a good servant, but a bad master. There are, of course, many beneficial uses of fire, the most obvious of which are that

it heats our homes and cooks our food. Children sometimes ask, What is fire made of? This is a very difficult question to answer. Classical Western philosophers divided the world into four elements: earth, water, air, and fire. Though we now recognise not four but 118 elements, the philosophers' view corresponded roughly with our modern concepts of matter: solids, liquids, and gases. However, fire is something altogether different as what we are seeing is an *effect* rather than something we can call matter. We cannot scoop up fire and put it in a sealed tin like other matter! It is, rather, a chemical reaction between oxygen in the atmosphere and some sort of fuel.

Although all this may be interesting, we need to turn to our text. Here we find that an important question is asked: "Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned?" No person in his right mind would ever consider taking literal fire to his person, so what did the wise man have in mind? Well, each of us at various times may find ourselves in certain situations or circumstances where, through the sinful nature of our hearts, there is a dangerous temptation present. Young people today face many dangers as they go out into the wider world. Perhaps they feel they are strong enough to resist the temptations that surround them. There may be some activity or event taking place that the young person may not be entirely happy about. They convince themselves that they will not get too deeply involved, so that they need not fear any harm. But think again of our text. If we dabble (for want of a better word) in things contrary to God's word, we can be sure we shall get burnt.

In the sermon on the mount, the Lord Jesus said, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." We normally think of mammon as meaning riches and wealth, and indeed we find that John Wycliffe in his translation uses the old English word *richesses*. However, a wider interpretation is possible, embracing everything that is of the world. How easily we can get caught up in worldliness, and this will be as fire in our bosom.

Many of the Lord's people are deeply concerned at the worldliness that is creeping into churches which once held traditional services and had sober preaching. Recently a local Baptist church hosted an event titled *Calling All Youth* where the aim was to emphasize that life with Jesus really is "Life 2 The Max." Amongst those appearing was a singer of the Tribe fame, someone else was billed as a 'basketball juggler

extra-ordinaire,’ and another an ‘escapologist and illusionist.’ We hardly like to sully our pages with such awful things, but we need to be aware that this is the fare of much of the religious world today. The heading of the leaflet claimed unbelievably that the aim was “Reaching young people for Jesus Christ, engaging them in effective Christian living.” How such things can promote “effective Christian living” we do not know.

We cannot stress too strongly to our young people, perhaps as they leave home for work or university, never to be drawn into anything of this nature. You will almost certainly be burned by it. Solomon says, “Lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul.”

Perhaps you think we are talking of extreme scenarios. Yes, we are, but it is apparent that in many places the *trend* is towards contemporary worship, with trivial hymns accompanied by all the regalia of modern music where previously the only instrument was the organ. We were surprised and shocked to pick up a pile of twenty or so hymnsheets from recent weddings held at a parish church, where none of the hymns were the traditional wedding hymns. They had been replaced with what can best be described as sentimental songs of dubious value, and unworthy of solemn marriage vows made in the sight of God.

The apostle James uses a striking expression: “to keep himself unspotted from the world.” May this be our desire - to be kept unspotted from the world, from everything that will burn us and harm us. The old hymn says: “Turn your eyes upon Jesus, Look full in His wonderful face.” A sight of a precious Saviour will be worth more than all the dross (the mammon) of this world. What a favour it will be to find HIM, the “Pearl of great price.”

Just one final thought. There is a day coming “that shall burn as an oven.” (Read the whole verse in Malachi 4. 1.) Peter also speaks of it: “the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.” The first hymn (Gadsby’s) refers to it too: - *the great burning day*. In that day, the wicked shall be burnt up leaving “them neither root nor branch.” May the Lord be pleased to use that solemn thought to cause each of us to ask, “How stands the case, my soul, with thee?”

With greetings and best wishes to you all.

The Editor.

## A BRIEF LIFE OF JOHN HUSS, MARTYR

*This year marks the 600th anniversary of the death at the stake of John Huss in the year 1415. We feel this is an important event in the history of the dawn of the reformation, and we felt it right to remember in our pages this brave and honoured martyr of God.*

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**“In the truth of the Gospel which I have written, taught, and preached I will die today with gladness.”**

Can *anyone* die with gladness? Can anyone die *with gladness*? Yes. God’s martyr, John Huss, did.

---

### Bohemia

Today’s Czech Republic is the ancient kingdom of Bohemia. The story of John Huss is bound up with the story of Prague, its capital city.

Bohemia was surrounded by hills and mountains. The winters were long and cold. The summers were hot, accompanied by frequent thunderstorms. Drought was almost unknown. The landscape was fresh and lush, although much of the area was under forest.

### Prague - a new city



*Bust of King Charles  
in St. Vitus Cathedral*

We are told by an old chronicler that, in the year 1348, “Our Lord Charles, King of Bohemia, laid the first stone and founded the new city of Prague, building a very strong wall with ramparts and high towers.” This king was King Charles IV (or King Carol in Czech). Later, his son Wenceslas reigned. This was not ‘Good King Wenceslas’ who lived much earlier in the 900's. King Charles’ son Wenceslas is always known as ‘the bad one.’ There is, however, some evidence that the wife of Wenceslas, Queen Sophia, was a devout and eager hearer of the word of God during the greater part of Huss’s own ministry.



Soon spires and steeples dominated the skyline, and the city became known as “Hundred-Towered-Prague.” The Gothic Cathedral of St. Vitus was built. The pope was impressed and granted a special indulgence to pilgrims visiting four Prague churches! The streets were symmetrically arranged around the three marketplaces. The height of roof levels was fixed so that churches might tower above other buildings. Even today, few buildings exceed five storeys in height. Vineyards were planted between the buildings. But not many people realise the city was built on thousands of oak piles.



*Prague - the city of a hundred towers*

The King himself called Prague “a garden of delight.” An observer wrote: “There are few countries in the world that can boast of a town whose beauty even remotely approaches that of Prague.” Although occupied by the Nazis in WWII, it was not harmed, and much of the medieval city remains to this day, leading some to claim it to be the most beautiful city in eastern Europe.

Charles IV, despite his support of some reformist preachers, and an assiduous builder of churches, was also a great collector of relics, so that

Prague gradually became a place of pilgrimage for the whole of Europe. Inside Wenceslas Chapel in St. Vitus Cathedral he kept a vast collection of relics, including a piece of the true cross in the chapel of the Holy Rood. Writers are unanimous that King Charles was a great king.



*St. Vitus Cathedral dominates the skyline above the River Vltava*

### **His early life**

John Huss was born some time between 1369 and 1373. Many dates in his life are uncertain - we have seen his date of birth given somewhere as 6 July 1369, but this is almost certainly wrong, and is being confused with the date of his death, which *is* known. The most likely year of his birth is 1371.

He was born in the village of Husinec in southern Bohemia. At first he was known as *Jan of Husinec* but this was later abbreviated to *Jan Hus*. In English he is usually known as John Huss.

Very little is known of his parents except that they were poor and had at least one other son who died before John. His background was that of the peasantry.



We know little more about his younger years until, at the age of about 13, he became a pupil at a grammar school at nearby Prachatice. This was the golden age of the Grammar School. Here he learnt to speak Latin fluently. He tells us, “The food was poor, the punishments severe.” For any misbehaviour, including speaking in Czech rather than Latin, the boys soon learnt another Latin phrase: it was *vae natibus* - “woe to your rear end!”

### **Enters Prague University**

King Charles wished to endow his kingdom and the city of Prague with a great and worthy university. Nothing equal to it existed in Germany. Students came there from all parts of the world - from England, France, and Poland and all the surrounding countries. The university was soon to rival the older institutions of Paris and Oxford.

In the year 1390, John entered the University of Prague. His mother accompanied him on his journey north, taking with her a present for the rector of a cake and a goose. On the way, the goose flew away, and could not be recaptured. (It is strange that in Czech the name Huss means goose!) He enrolled as Jan of Husinec. His degree supervisor teased him: “A goose is a useful bird that supplies coarse feathers for scribes, soft ones for sleepers, and meat for the stomach.”

The king was careful to secure papal support for his university. In January 1347 the Pope issued a bull - the university was intended to be a bastion of Roman Catholic orthodoxy.

### **Student life**

John lived in King Wenceslas College. Masters and students alike slept in dormitories. With him lived his life-long friend, Jerome of Prague, who was himself to be burned by the same council which condemned Huss.

The oldest standing part of the university is known as the Carolinum. It was originally a complex of buildings owned by the Master of the Royal Mint, but was transformed into the largest college at the time in Prague. In those early days of the university, many lectures were given in private houses.

In his quaint manner Huss tells us of the time when his only food was made up of bread and peas. “When I was a hungry little student, I made a spoon out of the bread till I had eaten the peas, and then I ate the spoon also.” All his life he felt his childhood poverty deeply.

He sought to supplement his inadequate income by singing in the church choir. “I sang vigils with others,” he said, adding, “We sang them rapidly just to get the job done quickly.” These night-time sessions must have caused much loss of sleep.



*Carolinum, still standing from the university of Huss's time*

The student body was 7,000 in a city of some 40,000. In 1393 Huss received his Bachelor of Arts degree, and the following year Bachelor of Theology. He went on to study for his Masters degree, which he received in 1396. As a graduated master, Huss was required to lecture for two years, after which he had the standing of a professor.

For the most part he enjoyed respect and status in university circles. On 15 October 1401 he was appointed dean of the university. As dean, he arranged tuition, examinations and graduations. He was also in charge of the financial side of the university, and we find him lending 70 Groschen to the King Wenceslas College. A promissory note to this effect can be seen (although almost illegible) on the flyleaf of the Dean's Book. In 1409 he was appointed rector (or chancellor). He felt the responsibility greatly. “Help me, those of you who have placed the burden of your affairs on my shoulders,” he cried. A sermon was preached to mark the occasion (by whom we do not know) from Matthew 20. 16: “For many be called, but few chosen.”

As chancellor, Huss established a book for recording events at the university. Although the book exists, the sheets from Huss's term of office have been torn out - later by his enemies, no doubt.

### **His conversion**

During the 1390's students were bringing over from England the works of John Wycliffe. This was helped by the marriage of Anne, the

sister of Wenceslas, to Richard II of England. The connection between Oxford and Prague Universities was close because of this marriage alliance. From the earliest days Huss was greatly attracted by Wycliffe's writings. He exclaimed: "Dear Wycliffe, let God deliver you the heavenly kingdom." In 1411 he wrote that he had been reading Wycliffe's works for 20 years or more, which would mean that soon after entry into the university in 1391 he had been exposed to the influence of the English reformer.

The exact date of Huss's conversion cannot be ascertained with certainty. In his first years at university he had accepted Roman dogma and had been largely ignorant of the Scriptures. However, there is

reference in his writings of this time to "the dear Christ."

If the young Huss listened to Matthew of Janov, canon of St. Vitus Cathedral, who it appears had some knowledge of the truth, he would have heard that baptismal grace was not enough and that a person who had been christened as a child needed to be converted. Superstitious veneration of images and statues of the Saviour, the virgin Mary and the saints was firmly opposed. Matthew deplored the fact that common people put greater trust in prayers to



*St. Vitus. Was this Matthew's pulpit?*

the saints than to Jesus Christ. His testimony was this: "I thought of nothing but that which attracts the eyes and rejoices the ears. This lasted till it pleased the Lord Jesus to snatch me away as a burning brand

plucked out of the fire. The Lord led me to the dwelling of sorrow, adversity, and shame. Now, only when I had become poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembled at the word of the Lord, did I begin to wonder at the truths of holy Scripture.”

Twice Matthew was summoned before the authorities. Two years later, in 1394, he died. But he was a prolific writer as well as a stirring preacher. What seeds were being sown in the mind of the young student Huss?

### **Becomes a priest**



In 1400 Huss became a priest, by his own admission partly to help his parents financially. He wrote later: “I had thought to become a priest quickly in order to secure a good livelihood and dress, and to be held in esteem by men.” Speaking of the monks he wrote: “The cellars of lay people are sometimes exhausted; but theirs never!” He observed that the priests “eat, gorge themselves, guzzle, and feast abundantly.”

At this time he seemed to possess a measure of pride in being found in the priesthood. In one sermon later he said: “How many times I have transgressed the holy word, rising and doffing my hood, or bowing to a rich man but not to a poor one. I trust, however, our merciful Jesus, our Saviour, that He will forgive me and preserve me henceforth from such conduct.”



## Begins to preach in St. Michael's



*St. Michael's, now derelict*

The year 1401 is the first definite indication we have of his preaching, and this was at the Church of St. Michael, Prague. Later, many things he was supposed to have said in St. Michael's pulpit were used by his opponents. But he preached in Latin, which was of use to but few of his hearers.

## Bethlehem Chapel

The people were weary of nothing but Latin sermons. They longed to hear preaching in their own language. But nowhere was such preaching allowed. The same year in which Huss began to preach, a rich city burgher named Hanus, and a businessman named Jan Kriz, decided to take action. Kriz donated a piece of land of some 800 square metres, part of his garden which included a well, a cottage and a cellar which became the preacher's house. A chapel was to be built, and the donors' charter stipulated that it should be for the preaching of sermons in the Czech language.

In 1402 Huss was appointed rector and preacher of the chapel, where he immediately preached in the Czech language, rather than in Latin. (Strangely, he prepared his sermons in Latin, and that is how



*Bethlehem Chapel today*



*The original Chapel*

they have been preserved.) The very founding of this chapel is an indication that there had been some biblical preachers in Prague, and that their ministry had been fruitful.

It has been estimated that Huss preached 3,000 sermons in the chapel. “Preachers count in the church more than prelates,” he said. One priest he told to preach “assiduously, but briefly.” Later, he wrote, “By the help of God I have preached, still am preaching, and if his grace will allow, shall continue to preach; if perchance I may be able to lead some poor, tried, or halting soul into the house of Christ to the King’s supper.”



*Interior of Bethlehem Chapel*

The singing of hymns soon became an important part of congregational worship, introduced by both Huss and his friend Jerome. However, Huss was later to quote Augustine: “As oft as the song delighteth me more than that which is sungen, so oft I acknowledge I trespass grievously.”

The chapel was most appropriately called Bethlehem which means ‘house of bread’ in order that, as was stated in the foundation charter, believers might be “refreshed by the bread of holy preaching.” Expectations were more than realised - the place was thronged regularly. There was an evident hunger for the word of God in the hearts of many. Why was it called Bethlehem Chapel? It was consecrated on the day of remembrance of the infants slain in Bethlehem.



### Opposition

In 1402 Jerome of Prague brought over two further works of Wycliffe. This aroused much interest. There was an eager desire to know more about this man. Wycliffe, in one of his works wrote powerfully: “If there were a hundred popes, and all the friars were turned into cardinals, their opinions in matters of faith should be believed only insofar as they are founded in Scripture.” He also put forward the heretical statement: “That the substance of material bread and wine remain in the Sacrament of the altar after consecration.” He advocated that people should be allowed to read the Bible in their own language, and that they should resist Rome’s insistence on a Latin-only Bible. Among the followers of Huss there arose an insistence that the laity should not only eat of the sacramental bread but also drink of the sacramental cup - partaking ‘in both kinds’ as they called it.



*St. Martin in the Wall*

At Prague many rose up against the spread of the new doctrines, wishing to silence the teachings of Wycliffe once and for all. At the same time there was much support for change, although it was not until 1414 that, for the first time, the Lord’s supper was administered ‘in both kinds’ at the Church of St. Martin in the Wall. This ancient, beautifully preserved church is hidden away in the winding back streets of the Old City, difficult to find, but located at the end of a street known as

Martinska. When the Old Town walls were built in the 13th century, St. Martin’s was divided in two. The largest part was left outside the walls

and became part of the New Town. The south wall of the smaller part of the church backed onto the Old Town wall, hence the name St. Martin in the Wall. In the following years, the chalice (i.e. the cup) became the symbol of the Hussites.

### **Meetings to discuss the new doctrines**

In May 1403 a meeting was called to discuss the new doctrines of Wycliffe. It was a “full and general convocation of all the masters of the University of Prague.” Wycliffe supporters accused the meeting of



*Huss's pulpit, Bethlehem chapel. The door to the pulpit is original, as is the threshold. The pulpit looks more modern but perhaps this is because of the decorative finish.*

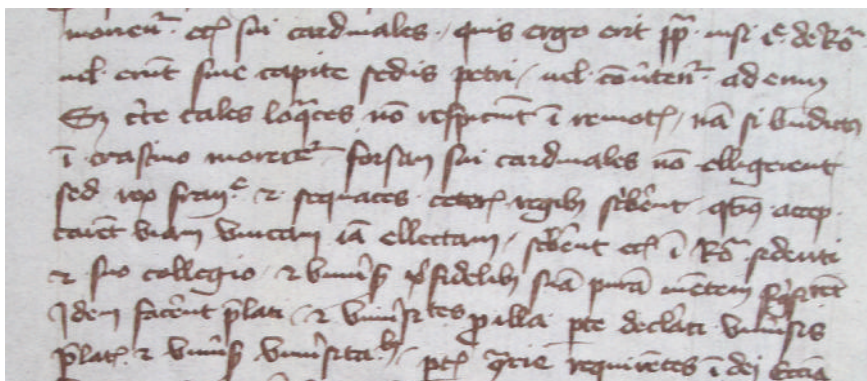
falsely and unjustly drawing from his books statements that were not contained in them. One Stephen Palec, a close friend of Wycliffe, threw one of his books on the table and challenged, “Let who will stand up and speak against any word contained in this book! I will defend it!”

Huss's enemies were waiting for him to fall. Spies were sent to listen eagerly for any careless word. On one occasion the attention of Huss was drawn to one of these spies, who was in the congregation



taking notes with his hood drawn over his forehead to prevent recognition. At one point in his sermon he paused and cried, “Man in the cowl, write that down in your notebook and take it to the Archbishop.”

Huss was facing renewed hostility because of his frequently expressed love of Wycliffe’s writings. However, the national leaders were favourably disposed to him. He was highly regarded at the University and received the favour (at first) of the newly appointed Archbishop of Prague.



*A report in Huss's own handwriting*

At the Bethlehem Chapel the crowds continued to gather. Huss was plain, down-to-earth and scriptural. He preached on the question of indulgences, and pointed out that mortal man cannot forgive sins. He sought to bring the theological arguments down to the level of the man in the pew. The devil he described as Old Nick. He dealt with the issues of the day. On the question of the Sabbath he took a very strict view. All games, agricultural labour and craftsmanship were to be put aside. There should be no dancing, bad language, buying and selling or worldly amusements.

In 1407 Huss was asked to preach the Synod sermon. Here he severely attacked those priests who forgot their duties and were guilty of gross sins. As a result of his preaching, charges were brought against him. It was said that in his sermons he sinned against charity by rendering the clergy odious to the people.

### **Complaints brought before the pope**

The archbishop and clergy of Prague brought their complaints before the pope, and in 1411 Huss was excommunicated. The pope ordered the cardinal of St. Angelo to proceed against him without mercy. The cardinal planned that Huss should be seized and delivered to the archbishop, and his Bethlehem Chapel destroyed. An attempt to do so was made - but it failed. "They attacked Bethlehem while I was preaching," he said. "The Lord God, however, confused their way so that they did not know what to do."

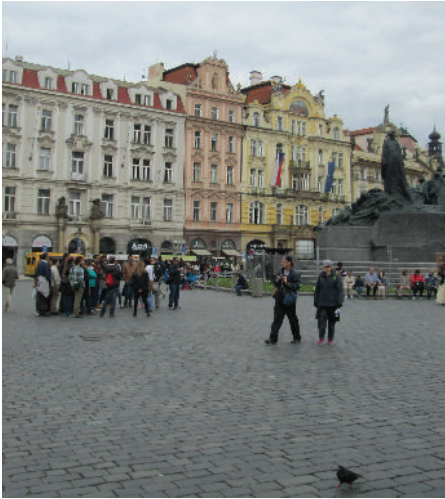


*Huss preaches to the people*

Another attempt to destroy the chapel was made, but was foiled. Huss retorted: "They would not dare to pull down a neighbour's oven without the king's permission, and yet they would dare to attempt to destroy God's church." Queen Sophia continued to attend the services, sitting in an oratory built for her in the eastern wall.

### **Sale of Indulgences storm**

In 1412 Pope John XXIII was short of badly-needed money for his war against the King of Naples. He decided to send his sellers of indulgences to Prague. King Charles had a financial interest in the indulgences, as he received a percentage of each sale. At a public disputation at the university on 7 June 1412, Huss spoke out strongly against indulgences. Protests against indulgences spilled out into the street, and tragically this storm ended with three young men from Bethlehem Chapel, Martin, Jan and Stasek, arrested and executed on the Old Town Square. Huss allowed them to be buried in Bethlehem chapel.



*Three young men were executed on the Old Town Square - where Huss's memorial now stands*

The King fancied that he himself might well be declared a heretic. He therefore ultimately joined with the Pope in proclaiming a decree against all books, texts and sermons written in the vernacular (i.e. the common language of the people). The decree declared that such should be burnt. Many of Wycliffe's books and valuable manuscripts were consigned to the flames.

In compliance with the wishes of the king, Huss decided to depart from Prague. He returned to his native town of Husinec. Never again would he preach in his beloved Bethlehem Chapel.

### **The Council of Constance**

In 1414 the pope instructed three bishops to begin an investigation against Huss. At this time, a general council of the Church of Rome, known as the Council of Constance, had been gathered to consider the "three-popes-at-the-same-time" question and other matters concerning the church. (Constance is in the south-west of Germany on the border with Switzerland.) During the long continuance of the Council, the German Emperor, the pope, 33 cardinals, three patriarchs, 47 archdeacons, 140 bishops, 124 abbots, 750 doctors and about 18,000 priests, monks and friars, besides many princes and counts, and the ambassadors of the Kings of France, England, Scotland, Denmark, Poland, Naples and Spain were present for at least some part of the assembly! Huss was invited to attend.

He did not need to go to. He could have saved his life. But he went as he wished to testify to the truth. His hour had come. At his trial Huss declared that he could have stayed in Bohemia under protection had he so wished. But he went.

He set out on his journey to Constance on 11 October 1414. The journey was long and tedious. He was accompanied by a number of faithful friends. The names of some we know: John of Chlum,



*Hus im Inselthurm 1414*

*Wall painting of Huss chained in the Dominican monastery tower*

Wenceslaus of Dube, Henry Lancembok, Master John Cardinal. He met with much kindness on the way. Passing through Nuremberg, the magistrates formed a guard of honour for him. On arrival at Constance, Elijah-like he lodged in the house of a poor widow woman in Paul's Strasse.

At first he remained at liberty, but his enemies spread rumours that he was planning to escape. As a result, he was arrested and imprisoned on 28 November 1414 at the Dominican monastery in the town. Although promised a safe passage by the Emperor Sigismund, the president of the assembly, (the documentation for which was delayed and its

authority questioned), he was, by order of Pope John XXIII, taken captive to the castle of the Archbishop of Constance at Gottlieben on the

banks of the River Rhine, Germany. (A few months later the Pope was himself transferred to the same prison.) Here he remained seventy-three days, separated from his friends, chained day and night, poorly fed, and desperately unwell. The Czech nobles were able to bribe his guards, and he was allowed



*Gottlieben Castle, Constance*



to write. It was during this period of imprisonment that Huss wrote several treatises (it reminds us of John Bunyan) including *On Repentance*, *On the Blood of Christ under the Species of Wine*, and *On the Holiness of the Body and Blood of Christ*.

### **The trial**

On 5 June 1415, John Huss was tried for the first time. The sittings of the Council were held in the hall of the Kaufhaus, in a large room supported by wooden pillars, looking towards the lake. The witnesses for the prosecution were heard, but Huss's defence was not. Attempting to speak, he was howled down. He never received the public hearing he was promised.

Sadly, some of his former friends and university colleagues were among those who contributed to his condemnation. Some of the names are known - Stephen Palec (a former close friend to whom we have already referred), Peter of Unicov, Nicholas of Stojcin (a former student of Huss), masters John of Minsterberk and Peter Storch. Yes, to us these are only names - but we are reminded of David when he cried: "But it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company" (Psalm 55. 13-14). Huss must have entered a little into the experience of his Lord and Master when "they all forsook Him, and fled." In this, his hour of need, they turned on him.

The trial continued on 7 June, and then, at his final trial on 8 June 1415, there were read to him thirty-nine sentences, twenty-six of which had been taken from his book *The Church*. Almost all of what he had written may be traced back to Wycliffe. Huss again declared himself willing to submit if he could be convinced of errors. He desired only a fair trial and more time to explain the reasons for his views. If his reasons and Bible texts did not suffice, he would be glad to submit. These words found no favourable reception. After the trial, several other attempts were made to induce him to recant, but he resisted all of them.

He was transferred to the Franciscan monastery, confined in its dungeon below ground, affording scarcely room to move. (The door of the dungeon has been preserved.) Here he spent the last weeks of his life. He declared himself willing to recant, if errors could be proved. Huss made no secret of his veneration of Wycliffe.

He wrote to a friend: "I write this letter in prison with my chained

hand, expecting my sentence of death tomorrow. He, Christ Jesus, has supported me in the midst of my temptations and trials.”

### **His condemnation**

The condemnation took place on 6 July 1415, in the presence of the solemn assembly of the council in the cathedral. After the performance of high mass and liturgy, Huss was led into the church. The Italian Bishop of Lodi delivered an oration on the duty of eradicating heresy; then some theses of Huss and Wycliffe and a report of his trial were read.

Huss protested loudly several times, and when his appeal to Christ was rejected as a heresy, he exclaimed, “O God and Lord, now the council condemns even Thine own act and Thine own law as heresy,



*Huss's condemnation at the Council of Constance*

since Thou Thyself didst lay Thy cause before Thy Father as the just judge, as an example for us, whenever we are sorely oppressed.”

An Italian prelate pronounced the sentence of condemnation upon Huss and his writings. Again he protested loudly, saying that even at this hour he did not wish for anything but to be convinced from Holy Scripture. He fell upon his knees and asked God with a low voice to forgive all his enemies. The sentence was pronounced that the Church had deprived him of all rights, and he was to be delivered to the secular

powers. He was defrocked, and a high paper hat put upon his head, with the inscription *Haeresiarcha* (*Latin - leader of heresy*). The prelate said to him, “We commit your soul to the devil.” Huss replied: “And I commit it to the most merciful Lord Jesus Christ who, on account of me, bore a much heavier and harsher crown of thorns.”

Then Huss was led away to the stake under a strong guard of armed men. Passing through the church graveyard, they were at that moment burning his books, at which act he smiled.

The place of execution was in a meadow near the castle of Gottlieben between the gates and the moats of the city. At the place of execution he knelt down, spread out his hands, and prayed aloud. His prayer is recorded: “Lord Jesus Christ, I am willing to bear most patiently and humbly this cruel death for Thy gospel and the preaching of Thy word.” Some of the people asked that a confessor should be given him, but a nearby priest in a green suit with a red silk lining, sitting on a horse, exclaimed, “A heretic should neither be heard nor given a confessor.”

The executioners undressed Huss and tied his hands behind his back with ropes, and his neck with a chain to a stake. He said, “My Redeemer and my Saviour was bound by a heavier chain, and I am not ashamed to bear being bound for His name by this one.” Wood and straw, two cart loads, was piled up so that it covered him to the neck. Facing east, they said, “Let him not be turned facing east, because he is a heretic; but turn him towards the west,” which was done.

Even now, at this last moment, the marshal, Hoppe of Poppenheim, came to him exhorting him to save his life by a recantation, but Huss declined with the words:

**“God is my witness that I have never taught that of which I have been accused by false witnesses. In the truth of the Gospel which I have written, taught, and preached I will die today with gladness.”**

Thereupon the fire was kindled, with John Wycliffe’s own manuscripts used as kindling for the fire. With a loud voice Huss sang, “Christ, thou Son of the living God, have mercy upon me,” and repeated the verse, “Into Thy hand I commit my spirit.” The wind blew the fire

into his face and he was silent, though his lips moved for a minute and a half before he expired in the Lord.

A third cart load of wood was brought and added to the fire. The charred body was pulled down into the fire. Finding his heart, the executioners impaled it on a sharpened stick and held it to the fire until consumed. On the order of Hoppe the marshal, his removed clothing was added to the fire “lest the Czechs should regard it as relics.”

His fortitude moved even his judges and his executioners.



Among his dying words he proclaimed, “In 100 years, God will raise up a man whose calls for reform cannot be suppressed.” Almost exactly 100 years later, in 1517, Martin Luther nailed his *95 Theses of Contention* onto the church door at Wittenberg. Huss’s remarkable prophecy was fulfilled.

His final conflict over, his soul now entered that blessed state pronounced by the Saviour to the dying thief: “Today shalt thou be with Me in Paradise.” His ashes were gathered into a cart and cast into the nearby River Rhine.

He was about 45 years of age.

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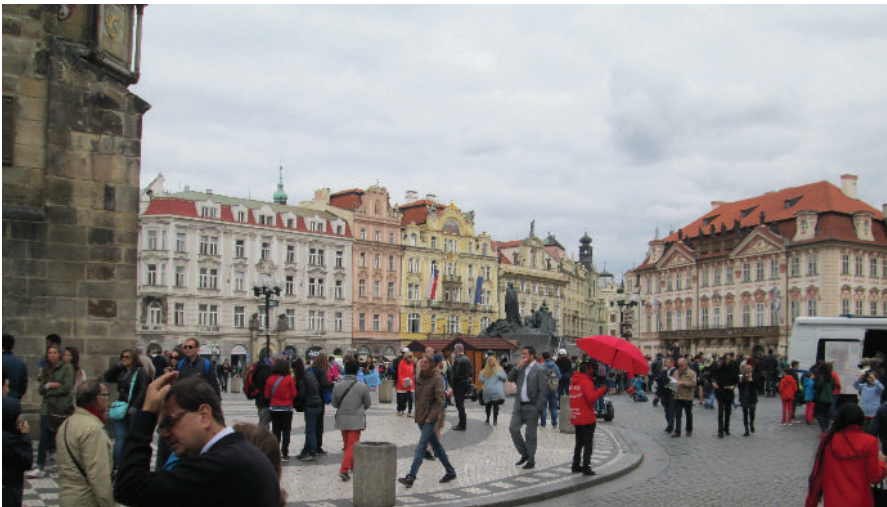


## PRAGUE - THE HOME OF MR. J. G. PAVLIK

Following our serialisation of the life of Mr. J. G. Pavlik in three editions of Perception (beginning Summer 2013) a reader kindly sent a photograph of Mr. Pavlik in his younger days. We felt this was of such excellent quality that we would like to share it.



Mr. Pavlik spent much of his life in Prague, the capital city of the Czech Republic. In the preface to his life he wrote: “I was fetched from the country of His martyr John Huss to your Island to bear witness of the truth as it is in Jesus.” He also wrote: “I lived in a flat in the main square.” We know it was at high level, probably in the block shown below. The statue of John Huss was erected in the square to mark the 500th anniversary and was unveiled on 6 July 1915.



## THE WESTERN (OR WAILING) WALL, JERUSALEM

by Matthew Aldridge

One of the few things that the Roman army of Titus did not destroy was the western support wall of the Temple, often known as the Wailing Wall. When Herod rebuilt the Jewish Temple he wanted a larger building than was possible on the original location, so he expanded the Temple Mount by building four retaining walls, and filling in the gap with rubble and soil, to create a flat construction site. The western wall is one of these retaining walls, and contrary to popular belief it is not one of the actual walls of the Temple. The prophecy of Christ that “there shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down” (Matthew 24. 2) has been fulfilled, as this only remaining wall is a retaining wall, not the wall of a building. However, because it is the only remaining part of the original temple, it is extremely sacred to the Jews, and they gather there, lined up against the wall, sometimes pressing their faces against it, wailing and crying to the Lord because their Temple has gone.

The Bible often speaks of Jews wailing: “there was great mourning among the Jews, and fasting, and weeping, and wailing” (Esther 4. 3); “let them make haste, and take up a wailing for us, that our eyes may run down with tears” (Jeremiah 9. 18); “wailing shall be in all streets; and they shall say in all the highways, Alas! alas!” (Amos 5. 16); to name just a few examples.



*Jews praying at the Western Wall at night*

Separate sections of the wall are reserved for men and women. The men must have their head covered, and women cannot have bare shoulders or short skirts. However, officials are always on

hand to lend free skull caps and shawls to those western visitors who come unprepared. As well as praying and wailing by the wall, the Jews also press notes (usually containing prayers or verses from the Psalms) into the cracks of the wall. In these high-tech times, it is even easier for the devout Jew as a number of companies offer a service where prayers can be emailed, then a local places the note in the wall on their behalf! These notes are cleared out twice a year by the Israeli authorities and buried in the Mount of Olives.



*Prayers placed in cracks of the wall*

Some Jews believe that it is not right to put fingers into the wall, as it is part of the Temple and therefore has inbuilt holiness, but others (it seems the majority) take the view that as it is an external wall, there is no problem here. Orthodox Jews are forbidden to enter into the Holy of Holies (or Kodesh Hakodashim to give it the correct Hebrew title), and the location of this would have been

the other side of the Western Wall, now under Arab Muslim control. The fact is that the Muslims will not allow Jews to pray on the other side of the wall anyway, so the Wailing Wall serves as a physical border between the two faiths. This means that the wall is the nearest a Jew can get to the Holy of Holies while being sure they are not trespassing, making it a very holy place. However, there is a tunnel which traverses the length of the retaining wall, which is much longer underground than on the surface, and in a little cave off this tunnel, Jews can sit and get slightly nearer the Holy of Holies, making it a popular place for prayer and meditation.

It is, of course, interesting to see part of the original temple complex that would have existed in the time of Christ, but also so sad to think of the Jews who are still waiting for their Messiah. The veil of the temple has been torn in two from top to bottom, the way to the Holy of Holies opened for sinners by the atoning blood of Jesus, King of the Jews.



## THE MARKET BOYS

Two boys took stands at the market, Henry to sell fruit and Ben oysters. The boy with the fruit had nearly sold out all his stock; he had only one melon left to be sold, and a gentleman came up to his stall, and looked at the melon, and said, "What a fine melon; I think I must buy it. What do you ask for it, my boy?"

"The melon is the best I have, sir; and though it looks very fair, there is an unsound spot on the other side," said the boy, turning it over.

"So there is," said the gentleman, "I think I will not take it; but," he added, looking at the boy, "it is very business-like to point out the defect of your fruit to customers."

"It is better than being dishonest, sir," said the boy modestly.

"You are right, my boy; always remember to speak the truth, and you will find it to be the best in the end. You have nothing else I wish for this morning, but I shall not forget your little stand in future."

"Are these oysters fresh?" he continued, turning to Ben Wilson's stand. "Yes, sir; fresh this morning," was the reply; and, a purchase being made, the gentleman went on his way.

"Henry, what a fool you were to show the gentleman that spot in the melon; now you can take it home for your pains, or throw it away. How much wiser is he about the oysters? Sold at the same price as if he had got the fresh ones. He would never have looked at the melon until he had gone away."

"Ben, I would not tell a lie, or act one either, for twice what I have earned to-day. Besides, I shall be better off in the end, for I have gained a customer, but you have lost one."

And so it proved, for next day the gentleman bought a supply of fruit from Henry, but never spent another penny at the stand of Ben. The gentleman, finding he could buy a good article of Henry, always bought of him, and sometimes talked a few minutes with him about his future hopes and prospects. To become a tradesman was his great ambition; and when the winter came on the gentleman, wanting a trusty boy for his shop, decided on giving the place to Henry. Steadily and surely he advanced in the confidence of his employer, until he became at length an honoured partner in the firm. By truth and honesty you see that men are rewarded, while deceit and lies bring shame and reproach.

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**DOUGLAS EDWARD BRADFORD***(CONTINUED FROM SUMMER 2015 PAGE 15)***My new house named**

I felt I could say, “Thus far my God has led me on,” and that Ebenezer must be the name of my new house at Baldock. How little did I realise then that one day the Lord was to call me to the Pastorate of a chapel called “Ebenezer” at a place of which I had never heard. But more of this later if the Lord will.

I received the house name-plate on Saturday, which was three days before my departure from London. The last three Sundays of my time in London I attended with my family at a Gospel Standard cause in Croydon. On my way there on the last Lord’s Day, I tried to ask for a further token that the step I was taking was the right way. I seemed to have unusual liberty at the Throne of Grace, so much so that I felt some further sign was going to be granted from “A prayer hearing and answering God.” I did not know the Pastor at this chapel, but years afterwards we became acquainted and a lasting friendship was made in the bonds of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The time came for the dear man to give out his text. Before so doing he said, “I do not know why I am led to this portion of the Word, but it’s been on my mind ever since yesterday. You will find it in I Samuel, chapter 7, verse 12: “Then Samuel took a stone ... and called the name of it EBENEZER, saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.” What my feelings were I cannot now describe, only that it was powerfully confirmed in my mind that the step I was taking in two days time was of the Lord. I could not trust myself to tell God’s servant the remarkable appearing of God on my unworthy part. Years afterwards a way was made that I was able to do so and we rejoiced together at the goodness of the Lord.

**Leaves London for Baldock**

Tuesday, 24th November 1931 dawned and a beautiful day it was, almost like spring. With sadness I said farewell to London with all its memories. We followed the removal van in a hired car and arrived at Baldock late in the afternoon. My intentions were, if the Lord willed, (ah! how I was to travel out that little word *IF*) to build a house there. Our new home was rather small after the one in London. I made the front room my office and, considering the change and the amount of



work that daily needed attention, it was very wonderful what help was given and how smoothly the work proceeded. Strange to say, I had not been long at Baldock when I seemed to feel that this part of the country was not to be my permanent abode. My mind was very exercised about this important matter and I wanted to know the Lord's mind concerning me. Was I to remain where I was? or What way was I to take? I wanted to see the cloud move, and my prayer was: "Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah."

We attended a little "Gospel Standard" cause about three miles away [Hope Chapel, Stotfold?], and a union in the things of God was soon made manifest.

### **Concerns over the ministry return**

During the latter part of my time in London with the solemn church trouble, family cares, and the ultimate packing up of my home, the matter of the ministry had not been uppermost in my mind, but now once again the weighty concern returned.

My mind went back over the years, now nearly ten, when I believed the Lord gave me the word in this connection: "A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse" (Song of Solomon 4. 12).

There were weekly prayer meetings at the little chapel that we attended and happy times they were. After one of these meetings the deacon approached me and said that some of the people were impressed that God was leading me forth into the ministry and, as they were without a minister the following Sabbath, would I go into the pulpit and preach to the people? I cannot describe the reaction of this upon me. Although my exercises in respect to the ministry were very real I had a strong feeling that this was not the time for me to go forth in this solemn work. In giving my reply in the negative to the deacon two thoughts seemed to guide me in this decision. Firstly, I was never asked if I was the subject of any exercise in this way. Secondly, the case of Moses who for forty years was sent into the "backside of the desert" to be prepared for the work of leading God's people. I had been exercised for ten years and often during this time I seemed to conclude it was only a delusion or a temptation from the devil, and would never come to pass! I told the Lord this and the words came: "They shall not be ashamed that wait for me." Faith seemed to spring up in my poor heart and I said, "Lord, I have waited for ten years and I will wait ten years longer if it be Thy

will” and I had to!

This incident seemed to further confirm me in my mind that I was not to settle down here, but where? Only the Lord knew.

### **Hears of Matfield, Kent**

We lived in our hired house at Baldock for eighteen months. The owner was the local builder, so I informed him that I was thinking of building a house and I put the matter in his hands. He said he would soon find a suitable plot. However, this he was not able to do, as every time a site seemed to be suitable there was always some obstacle in the way till at last I realised the Lord was hedging up my way.

In the early part of 1932 it was brought to my notice that there was a Gospel Standard cause at a place called Matfield in Kent, a very suitable locality for those requiring the quietness of the country. I had never heard of this place, and did not know in what part of Kent it was situated until I was told it was near Paddock Wood. My informers also said there was the possibility that a suitable building plot could be found.

I have already mentioned that I never felt Baldock was to be my home, but why had I been permitted to come this way? My mind was very much exercised, and prayer went up to God for some sign as to my future movements, and answer to prayer seemed to be given on this wise: I was reading about the journeys of the children of Israel from Egypt to Canaan, how they went in quite the wrong direction, that is instead of going north they went south.

### **Visits Matfield**

In my simplicity I said, “Lord have I come north and is it Thy will that I must go south?” I now felt a strong desire to see this place called Matfield and, with this in view, I set out early on a beautiful Spring morning in 1932. I took my bicycle on the train to Kings Cross, cycled across London to Charing Cross, and caught a train down to Paddock Wood. As the train sped through the beautiful county of Kent I felt persuaded that this fair “Garden of England” was going to be my home.

On arrival at Paddock Wood Station I enquired my way to Matfield. How fresh in my memory is that morning as I pushed my cycle up Gedges Hill. As I stood on the summit of this hill and gazed over the beautiful view, I inwardly said, “Lord, make this my home,” and this request was deepened as I entered the beautiful village of Matfield. It was one of those wonderful spring days that only the Lord could make,

and I felt that here I was to “pitch my tent.”

After a little refreshment I walked around and came across the old chapel and to my surprise noticed it was called “Ebenezer”, the same name as my house! This seemed to further confirm me that here I was to find a settled rest as far as it is possible in this wilderness world. I now wondered whether it would be possible to rent a house for the time and knocked at the door of a house near the chapel to make this inquiry.

A very old lady opened the door and, in response to my question, said in a very emphatic manner, “Oh no, you will never find a house here!” I thanked her and said I would leave my name and address in case she should hear of a likely place in the vicinity. When she learned that the name of my house was “Ebenezer” her whole face filled with astonishment. I just relate this as the old lady was the only person I spoke to on this my first visit to Matfield (I did not know anyone else) and now after forty years it is still fresh in my memory.

### **Returns home to Baldock**

Before leaving Matfield I felt a strong desire to look at the chapel once more and, as I did so, a great feeling of loneliness stole over my spirit. The words came: “There my best friends, my kindred dwell; There God my Saviour reigns.” How I was to prove the truth of these words in my future pathway and experience, but at that time it was entirely hid.

Through mercy I arrived home in safety. The months passed and there seemed no signs that I was to pitch my tent elsewhere and I resolved to leave things in the hands of Him who knows the end from the beginning. So I waited in silence to see once more the unfolding of His gracious hand in Providence. It was late in the summer of this year I was to see the unfolding bud of this Providence.

### **A plot of land secured at Matfield**

Evidently it had come to the knowledge of the Deacons at Matfield that I was seeking a parcel of ground on which to build a house. I did not know these gracious men and had never communicated with them and I had no hand in the transactions that eventually opened up. I rightly concluded that the Lord had gone before me and opened the hearts of these gentlemen to deal favourably with me.

Briefly then it was arranged that I should meet the two Deacons at their respective homes. How wonderful was that meeting! Before



anything of a providential matter was mentioned in our conversation, there seemed to be a sweet union in the things of God, and the Lord I believe gave me a place in their hearts. One of these friends owned a considerable amount of land at Matfield and intimated his willingness to sell me a plot on which there were planted fruit trees, apples, pears and plums. I thought of what God did for his chosen people, when he gave them vineyards and oliveyards which they had not planted.

Although I had no money to buy land or build a house, nevertheless I felt sure as I stood on this site that there I was to pitch my tent. Everything that followed confirmed this. My kind friend asked a very low figure for the purchase. My aunt was made willing to buy the land, erect a house and charge me a very low rent. A year after this she died and left the property to me.



*The newly-built house at Foxhole Lane, Matfield*

I have now lived here for forty-two years. I had two children when coming here and two more were born in Matfield. For almost thirty years I have been the unworthy Pastor of my beloved people at Ebenezer Chapel, Matfield. Surely, “This is the Lord’s doing and it is marvellous in our eyes.”

**Leaves Baldock for Matfield**

Early in the Spring of 1933 my house was ready for occupation, and on 4th April we left Baldock to take up our residence at Matfield.

After a few months my previous feelings, in relation to the friends at Matfield proved to be right, and I felt a love and union towards them in the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and a desire, although so unworthy, to cast in my lot with them. I felt Christ was among them and where He dwelt there I wanted to be. I tried to make it a matter of prayer with my gracious covenant God and asked for a confirming word to go before the Church. In due course He gave me this Word with which to go forward: "As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my Beloved among the sons. I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste. He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love" (Song. 2. 3-4).

In August, 1933 I went before the Church and was helped to give in my experience and was unanimously received into membership.

**Exercises regarding the ministry revived**

Towards the close of this (to me) eventful year my exercises about the ministry revived and with them the awful temptation of the accuser of the brethren who came upon me like a flood, and unbelief and carnal reason began to work in my poor sinful soul. It would be impossible to record all that I passed through, for it seemed to me impossible that such a poor polluted wretch as I could ever be made useful as a minister of the Gospel. Feeling my own unfitness and the great importance of the work, like Moses of old I began to make excuses asking, Who am I that I should go? "I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue. O my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send" (Exodus 4. 10-13). Like Jeremiah also I said: "Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child" (Jeremiah 1. 6).

Thus I felt to be a poor weak helpless worm, unfit to go forth in the name of the Lord, and I sank in my own esteem and had to cry out: "Who is sufficient for these things?" (2 Cor. 2. 16).

*TO BE CONTINUED*

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## UNUSUAL BIBLES

### 1 - The Braille Bible

Little Louis Braille was a bright boy. He lived in a pretty stone house in the countryside near the French city of Paris with his older sisters Monique and Marie, and his brother Simon. There was nothing Louis liked better than to play in his father's workshop where his father followed his trade as a leather-worker making saddles and harnesses for horses. One day, as he was playing in the workshop Louis injured his eye on a sharp tool used to make holes in the leather. The awl slipped and pierced his eye. In spite of the best care available at the time, infection set in and soon spread to the other eye as well, leaving him completely blind. He was only three years old.

When Louis was old enough to go to the village school, he was allowed to sit in the classroom to learn what he could by listening. At the age of ten, he attended a special school for blind young people in Paris. Louis did well at his studies, especially at music, first learning to play the piano and then the organ. Louis thought to himself, "Is there nothing that can be done to help blind people to read and write?"

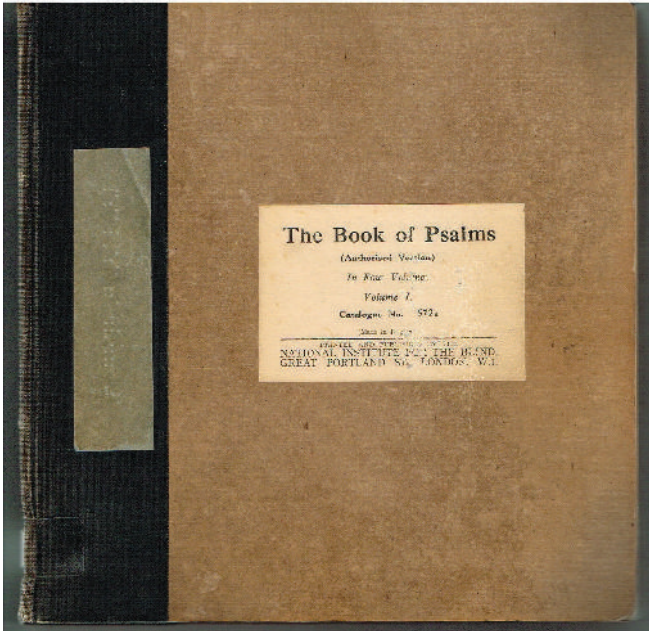


*The six-dot cell Braille system. Part of Psalm 1.*

By the time he was 15 Louis had developed the system that we know today as Braille. His system used a six dot cell and was based upon normal spelling. Then a little later, in 1829, he wrote a book on how to write music as well as words using nothing but raised dots. So good was

his system that clever blind children grew up able to read almost as fast as those who could read with normal eyesight.

It was not until 1924 that the first Authorised Version of the Bible was published in Braille. The Gospel Standard Library has a copy of the Braille Bible in 77 sections, as well as Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, and a Gadsby's Hymnbook.



*Section of Braille Bible published by  
the National Institute for the Blind*

S o m e of our older readers will remember Mr. P. O. Laver, Pastor of Rotherfield Chapel, who read in the pulpit from a Braille Bible. Occasionally he would have some difficulty in reading an unusual word - we held our breath, but he always succeeded in the end.

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### THE NOBLEMAN'S MANSION

An Irish nobleman, who had just finished building a family mansion, asked his Bishop what motto should be put upon the building to commemorate the work. "Put on it," replied the faithful Bishop, "TO BE BURNT." How true! One day all in this world is to be burned up.

**THE DEATH OF MOSES**

*“And He buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day” (Deuteronomy 34. 6).*

By Nebo's lonely mountain,  
On this side Jordan's wave,  
In a vale in the land of Moab,  
There lies a lonely grave;  
And no man knows that sepulchre,  
And no man saw it e'er;  
For the angels of God upturned the sod  
And laid the dead man there.

Perchance the bald old eagle  
On grey Beth-Peor's height,  
Out of his rocky eyrie  
Looked on the wondrous sight;  
Perchance the lion, stalking,  
Still shuns the hallowed spot;  
For beast and bird have seen and heard  
That which man knoweth not.

O lonely grave in Moab's land!  
O dark Beth-Peor's hill!  
Speak to these curious hearts of ours  
And teach them to be still;  
God hath His mysteries of grace,  
Ways that we cannot tell;  
He hides them deep, like the secret sleep  
Of him He loved so well.

*Cecil Frances Alexander*  
*1818-1895*

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## WILL YOUR ANCHOR HOLD?

*Will your anchor hold in the storms of life,  
When the clouds unfold their wings of strife?  
When the strong tides lift, and the cables strain,  
Will your anchor drift, or firm remain?*

What a good hymn this is! The questions asked are so important to each one of us.

Paul tells us that *hope* is the anchor of the soul (Hebrews 6. 19). He uses a striking expression when he refers to those who have “fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.”

Let us each ask ourselves the vital question: Have *we* fled for refuge to Christ? If so, then our anchor is “both sure and steadfast.”

However good an anchor might be, however firmly it might be embedded in the seabed, its effectiveness in securing the ship depends entirely on the strength of the chain that attaches it to the ship. There must be a union between the anchor and the ship, something that unites the two. Our souls are safe only when they are “*fastened to the Rock which cannot move.*”



*Anchor chain making at the Hingley Ironworks in Netherton, Dudley, which made the anchor and chains for the ill-fated Titanic. Notice the central crossbar through each link for added strength.*

And let us think finally on another important question:

*Will your anchor hold in the floods of death,  
When the waters cold chill your latest breath?*

And the answer:

*On the rising tide you can never fail,  
While your anchor holds within the veil.*

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## A FEW CURRENT MATTERS

### Record price for a ruby

A 26 carat ruby, which had the rare grading of ‘pigeon’s blood’, has just been sold for 28million Swiss Francs - about £19.5million - at Sotheby’s auction house in Geneva. This trebled the previous record price for a ruby and is the most expensive coloured gemstone ever that is not a diamond. It was found in a mine in Burma. In the book of Proverbs Solomon tells us that “wisdom is better than rubies,” and that the price of a good wife “is far above rubies.” Many of us can testify to that!



### Students vote to remove Bibles

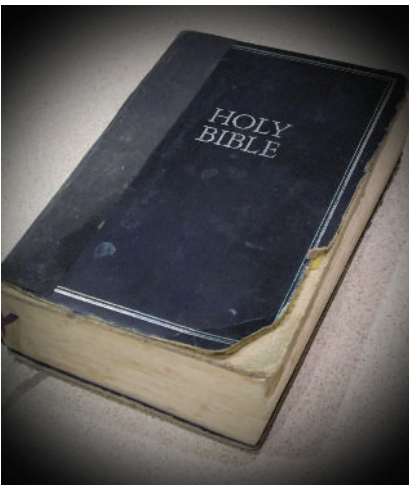
Students at Aberystwyth University have voted to have Bibles placed by Gideons International removed from student halls of residence in case they offend those of other religions. However, fewer than 5 per cent of the 10,000-strong student body voted - with 300 in favour and 175 against. Although so few voted, the union insisted the result was binding and it would now lobby the university to remove all Bibles. The motion put forward was: ‘Compulsory inclusion of Bibles in bedrooms is inappropriate in a multicultural university. It could be offensive, and university should provide a safe space for students to explore and develop their beliefs in a neutral environment.’ Several other universities have also abolished Gideon Bibles, along with Travelodge who have removed all Gideon Bibles ‘for diversity reasons.’

### God to be referred to as ‘She’

The group Women and the Church of England want to start referring to God as ‘She’. The group is challenging the concept of God as a man in hymns, prayers and services. One of the supporters of the idea, the Rev Emma Percy, said: “The dominance of male language makes women feel they are less holy. If we take seriously the idea that men and women are made in the image of God, both male and female language should be used.” Miss Ann Widdecombe, a former Conservative MP who left the Church of England following the decision to ordain women priests, said: “This is plain silly, unbiblical and ridiculous. I think it’s the work of a few lunatics.” This magazine would go further and say it is nothing short of blasphemy.

### Marks and Spencer’s Bible

We reported in our last edition that M&S had banned the use of the words ‘Christ’ and ‘Jesus Christ’ as part of written greetings with online purchases of flowers, labelling them ‘offensive words.’ Unbelievably, it is not long ago that M&S were selling their own special edition of the Authorised Version of the Bible in their stores. We remember them piled high in our local store. How times have changed! It was a large Bible with exceptionally clear print. Do any of our readers still possess one of these Bibles? We would be interested to know. Our own copy is still in daily use as our ‘kitchen’ Bible, now much battered and repaired after more than 30 years use.



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Since our last edition, M&S have confirmed that the words ‘Jesus’ and ‘Christ’ have now been removed from the list of offensive words. We are pleased to hear of this



development. One of our readers has mentioned that a recent order of hers went through using the previously banned words.

### **Funerals for suicides.**

People who commit suicide are to be allowed full funerals in the Church of England for the first time. For centuries ecclesiastical law has said those who died by their own hand must be denied the complete rites of a Christian burial. In February the General Synod voted 262 to five to end the ban. Canon Michael Parsons from Gloucester said: "We take funerals of murderers, rapists, child abusers and gangsters and we are happy to commit them to the mercy of God. But not, it seems, suicides." Although the rules have been relaxed several times, in the early 1800's an act was passed that the body of those who had taken their own life should be buried privately between the hours of nine and 12 at night, with no religious ceremony. The church must now consider exactly how to change the rules.

### **Cannabis**

More than a million young people aged between 16 and 24 admitted using this Class B narcotic drug during the last two years. This is a 20% rise above the previous two years. At the same time, the use of ecstasy has more than doubled in two years. These alarming figures have been published by the Office for National Statistics. Research indicates that cannabis is highly addictive, causes mental health problems, and leads to violence. Foolishly, prosecutions, police warnings and penalty notices have all fallen.

### **Earthquake moves Mount Everest**

Scientists say that the devastating earthquake in Nepal has moved Mount Everest an inch to the south-west, and the capital city Kathmandu has shifted south by more than 5ft. More than 8,700 people were killed by the quake and the aftershock that followed. "For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee" (Isaiah 54. 10). What a gracious promise that is!

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In spite of a highly successful agricultural industry, Britain produces less than two-thirds of the food the country consumes. The National Farmers Union has calculated that if all the food produced in the UK in a year were stored and eaten from January 1st, the “cupboard” would be bare by August 14th. It is predicted that within a generation more than half of the UK’s food will come from overseas. Farming production is worth about £26bn a year.

God’s promise of “seedtime and harvest” should be a matter of great thankfulness. In November 1621 the Pilgrim Fathers had their first thanksgiving day to thank God for His mercies in providing a successful harvest. One named Edward Winslow wrote: “Our harvest being gotten in, our governor sent four men to catch fowl that we might, after a special manner, rejoice together after we had gathered the fruits of our labour.”



*First Thanksgiving at Plymouth, Massachusetts*

This was soon to be tried, for in June and July 1623 they suffered a famine. There was no rain for seven weeks and they watched the corn wither in the fields around them. They turned to prayer, and set aside a day of prayer and fasting for nine hours. They had a most remarkable answer to prayer as soon after a soft rain began to fall and went on day after day.



# PERCEPTION

A Quarterly Magazine for Young People



"He giveth snow like wool: He scattereth the  
hoarfrost like ashes" (Psalm 147. 16).

WINTER 2015

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## EDITORIAL

*“Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am” (Psalm 39. 4).*

A minister arrived for his first visit to a remote country chapel. When he stood up to preach, he said, “Friends, when I received the invitation to preach here, do you know the first thing I did? I looked for THIS.” And he held up a large road atlas. “You see,” he said, “I did not know the way.” Now whatever we may think of the minister’s pulpit method, he used the road atlas to illustrate his subject that morning. He went on to speak of how we need a guide to direct us - that guide, of course, being the Word of God.

When we set off on a journey, we usually ask ourselves, “How long will it take?” We want to know (or others want to know) what time we hope to arrive. In these days of sat-nav we are helpfully provided with an estimate of the arrival time for our journey. Pre sat-nav days, it was common to write to the AA or a similar organisation requesting, for example, a holiday route. This would arrive a few days later setting out a detailed itinerary to be followed, any notable landmarks on the way, and the total time the journey would take. This information is important if we have an appointment to keep, or we need to arrive at an airport by a certain time, or perhaps we need simply to pick up the children from school at a certain time. In other words, the end of a journey is as important as the beginning.

But how few people appear to give any consideration at all to the end of another important journey - the journey of life! This journey begins from the day of our birth, and ends with the day of our death. It may be long, or it may be short. None of knows how long that journey will be, as this is committed to God - “My times are in His hand.” But how solemn if we carry on day after day, month after month, living life to the full, but with no thought of our end.



When young, we do not think much about the measure of our days. After all, death is something that comes only to older people. Or is it? I remember when at school hearing for the first time of the death of someone of my own age group. This person did not go to the same school as myself, but we travelled to school on the same bus and often chatted. Suddenly the news came through - this friend had been killed while walking on a road in France during the summer holidays.

On another occasion, a boy at school was to have a serious operation - he had a heart problem. At our morning assembly, our headmaster prayed for this boy that he might be brought safely through the operation. He died the next day. It was not the Lord's will that his life should be spared.

Some years after this I heard that another of my school friends had passed away very unexpectedly. Russell (his name) was a clever boy, and in fact was moved up a year in the junior school as the work was too easy for him. He became a teacher and was well-respected. But the measure of his days was shortened. I remember the finality of it hitting me hard - he was gone, gone into eternity, and where was his soul?

As we come to the close of another year, it is an appropriate time to take stock of our journey. How far have we got on the way? Perhaps on reflection, looking back over the year that is passed, we may have some regrets that we did not go a different way. Experience has shown us that what we *thought* was the right way was not the best after all. There may be some turning point in our life. A decision has to be made as to which route we should follow. How do we decide? "Commit thy way unto the Lord and He shall bring it to pass." That is the safest way - to commit it unto Him who alone knows the end from the beginning.

Our text from Psalm 39 was a prayer of David. Moses prayed a similar prayer in another Psalm: "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom" (Psalm 90. 12). May the Lord grant us each submission to His will, and a true concern over the end of our journey, in whatever the year ahead may bring for us.

With greetings and best wishes to all of our readers, now and in the coming year. May the Lord bless you each.

The Editor.

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## WE ARE JOURNEYING

Continuing our theme of life compared to a journey, we are pleased to insert part of a sermon preached by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom on a Lord's day morning in 1991. The text was: *"And Moses said unto Hobab, the son of Raguel the Midianite, Moses' father in law, We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you: come thou with us, and we will do thee good: for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel"* (Numbers 10. 29).

One of the most familiar comparisons we have is that of life to a journey. Again and again it appears, right through the Bible, our life, your life, my life, compared to a journey. In literature, whether it is religious or not, you have this thought over and over again. You have it in poetry, whether it is religious poetry or secular poetry. Especially you have it in dozens of our hymns: our life compared to a journey. Of course, in the Bible there is all the imagery of the desert, the wilderness, the tents, the way not clearly marked out, the need for provision, the need for water, the need for a good guide. It is one of the great themes of Scripture, our life compared to a journey.



*A wilderness journey*

The more you think of it, the more you realise what an apt comparison it is. This journey begins the moment you and I are born. Immediately, from the day of our birth, we are on a journey. So it can be said of every one of us here this morning, "We are journeying." Some have

got a long way in their journey. Some are only at the beginning of their journey. But if you take the smallest infant here this morning, and you take the most aged of the old people, it is true of us each: "We are journeying." We cannot stand still. Every night when we go to bed, we are a day's march further on in our journey. With some, it is a long journey; with others it is a short journey. With some, the journey ends peaceably; with some the journey ends violently, suddenly. But all of us, we are journeying.



All of us are journeying towards eternity. We are not here for ever. God has put each one of us here on this earth for a little time, some longer, some shorter. He has put us here for a purpose. He has put us here for an end. He has set our feet in this journey, the journey of life. There cannot be any standing still. There cannot be any turning back. We are continually going on towards the end of our journey. The older we get, the more we realise how short our time is, that we are only here for a little while, and then that great, that vast eternity.

I go back to those days when I was about eighteen or nineteen, and eternity did become a tremendous sound. It seemed to cast a gloom, a shadow over everything. I remember when days came round which I used to enjoy, and O there seemed to be a gloom and a shadow over everything. Then those things I used to enjoy, the pleasures I used to love, did not satisfy any more. O this truth, "We are journeying"!

But then it comes to this, that when the journey ends, there are just two different destinations: there is heaven, there is hell. The one thing which really matters this morning is: if you and I are journeying, and most certainly we are, then *where* are we journeying? How many people here with a clear conscience before God can say, "We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you"? That is, the Promised Land. That is, the heavenly Canaan.

By nature, when we set out, we are all journeying in the wrong direction, every one of us, whether religious or irreligious, whether we go to chapel or do not go to chapel. We are all journeying towards hell; and unless grace intervenes, unless we are blessed with repentance, unless the Holy Ghost stops us, unless we are completely turned round, unless there is a different direction to our life, the place to which we are journeying will be the place where to all eternity we will dwell. One point I have realised for many years: we shall never get to heaven unless we journey heavenwards.

What about the dying thief? It was at the eleventh hour, almost at the twelfth hour, that his feet were turned round. But those last moments in his life, he was journeying in the right direction. He was journeying heavenwards. He was journeying towards "the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you." And the Lord Jesus *did* say, I will give it you. He said, "Today shalt thou be with Me in paradise." The dying thief did turn round. He made great headway heavenwards

in his dying moments. “Lord, remember me.”

“We are journeying.” I think the point on which more than anything else we need to be concerned is this: has there ever been a change in direction? That is really what conversion is. It is a change in your direction. It may come suddenly, abruptly, or it may come very gradually. But has there been a change in your direction? “We are journeying.” The godly people years ago used to like this (you do not hear it so much today):

““For ever with the Lord!”  
Amen, so let it be!  
Life from the dead is in that word,  
'Tis immortality.  
Here in the body pent,  
Absent from Thee I roam,  
But daily pitch my moving tent  
A day's march nearer home.”

Well, when we pitch our moving tent tonight, will it be a day's march nearer heaven or a day's march nearer hell?

*Speaking to the young people in the congregation:*

We would speak lovingly and affectionately to all our young people here this morning. We do not promise them an easy way. The way is rough. It means leaving the world. It means giving up your idols. It means giving up your sinful pleasures. You may be despised by the world. But it will be heaven at last. Or there is the other way. You have your lusts, your pleasures, your sins, your desires. You have a good time and enjoy yourself, and then you have the eternal reckoning. Still this call rings down the years, “Come thou with us.” We have been where you are. You have never been where we are. We know the difference. We can make the comparison.

“And, though the world may think it strange,  
We would not with the world exchange.”

We would rather have the lot of the people of God. We would rather have the wilderness with all its sorrows, with all its grief, than all this world can call good and great. We can say, “Come thou with us, and we

will do thee good: for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel.” The world will never do you any good. Sin will never do you any good. Satan will never do you any good. We know the difference. We once thought we knew true peace, true happiness in the world. But the Lord stirred up our nest. He brought us forth, He put us in this pilgrim way, this way of separation. “Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.” We had this burnt in our hearts:

“Not health, nor wealth, nor sounding fame,  
Nor earth’s deceitful, empty name,  
With all its pomp and all its glare,  
Can with a precious Christ compare.”

We know we have something better than the world can ever give. We also know that *the best is still to come*.

Beloved friends, may you this morning view something of the glory and everlasting blessedness of the people of God in Christ, now and to all eternity.

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### CANON HOBSON: PRAYER HEARD AND ANSWERED

A dear sister in the Lord called upon me to ask if I would join her and her husband, at twelve o’clock that day, in prayer to God that He would be pleased to keep their cattle free from the disease which was carrying off those on the next farm, or, if it attacked them, to bless remedies for their cure.

I went back with her to the farmhouse, where she and her husband knelt with me and we spread the whole matter before the Lord, as we did every weekday for nearly a month. And, let it be told to His praise and glory, God was gracious to hear our cry and grant our petition, inasmuch as not one of those dear people’s cattle was even smitten, though the disease attacked and killed many of those on the neighbouring farms. It would be difficult to explain this otherwise than as being an answer to prayer.

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**CHRISTMAS EVE AT BETHLEHEM**

by Alfred J. Levell

*As a young soldier, Mr. Levell set sail in the S.S. Canton for Port Said in October 1945. From here he was to spend time in Palestine where he visited a number of Biblical places. When he returned home, he wrote an account (some from letters he had sent home) of many of his experiences and published it under the title 'A Soldier Views the Holy Land.' His Pastor, Mr. Jesse Delves of Clapham, wrote a Foreword commending the writings for the reading of young people. Here Mr. Levell gives an account of a Christmas Eve spent at Bethlehem.*

My next outing was on Christmas Eve, 1945, and, as it was a unique trip, I will describe it separately at the possible risk of some slight repetition later when I recount visits to the same places, made in a more detailed fashion. Perhaps I could not do better than to quote from a letter written home on Christmas Day, when events were all fresh in my mind.

At least this will be a Christmas which I shall remember. Most of us have 2½ days off, but actually I have been doing a spell of duty this afternoon. I have also been sitting outdoors reading, and the sunshine, the sea, and the scenery were all alike glorious on this lovely warm day. What a contrast from the intense cold of last night, about which I must now tell you.

Trips were organised from all over Palestine to enable troops to attend a Carol Service at Bethlehem. Our Unit was allocated 22 vacancies and I was one of those able to go. We had two trucks, each with its driver and armed escort, hardly I thought compatible with going to a service! The seats were, of course, just the usual wooden forms, but fortunately I had an old car cushion which improved matters for the long journey. Acting on advice, I took my greatcoat, blanket, and pullover, and I've been glad of them all! A high wind had been blowing, but it dropped suddenly and we set out at 2pm yesterday in perfect weather, complete with parcels of food and chocolate for the journey.

Bethlehem is almost exactly 100 miles by road from here, and as the distance is almost the same as from Nazareth to Bethlehem, though the direction is slightly different, I compared the journey in my mind to

that made by Joseph “with his espoused wife” when he went to be taxed at Bethlehem. But what a contrast in our mode of travel! We have been and returned in 18 hours, whereas it must have taken him several days.

About twenty miles north of Jerusalem, one climb consisted of a winding road - about 10 hairpin bends - and sheer drops down from the side of the road. It was certainly quite a breath-taking ride!



*Jerusalem at night*

It was dark when we reached Jerusalem, but the lights were impressive and the modern city appears to be well built and spacious. We also saw the wall of the old city, and the Damascus Gate. Bethlehem is only four or five miles from Jerusalem and, with the growth of each, the intervening space is almost a “built-up area”. We saw Rachel’s tomb as we passed by,

and finally arrived at Bethlehem at 6.25pm. You should have seen the sight - army lorries by the hundred, parked for two miles outside Bethlehem, and service personnel by the thousand! There seemed to be endless Palestine police on duty, and all types of civilians, mingling with the Forces, made it a cosmopolitan crowd.

After a cup of tea (obtained with difficulty), we went off to the Shepherds’ Fields. Here my preconceived ideas were shattered. I had always imagined a field lying on an upland, and the shepherds running *down* to find the Lord Jesus. On the contrary, I now discovered that from Bethlehem you go down and down, along a rugged stony track for 1½



*Rachel’s tomb in 1937*

miles to get to the Fields. It’s a real walk, but much worse coming back.

I was moving in a crowd four or five deep, and I could not but wonder what they were all thinking about. Some possibly had come out of idle curiosity, but I had a feeling that they were not many. I was struck with the orderliness, good behaviour and reverence of the crowd generally, and I believe that most had come with a genuine interest in the events which were being commemorated. But it was equally and painfully obvious that much of this commemoration was “of the flesh” -

a large Bethlehem star made by a neon sign, on the Church of Nativity, bore witness to this. As I walked along that track with my thoughts drifting in these lines, it seemed for a few minutes that the crowd was taken from one's mind, to give place to a little meditation on that condescension and love, which caused the Redeemer to come to this earth, even in the form of a babe, and one had a desire to say:

“In that dear babe of Bethlehem I see,

My God contracted to a span for me.”

We arrived at the Field, jostled through the gateway, and here we were, gathered on the very spot where those shepherds, of whom we have so often sung and read, had seen the vision of angels, and had had the birth of the God-man revealed to them.



*The Shepherds' Fields in winter. The track down which Mr. Levell descended is doubtless the now-metalled road seen on the extreme left of the picture*



We were in good time for the service, and as they asked for volunteers to form a makeshift choir, we stepped forward and, in so doing, enjoyed singing some of the old Christmas hymns (but in what extraordinary surroundings!) We obtained a good place near the huge bonfire, which was lit just before the service started, and which, together with a few arc-lamps, provided the necessary light.

The service was ably conducted by the Assistant Chaplain-General, who estimated the congregation at about 5,500. In a brief address, he spoke simply and suitably, considering the very mixed nature of his audience. The singing of the hymns by 5,500 was remarkably good, with just a small makeshift choir of a couple of dozen to lead: it will certainly be remembered by many.

The service ended, we trudged back to Bethlehem. It was a sweating uphill job, and I could not help but cast my mind back those 1900 odd years, and thought that the shepherds had had no physically easy task in finding “the babe of Bethlehem.”

Various services had taken place in the Church of Nativity and other churches. I was able to look inside the main part of the Church, but to get into the “Grotto of the Nativity” (marking the place of Christ’s birth) was next to impossible with such crowds.

The little market place was crowded, and I found that all the shopkeepers had put up their prices specially for the occasion. For example, a very small cup of inferior tea, and one cake, cost us 1/6d each, but we managed to get some bananas quite reasonably - the first I had eaten since they went out of fashion in England!

We found our lorry at about 1pm and finally left at about 2.40pm. In passing through Jerusalem our driver took the wrong turning and we found ourselves quite literally going to Jericho! This was speedily rectified, but, later on, after we had gone through Nablus, another wrong turning was taken with the result that we came back through the plain of Jezreel. It was bitterly cold throughout the night, particularly in the Samaritan hills, almost unbelievably so in comparison with the heat of the day, and an army lorry is not the most luxurious of conveyances! Needless to say, we slept but little, and were awake to see the dawn, and just as the sunset last night was glorious, so the dawn this morning, as it shimmered over the hills of Galilee and Mount Tabor, was unforgettably beautiful.

We arrived back in camp at about 8am and were all glad to snatch a few hours sleep. It has been a privilege to visit Bethlehem thus on Christmas Eve, and an experience on which one will look back each recurring Christmas season, though today my thoughts are with you all at home!

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You will be interested to know that in later years Mr. Levell served the denomination as a member of the committee of the Gospel Standard Aid and Poor Relief Societies, the Gospel Standard Bethesda Fund, the Gospel Standard Trust, and was also Chairman of the Companion Tune Book Trust.

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### **BISHOP GOBAT SAVED FROM A HYAENA**

In the middle of the 1800's there was a Bishop of Jerusalem by the name of Bishop Samuel Gobat. He longed to preach the Gospel to others, and spent many years as a missionary in Abyssinia (today's Ethiopia). There he met with many discouragements. Once, tired and weary, he retired into a cave to pray and to rest.



After prayer, when he rose from his knees, his eyes had adjusted to the darkness and gloom of the cave. To his astonishment, just a few feet away from him was a hyaena with her cubs. It is well known that hyaenas are very fierce hunters, and very dangerous, especially when they have babies. In fact, hyaenas are one of the very few animals that will attack a lion, and will kill each other in fights over prey.

But God had protected His servant the Bishop from the hyaena just as He protected Daniel from the lions. He had closed the mother hyaena's mouth.

In peace, and with a sense of wonder at God's protection, he left the cave and continued on his journey.

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## MINISTERS - THE LORD'S SERVANTS

One of our younger readers has been much disturbed recently by comments made to her about different ministers. Remarks have been made such as, "Oh, do you like him?" "I'm surprised you have him to preach." "Do you get on well with him? I don't."

These comments have really disturbed this young person, and she worries that she will be prejudiced against the minister before she even gets to the service.

She asked whether a few remarks could be given in *Perception* on this subject. We felt we would gladly do so if it would be helpful. Only then did we realise what a difficult - and delicate - matter this is, and for a time felt unequal to the task. However, having received the request, we will try to give a few general remarks, and hope that they might be a help in one way or another.

### **No minister will be free of criticism**

Let us say first of all that there can scarcely have been a Christian minister about whom *some* unkind, disparaging remark has not been made. John Chandler, an early settler in Australia, speaking of the sneers and malice displayed towards one of the Lord's servants under whose ministry he had been much blessed, wrote: "But the Lord's servants must go through good and evil report - *and they are pretty sure to have plenty of the latter.*"

Mr. Jesse Delves, Pastor of Ebenezer Chapel, Clapham, when the Lord gave him a word confirming the ministry, wrote: "The word confirmed me in this, that the Lord would bring me into the ministry, *and that I should have much opposition.*"

So to some extent we have to expect it - but it *is* unsettling, particularly for our young people, when a remark is made by someone older, someone more experienced, than themselves, and perhaps someone whom they regard as a gracious person.

### **All true ministers will feel their unfitness**

When the burden of the ministry, or indeed any other work of the Lord, is laid on a man, his first reaction is normally one of inadequacy for such an office.

Moses said: "Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh?"

Gideon said: "I am the least in my father's house."

Solomon said: "Who am I then, that I should build Him an house?"

Jeremiah said: "Ah, Lord God, I cannot speak: for I am but a child."

Amos said: "I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son."

Paul said: "I am less than the least of all saints."

So a servant of the Lord normally enters the ministry with fearfulness and a sense of his inadequacy for the work. Those of you who have been reading our serialisation of Mr. Bradford's life will remember his thoughts when the ministry was first suggested to him: "I tried to tell the Lord what a poor, weak, nervous creature I was - so unfit to speak in public. Also my unfitness for so sacred an office."

Other ministers have expressed similar feelings.

William Smith (Pastor of Rehoboth Chapel, Tunbridge Wells in the 1800's): "I felt myself such a poor, blind, and ignorant creature, that I thought I had done wrong by consenting to go out to preach."

Jesse Delves (Pastor of Ebenezer Chapel, Clapham): "At times I felt such a sinful wretch before the Lord, that the thought seemed only like presumption to think of such a work as the ministry for such a poor ignorant wretch as I felt."

### **As hearers, we have a great responsibility**

Although the Lord Jesus Christ said, "Take heed *what* ye hear" (Mark 4. 24), He also said, "Take heed *how* ye hear" (Luke 8. 18). There is a responsibility laid upon the hearers to approach the services of God's house with a right desire to be fed and receive profit under the Word. It is good when the language of the hearers is, "Is there any word from the Lord for me?" Mark 4. 24 particularly appears to be linked with hasty or rash judgment when hearing the word of God preached.

A listener who is truly exercised will have a feeling instinctively that something is right. In our denomination there are two words we use which are difficult to define: one is *unction* and the other is *savour*. "There was an *unction* in the preaching," we say. The word itself is derived from *anointing*. It means something truly spiritual in the language spoken - something that commends itself to us as *having the right ring*.

### **How should we react if someone runs a minister down?**

Our advice is that first we should say, “May I ask why you say that?” The reply may give some indication of what is troubling the person who has made the remark.

- *Is it just some petty thing that really does not matter?* We remember a minister being criticised because he took his Tune Book with him into the pulpit.
- *Is it just some kind of prejudice?* A couple arrived at chapel a little late. The minister preaching was one they had not heard before. “When we got in the porch,” they said, “we heard this posh voice, so we went home.” This was just prejudice. Nathanael was prejudiced: “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” he asked.
- *Is it just some generational difference?* One of our older ministers told me that fifty years ago, no respectable minister would appear at chapel without his hat. We remember reading an article - a serious article - on whether it was right for a minister ever to wear ‘pumps’ (what today we would call trainers).

If the problem appears to be in the above category then ignore it completely. It is unworthy of further consideration.

### **What if it is something more serious?**

We need to draw a distinction between a ministry which is *defective* and a ministry which is *unscriptural*. If a minister is unclear on justification by faith alone (for example), or he falls short on the total depravity of man, or speaks as if you could ‘be saved’ if only you ‘tried harder,’ then that ministry is unscriptural. On no account should we sit under an erroneous ministry - this will be harmful to us. For those young in the way, the advice of a more mature or discerning person may be invaluable as they may be aware of the error or leaning towards error.

Although it is unsettling, in many cases there may be something of substance behind the remarks and it would be wrong automatically to dismiss them. Although you alone are accountable to God for “how you hear,” it is scriptural for the old to instruct the young, and the younger person should be willing to listen. If you feel the criticism has been made by a gracious person, then try to make it a matter of prayer that the Lord will enable you to come to a right judgment on the matter.

Apart from error, we trust that ministers will remember those words in Ecclesiastes 12.10: “The preacher sought to find out acceptable words.” The language in which the preacher proclaims the Gospel must be acceptable to the people. There is no place for undignified language in the pulpit - although we have no wish that anyone should be other than *natural*.

Similar considerations can be made concerning dress. We were invited to attend a meeting recently at which a minister was to speak. He gave his talk wearing jeans and generally very casual clothing. Personally, we found this unbecoming, and unworthy of the serious position he held as a minister of the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **Ministers have varying gifts**

We must not expect all ministers to be equally gifted. The well known Mr. J. C. Philpot, wrote: “There is a great tendency in our mind to reduce every person to a certain fixed model. We have all of us certain modes of thought and expression which, because they accurately represent our own views and feelings, are, as if instinctively, applied by us as rules of measurement to others with whom we may be brought into contact.”

God dispenses His gifts as he sees fit. Some ministers (particularly in the past) have been only half literate, but God has greatly blessed their ministry. Some expressions and mannerisms may grate on a more refined person - but “charity beareth all things.” Love can, and must, overlook many things.

### **God can use the lesser-gifted minister**

Most of you will have heard of Dr. John Owen, the very learned Puritan minister. Perhaps you have some of his works on your bookshelves at home. (People say that when Dr. Owen has written about something, there is nothing possible left to say.) He entered Oxford University at the age of twelve. He read classics, mathematics, philosophy, theology and Hebrew. An exceptional student, he obtained his MA degree at the age of nineteen. One Lord’s day morning he set off to worship at St. Mary’s Church, Aldermanbury (later destroyed by the Great Fire of London in 1666). His intention was to hear the great Dr. Edmund Calamy preach. But the great man was unable to come.



Instead, a rustic countryman preacher entered the pulpit. Many of the congregation left the building in disgust. But the countryman preached from, “Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?” Owen’s heart was deeply touched, and he felt greatly revived. He never knew who the preacher was, but God had used him.

### **A man’s natural disposition and background will remain with him all his life**

I have in my possession an old school report from my junior school. The teacher made some remark about me (I will not say what it was!) that I was not too pleased with at the time. But I often think about it and realise how true it was - I am still the same now as I was then! We must make allowances for a man’s nature. “We are what we are,” and so are ministers.

### **Ministers need our prayers**

“Ye also helping together by prayer for us” (2 Corinthians 1. 11).

“Brethren, pray for us” (1 Thessalonians 5. 25).

“Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified” (2 Thessalonians 3. 1).

A prayerless congregation is unlikely to have a good Lord’s day (though God is sovereign). Let us pray earnestly before the service that the Holy Spirit may be poured out on the minister we expect to hear.

### **A true story**

A young man was expecting a certain minister at his chapel whom he could not seem to ‘get on with.’ He mentioned to his girlfriend how he hoped that, even if it was not a profitable time to him, someone else might receive a token, and that perhaps he himself might be helped through the hymns or something else in the service. His girlfriend felt very much over the weekend that she must try to pray ‘harder’ that the Lord, if it was his will, would indeed show him some token, and that he might feel it to have been a profitable Lord’s day. The words with her were: “For with God nothing shall be impossible.”

Well, on the Monday morning, it was wonderful that he was able to tell his girlfriend that the Lord had indeed answered prayer, and he could truly say it had been good for him to have been in the house of the

Lord that day. In fact, the minister took for his text the exact words he had tried to plead in prayer that morning.

His thoughts were now changed towards that minister and he was sure he would not have the same feelings before the next service when the same minister was expected.

### **Another true story**

A young minister came to preach at the chapel for the first time. After the service one of the members spoke some rather unkind things about him. After a few days she said to one of the deacons: "I am so sorry I spoke against the minister. I have been trying to pray for him." How we need this spirit.

### **A few Scriptures to think over**

"And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake" (1 Thess 5. 13).

Peter and John: "they were unlearned and ignorant men" (Acts 4. 13).

They said of Jesus, "How knoweth this Man letters, having never learned?" (John 7. 15).

"Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you!" (Luke 6. 26).

"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season" (2 Tim 4. 2).

"By evil report and good report" (2 Cor 6. 8). (Ministers stand answerable to their Master alone.)

### **The case of Apollos (Acts 18. 24-28)**

A new preacher appeared at Ephesus.

- He was eloquent (a good speaker).
- He was mighty in the scriptures.
- He was instructed in the way of the Lord.
- He was fervent.
- He was diligent.
- He was bold.

To all appearances he had all that was needed for a good minister. But when Aquila and Priscilla had heard him preach, they realised that all was not right. Although he knew much (mighty in the scriptures), there was something missing in his ministry. We are given a hint of

where the problem lay: he knew only the baptism of John. Exactly what the result of this was, we cannot be sure. Possibly he knew little of the glorious resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

What did Aquila and Priscilla do? Instead of speaking to others, they called him aside - invited him round, we might say. And then, lovingly and patiently, they explained to him “the way of God more perfectly.”

After that, we read the brethren could receive him, and “he helped them much which had believed through grace.” Their love and patience had, under God, been greatly used for the good of the church. Above all, he now spoke well of the Lord Jesus, “shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ.”

Let us think over this remarkable account. May we all be given a love to the Lord’s servants and to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake. They are those that bring “good tidings of great joy.” Love will cover a multitude of deficiencies! And may those that are older reflect very carefully how they speak in the presence of those who are young - and often still tender - in the way.

\* \* \* \*

We conclude with an account from John Warburton’s autobiography of his almost unbelievable prejudice against William Gadsby - and how that prejudice was turned into love for the Lord’s servant.

### **John Warburton’s prejudice against William Gadsby**

Some time after this, Mr. Gadsby came to Manchester to supply the Baptist chapel of which he is now the pastor, and I went to hear him. I think I shall never forget the first time I heard him. When I got into the chapel I thought to myself, “What a poor, gloomy, miserable place this is.” As the people came in, I felt such a hatred rise up in my heart against them as I never felt against any people before. Nay, so much so, that I was just ready to take up my hat and walk out, when Mr. Gadsby got into the pulpit. I was struck with surprise to see so poor and mean-looking a fellow (as I thought him) attempt to preach. I despised him in my very soul, and thought he looked like an ignorant fool that had not common sense.

He arose and gave out a hymn, but it was in so drawing a way that I verily believed he could not read. O how the devil rose up in my heart! I even wished that some one or other would raise a disturbance in the chapel, for I thought I could kick him out of it with all the pleasure in the world. My prejudice was so strong that, when he went to prayer, I do believe that I actually hated the sound of his voice. He appeared to me to stutter and stammer as though he could hardly get a word out of his mouth. My soul boiled with rage, and I called myself a thousand fools for coming to hear such a fool.

When he had finished his prayer, which was very short, I thought to myself, "Poor creature! thou canst never preach, I'm sure;" and I felt a secret pleasure in the hope that when he had read his text he would be obliged to tell the people that he could not preach. The words of his text were, "A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things; and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things;" and he was so long in reading them, that I dropped my head down and thought I would try to go to sleep. He then made a little pause, and I looked up to see what he was about, and he was looking all around the chapel, and rolling his eyes in such a way that I really thought him crazy.

The first words he spoke were, "Perhaps you will be ready to say that, according to our sentiments, we cannot find a good man upon earth. But by the help of God we will, or we will ransack the Bible from Genesis to Revelation." O how my prejudice was knocked down at a blow! My soul melted like wax before the sun, and I exclaimed, "God bless thee! The Lord help thee to find the good man!" He first showed that by nature no man was good, and O the depths he entered into in showing man's lost and ruined condition. But when he came to describe the good man as he stood in Christ, and the good things which were then brought forth out of his heart, my soul was so overcome I cried out in my feelings, "Whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God; where thou diest I will die." My very soul was knit to him, as closely as Jonathan's to David, and my ears were nailed to the doorpost. O the heavenly times I have had when Mr. Gadsby was supplying, for he was not at that time their settled pastor.

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## UNUSUAL BIBLES

### 2 - The Pitman Shorthand Bible

In the early 1800's there lived a large family in the town of Trowbridge, Wiltshire by the name of Pitman. Eventually there were eleven children in the family, and the third of these, born in 1813, was Isaac. A bright boy, he was educated at the local grammar school. They had never had such an avid reader! At the age of sixteen, he read through the whole of Walker's Dictionary and copied out all the words he did not know how to pronounce so that he could study both the meanings and sounds of words.

He started his career as a clerk in a textile mill. However, 'books' he described as one of the two loves of his life (the other was music) and he left the mill to become an English teacher at his own private school in Wooton-under-Edge.

He was a lifelong advocate of spelling reform for the English language, and produced many pamphlets setting out his ideas. His motto was 'time saved is life gained.'

In fulfilment of his motto, he developed a system of writing at speed based solely on phonetics, i.e. based purely on the sound. His system he originally called *Stenographic Sound-Hand*. His work was not entirely original, as he based it on an earlier system known as Taylor's system.

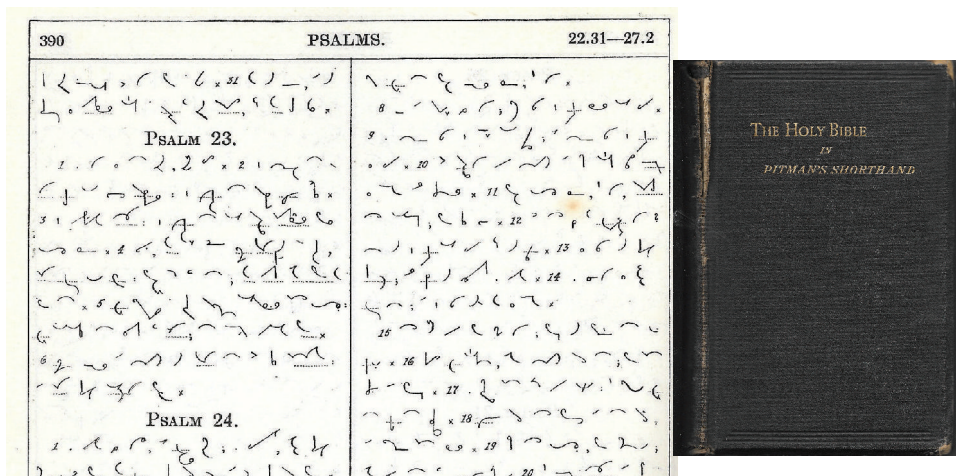


*Sir Isaac Pitman*

Although he much improved Taylor's work, his publisher rejected it and suggested he should develop a completely new system. This he did, and once he was satisfied with what he had done, he published another pamphlet giving as an example of his shorthand Psalm 100 and the Lord's Prayer.

It was soon realised how his shorthand was of great commercial importance, and its use revolutionised journalism and the work of reporting. Previously, reporters took notes in longhand, then filled in the details from memory, leading to many inaccuracies.

One great labour of love, not connected with his shorthand, was his work on revising Bagster's Comprehensive Bible, an Authorised Version publication much used by students. His custom was to read the Bible morning and evening. As he did so, he would refer to every parallel margin reference. He discovered numerous misprints and errors in these references, which he found were, for the most part, repeated in the various commentaries available at the time. During the next three years almost every hour of Isaac's long days was spent in the examination of the four thousand notes, and the five hundred thousand parallel passages. These corrections found their way into subsequent editions of Bagster's Bible.



*Pitman's Shorthand Bible open on Psalm 23*

In 1894 he was knighted. He died at Bath in 1897. There is a memorial plaque to him on the north wall of Bath Abbey.



Sir Isaac Pitman was the grandfather of Sir James Pitman who developed the disastrous Initial Teaching Alphabet, so popular with junior school teachers in the 1970's. It has now fallen into disuse.



## THE HINGLEY IRONWORKS

The picture of the Hingley Ironworks on page 37 in the Autumn 2015 *Perception* has aroused some interest. The man on the left is Benjamin Woodhouse, the grandfather of Mr. Clifford Woodhouse, Pastor of Chard Strict Baptist chapel! The picture was taken about 1910 when Ben was aged 34. He was the number one striker. He died five years later at the age of 39 and is buried in Beeches Road chapel graveyard, Blackheath, behind the chapel, fourth row back. The men from left to right are: Ben Woodhouse, George Bridgewater, Albert Hodgetts (son), Theophlus Dunn, and Ben Hodgetts, master chain maker (father). The ironworks are now demolished and the site redeveloped. We are grateful to Mrs. Marcelle Woodhouse for these interesting facts.

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## SKIN - OUR ORGAN OF TOUCH

Our skin is composed of several layers. The top layer, the *epidermis*, is the layer of skin you can see. Made up of dead skin cells, it is waterproof and serves as a protective wrap for the underlying layers.

Our sense of touch is controlled by a huge network of nerve endings and touch receptors, of which we have many millions. This system is responsible for all the sensations we feel - cold, hot, smooth, rough, pressure, itch, pain, vibrations and more.

Continuous information is sent to and from the brain by specialised nerves known as *neurons*. Other organs of sense - the ears, the eyes, the nose - are confined to one spot, but our organ of touch, the skin, covers our entire body. Our skin is actually quite tough, but at the same time it is sensitive to the slightest stimulation.

A hand can distinguish between a smooth piece of glass, and one etched with lines only 1/2500 of an inch deep. They say that a synthetic textile worker can detect by feel alone if a nylon blend has been increased by 5 per cent.

Perhaps we wonder why our bodies are blanketed by what some may think as useless hairs. In fact, each hair acts as a lever enabling us to detect pressure of 1/1000 of an ounce on the tip of a half-inch hair.

Indeed, we are “fearfully and wonderfully made.”

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**DOUGLAS EDWARD BRADFORD***(Continued from Autumn 2015 page 33)***The backside of the desert**

I believe the Lord then drove me into the “backside of the desert” to learn more at the school of Christ. I now tried to dismiss all thoughts about the solemn work of the ministry. My secretarial work at this time was heavy and this with family concerns, seemed to take up my mind. I now concluded the Lord had heard and received my confessions of total unfitness to speak in His name, and I felt a great burden had been lifted off my mind. This respite, however, was not to be for long as at the opening of 1934 a word was spoken with unusual power, almost like a voice from heaven: “And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry” (1 Timothy 1. 12).

This I know was a promise for the future as it concerned myself and I locked it up in my heart and spoke to no man about it. This word conveyed to me the solemn fact that my exercises about the ministry were from the Lord over these many years and I felt persuaded that in His time He would bring it to pass. All I had to do was to wait and watch the unfolding of His hand in the matter. Many years passed before it pleased the Lord to put the ministerial “yoke” upon me. I had to learn much more of my unfitness and the need of that “precious blood” to cleanse me from all my sins. I had to tarry (as one good man said) a little longer at Jerusalem until my beard was grown.

**Continuing exercises over the ministry**

Although I had not dropped the slightest hint to any of my friends as to my exercises, yet several expressed their opinion that the time would come that the Lord would send me out to proclaim “the unsearchable riches of Christ.” I held my counsel.

During the next four years I had my providential trials, but mercies intermixed. Two more children were added to my “quiver.” These things caused many a visit to the throne of grace. Towards the end of this period dark storm clouds were gathering over the nations as the Second World War approached. Added to this the cloud was over our little cause and one’s mind seemed under a heavy burden wondering

what the Lord was going to do with our nation and our beloved Church.

Then as regards the ministry, the enemy came in upon me like a flood, and unbelief and carnal reason joined hands with the tempter who said: "Such an insignificant creature to set yourself up as a preacher." My spirit sank. Unbelief got fast hold upon me; this may seem strange to some who know not their weakness. Notwithstanding my former experience of God's dealing with me I was caught in the stronghold of the devil for a season. I resolved to dismiss all thoughts of becoming a minister.

### **Watching and waiting**

Still, the matter returned from time to time and I tried to reason with God, telling Him of my utter unfitness for so sacred an office; but I knew sinners were called to preach to sinners. I believe all this proved a salutary check against the premature development of the matter which would have run up before the tree was properly rooted.

It is a mercy to be holden by God until the time arrives! I was enabled to keep these thoughts of my heart secret. Especially did I guard my words in public prayer. I regard it a great weakness when men give hints in prayer. It is such mistrust of God and, like Samson, is a discovering of our secret unto others instead of waiting for the Lord to lay it on the minds of His people. This is making more haste than good speed.

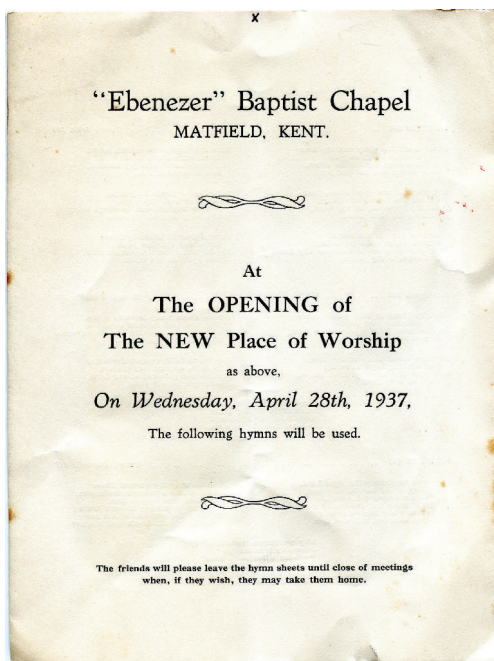
About this time I came across the account of the late Mr. Row, one time Pastor at Tonbridge, who had opened his mind to Mr. Henry Fowler as regards the ministry. Mr. Fowler's advice had been: "Watch and wait; it may take seven or even fourteen years to bring about." But Mr. Row recorded that in his own case it had taken nearly twenty-one years. I was to wait *twenty-four years*.

The year 1938 was a very solemn time. The awful war, by God's goodness, was stayed for another year, which gave the Nation time to prepare, but the trouble at our little cause continued. In the midst of all this unrest the Lord dropped a very solemn word into my mind: "Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it" (Rev. 3. 8). This, of course, was a message to the angel (Pastor) of the church in Philadelphia, nevertheless I felt it was a word to me in respect to the ministry. I was taught there was no other way into this calling but

by Christ who himself was the “Open Door,” and I asked Him to confirm this word if it was for me.



*The new Ebenezer Chapel, Matfield opened in 1937*



**Alternating doubts and fears**

A little while after this a friend asked if I would like to go to the anniversary service at a local chapel and, as I had no car in those days, I gladly accepted his kind offer. The minister announced the reading, Revelation chapter three; imagine my feelings when I heard this. As the dear man read, and the way God led him in his prayer, I felt sure verse 8 would be his text and it was so!

In a wonderful way the gracious Spirit seemed to lead him into my pathway, especially the weighty concern of speaking in His name. The good man knew nothing about my alternating doubts and fears and sometimes my vehement longings to glorify a blessed Redeemer. After the service my dear friend said, "That text was for you." I kept my exercise to myself and remarked that I hoped it was a word for us both and that we should at last prove Christ to be our "Door" into heaven.

**Election of Deacons - "The lot is cast into the lap."**

The year 1939 was to be a very solemn one for our little cause. At the end of January a Church Meeting was held, the chief business being to elect two deacons, and I was one invited to serve. My reply was that I would do so, providing the vote was by ballot and unanimous. As the meeting was of a personal nature I did not attend. I gave a friend who lived near a lift to the chapel and promised to call back again afterwards.

I shall never forget that evening and the wonderful liberty granted in calling upon God, and the wonderful word that was so clearly given that night: "The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord." This completely composed my spirits and I had no doubt whatever that the "lot" would *not* be unanimous. I felt a perfect submission to the will of God. I took my friend home after the meeting as promised. I said, "You need not tell me the result of the voting - the Lord has already done so," making known what I had just received from the Lord.

The voting at the aforesaid meeting was not unanimous but the margin was small. During the year our Pastor informed the Church that, owing to his health and the strain of the pastorate upon him, he felt his settled work among them must cease at the end of the year. The Deacons frequently requested the Pastor to reconsider his resignation during the year but he said his decision was final.

## The war years

In September the gathering storm clouds broke upon our nation and once more we were at war with Germany. At the end of the year we were left without an under-shepherd.

During 1940 we were favoured in obtaining ministers in spite of the difficulty of travelling owing to war conditions, but had quite a few vacant Sabbaths. The Lord graciously helped our dear aged deacon to read sermons when we were without a servant of God. As I was the only other male member it fell to my lot to help at the Throne of Grace.



*Mr. Bradford in front of his house at  
Foxhole Lane, Matfield*

The War years rolled on, 1941, 1942, 1943 and 1944 with the heavy bombing by day and night, Kent being in the forefront. However, we suffered no hurt from enemy action either personally or to our house. Also our dear Sanctuary, God's House, received no damage, and we were able to carry on our services during all these years.

As the War continued it became ever more difficult to obtain ministers owing to petrol shortage and public transport difficulty. It was obvious that the strain of reading sermons was telling upon our dear aged deacon when, as was often the case, we had no minister. He would say, "We have no minister next Lord's Day and the friends would like you to speak a few words." I said, "No, I cannot do this as much as I should like to help you. I feel I should be shut up and confounded." Had he asked me to read a sermon I would have ventured to do so but, strange to say, this was never suggested.

## Helped eventually to speak to the people

The climax came about the middle of 1941. We had a minister for the afternoon of the Sabbath but no one for the morning and I concluded there would be the usual read sermon. Imagine my consternation when we met as usual in the vestry before the service and the dear man said,



“I have no sermon to read this morning, but I will read the Scriptures and pray, then you must read and speak and the Lord will open your mouth.” I was unable to say a word as I felt the ground was giving way under me. It was time for the service to commence and so no opportunity to remonstrate. I walked into the chapel like a dead man.

What the hymns, reading or my friend’s prayer was I could not tell! All I could say was, “Lord, what am I to read, what am I to say?” During the singing of the second hymn it seemed to come into my mind to read the eleventh chapter of John, the account of Lazarus seemed to be my case, spiritually “dead.” The hymn finished then the deacon’s voice: “Our friend will now read a portion of the Scriptures and speak to us.” In what seemed to me a far away voice I gave out John 11 and, as I read on, all fear and bondage seemed to leave me and when I came to the end of verse 44 (“Loose him and let him go”) I paused and read it again; my mouth was opened, my spirit set at liberty, and to my great surprise for half-an-hour I spoke of Christ as the resurrection and the life of poor souls.

From this time until the church called me to the ministry in February 1944, (a period of two-and-a-half years,) I spoke on many occasions from the desk, and this was my probationary period.

Now this soon got “noised abroad” and I received several invitations to speak at other chapels in our denomination. In fact one chapel in London wished me to become their Pastor! All this I refused as I did not consider then that I had been properly called to the ministry.

### **Sent into the ministry by the church**

The time came when my church asked me to come before them and give my exercises in regard to the ministry. This I was much helped to do and on 22nd February 1944 they gave me the right hand of fellowship into the ministry. So after twenty-four years of deep soul travail, He sent most unworthy me to lift up the Gospel standard to dying sinners.

Now as I write the Lord has upheld me in this solemn work for thirty years, twenty-nine of which I have been an unworthy Pastor. At the Church Meeting I was graciously helped to give a concise summary of what I believed to be the Lord’s leadings in my soul in respect of the ministry, much of which has been recorded in this brief account. A

word was given to me at that time which took away all fear: “And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry” (1 Timothy 1. 12).

This is what I always laboured to do, to be faithful. I know I have not been a successful preacher, but I have longed to be kept faithful to the blessed gospel and the souls of my beloved people. What I covet to hear at last is just this: “Well done, thou good and faithful servant” and then, “Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord” (Matthew 25. 21).



*Mr. Bradford with his family*

### **Called to the Pastorate**

At a Church Meeting on 26th April, 1944 the Church gave me an unanimous call to be their Pastor as from 1st January, 1945.

I soon had to learn how hard is the pathway of a minister and soon came the opposition therein, and from quarters least expected. But the further I travelled in the divine life the more I felt my poverty, and my greatest enemy was SELF. I felt my poverty, emptiness, nothingness and insufficiency, a sojourner and pilgrim through this waste howling wilderness. In the midst of all my profound exercise the Lord gave me a few dear loyal friends that stood by me and have done so throughout all the years of my Pastorate - I love them dearly.

As I write it is now nearly thirty years since the Lord called me to the office of a Pastor, and oh! how merciful He has been to one so unworthy of such a high calling, better to me than all my fears, and has added unto the Church “Such as should be saved.”

### **Heavy afflictions**

At the beginning of 1948 it pleased the Lord to lay a heavy affliction upon me, and I was suddenly rushed into hospital for a major operation. I remained there for eight weeks. To the glory of God alone I can say this affliction was greatly blessed to my soul, and at times my room was like Bethel, it truly was a sacred spot.

On one never-to-be-forgotten night I had such a view of Christ in the garden of Gethsemane. I was in great pain and discomfort. The staff were very shorthanded and busy and I did not like to call a nurse, but was enabled to call upon God and told Him my case and said, “Lord, I am in agony.” No sooner had I uttered these words than it came into my mind the words of Christ: “And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly: and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.” Then there followed such confession and I said, “Lord, I do not know what ‘agony’ means. Oh! do forgive me.” And then, wonder of wonders, all pain was taken away and I was enabled to meditate sweetly upon the dear Redeemer’s sufferings.

After about four months I was enabled once more to resume my Pastorate and ministry. As I write it is now twenty-five years since it pleased my gracious God to raise me up to a measure of health and strength, and I believe God gave me a measure of faith to wait upon Him for this.

As the years rolled on how I had to prove that only the Lord could have upheld me as, in much felt weariness, I laboured in word and doctrine for the souls of my dear people, that Christ might be formed in their hearts, the hope of glory. Time proved that this wonderful work was going on in the hearts of some, and God has given me these “children” and how dear to me are these “Lydias” and “Timothys.”

### **Further afflictions**

There are certain outstanding events in our lives which time, and I feel eternity, will never blot out, in which it pleases God to bring us into

some deep affliction, and the opening of the year 1965 was just such a time to me. I lost, almost completely, the use of my vocal powers and for six months was unable to preach. At the very commencement of this solemn affliction the Lord graciously gave me the following word: "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because Thou didst it." This He followed up with: "O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more." These words silenced the suggestion of the "Accuser" that my ministry and Pastorate was at an end, and that I should never speak again. As often before, I again proved him to be a liar. "Remove Thy stroke away from me" was my prayer, heard and answered, and now nine years after this I am still able to proclaim the blessed Gospel of the grace of God to my dear people.

During this period it was truly wonderful how the Lord kindly supplied all our needs. Very seldom were we without ministers, our dear brethren in the ministry so willingly responding to our invitations to supply the pulpit.

### **Resumes his ministry**

Well, the Lord raised me up again and I was able to resume my Pastorate. The dear friends installed an amplifier in the chapel which was a great help as there was a weakness left in my voice. The throat specialist strongly advised me to give up all outside preaching otherwise he feared a relapse. In this I felt he was led aright, so I gave up speaking three times on the Sabbath and made few outside engagements. I felt it was right to reserve my strength for my own dear flock, of whom I trust God had made me an overseer, and who during this long trial so loyally and affectionately stood by me.

Nine years have now rapidly passed away. During this time the Lord has graciously appeared for us and there have been signs following the preaching of the cross, and God has given me some "dear children" whom I love for the truth's sake; others also are dear to my soul, and blessed be our covenant God, peace and harmony dwell in our midst.

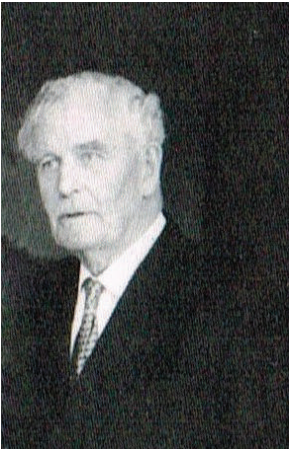
### **Resignation of Secretarial office**

Towards the end of 1967, owing to my advancing age, I felt the time had come to resign my office as Secretary of the Surrey Tabernacle Benefit Society in favour of a younger man. I had been helped to carry

on the work for forty years and I found it to be a pleasure to serve the members of this little Society for so many years.

### **Closing thoughts and desires**

Now that the sands of time are sinking and my sun is fast westering, my earnest and prayerful desire is that of the beloved Paul: "That I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God."



For thirty years I have been allowed of my God to testify of this glorious Gospel. During these years I have had that inward persuasion, as well as outward testimonies, that my labour has not been in vain in the Lord. Still, I want more fellowship and communion with God and I long "For a closer walk with God," more humility, godly fear and sorrow, more patience and submission - in a word, to be as clay in the Potter's hands.

What a conflict the pathway has been, and will be to the end, but if this brings profit it will be well. We learn by these things that there is no complete satisfaction or rest here. What a mercy if we can say with David: "As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied when I awake, with Thy likeness."

I need no one to tell me that before long my imperfect and sin-stained work will be done, and I shall have laid down my stewardship at the feet of Him where I hope to cast my crown, and then I trust I shall be adoring "the Lamb in the midst of the throne." Now my desire is that none of my dear people to whom I have been allowed to minister for so many years may be missing there! May God Almighty bless and keep you in His fear, comfort your hearts with His love, that you may stand fast in the faith and thus endure to the end. My desire is that the blessed truths I have endeavoured to set before you may abide with you, so that after my decease you may have them "always in remembrance."

*Mr. Bradford fell asleep in Jesus on 12 May 1981 at the age of 91 years. He had been Pastor at Matfield Chapel for 36 years.*

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## NATIONAL SERVICE DAYS (2)

Following the account in the Summer 2015 edition of the experiences of one of our young men of his National Service days, another friend was prompted to send in an account of his own experiences. He rightly pointed out that only men now in their mid 70's will have been through National Service, which was abolished in the early 1960's. If any other of our readers feel able to send in their own experiences of National Service days (or know of someone who might be able to) we feel that it would be a valuable resource to publish them as a record for future generations.

National Service officially ended 31 Dec 1960 but the last National Serviceman was not discharged until May 1963. Those born on or after 1 October 1939 did not have to serve.

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My National Service days began on 8 December 1955 when I was called up to the Royal Air Force for 2 years.

I had had a very sheltered upbringing in a godly home. I was born in May 1937 so was a wartime child and lived in that part of the country nearest to Germany, locally known as “bomb alley.” Between my birth and the end of the war in May 1945 I had four miraculous escapes from death by enemy action, three times by bombs or flying bombs (doodle bugs). The fourth was when travelling as a family in my father’s car, when we were machine gunned by a low flying German fighter plane. To this day, this comes to mind when I pass that spot. I was also preserved, though injured, when I fell from my father’s van when moving.

As with all RAF recruits I was called to Cardington, Bedfordshire for one week for “kitting out.” This was the first time I had ever been away from home alone. Like Samuel, I have to say that spiritually, I “did not yet know the Lord.” I firmly believe, however, that the Lord brought things to my mind to uphold and comfort me providentially as will be apparent from what follows.

The first night at Cardington found me billeted with more than twenty total strangers in one hut. Being early December, darkness fell at about 4pm. Immediately there was a power cut which lasted the whole night. So I was in the darkness, in a large hut with twenty total



strangers. To make it worse, the man in the next bed to me was a spiritualist (one who believes there can be communication with the dead). His wild ramblings and the filthy conversation of the others was so alien to me that after two or three days I became very dejected and wondered how I would get through two years. But one evening I was melted down when the words dropped in:

“I’ll strengthen thee, help thee, and cause thee to stand,  
Upheld by My righteous, omnipotent hand.”

These words often came back to me during the following two years.

From Cardington I went to one of the basic training camps for eight weeks at Hednesford, Staffordshire, which was in the forest of Cannock Chase. This was designed to make “military men” of us. Long marches in the thick woodland and other combat training was not at all congenial to my natural disposition. Some idea of the intense cold can be gleaned from the fact that in a hut of twenty men, with a solid fuel stove at each end, water still froze in the mug beside my bed. However, I was brought safely through.

My next move was for “trade training” for a further six to eight weeks. This was at Credenhill, Herefordshire which was a lovely spot in early spring. My training was in “statistics” which was much more suited to my natural abilities and the company there was better. Provision was made for Sunday worship and non-conformists were taken to a little chapel which I believe was just over the border into Wales. I can even remember the minister’s text on one occasion which was: “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver” (Proverbs 25. 11).

At the conclusion of trade training came the selection of a camp for the remainder of the time. I believe it was at this time that I was beginning to be very gently drawn by the Lord to seek Him and to gather among His people. I therefore dreaded the thought of being sent abroad. I was posted to Duxford about 11 miles south of Cambridge. From there I was able to go home for weekends when not required to work. There was no Sunday bus service between Duxford and Cambridge so when not at home or after working I had to resort to the serviceman’s practice of “thumbing a lift” which was usually successful if in uniform. A kind family in Cambridge looked after me on the Sundays that I was there.

I started keeping a diary in July 1957 in which I recorded my

breathings after the Lord and sorrow over my sins, and also sadness when I could not get to chapel. I recorded on 14 July 1957 that after having had to work all day and failing to obtain a lift to Cambridge, even after walking three miles to a village called Sawston, I turned aside into a secluded field to read my Bible. I also recorded on Tuesday, 28 August 1957 that I went for a walk with a fellow serviceman and we discussed nuclear warfare, which was a very real threat at that time. This colleague said, “We would all be blown to atoms.” In an instant the words came with power, “But none of the ransomed shall ever be lost.” I can still picture that scene after 58 years, which shows the reality of it.

The most notable day, spiritually considered, during my National Service was Sunday, 15 September 1957. The Lord wonderfully marshalled my circumstances because he had a blessing in store for me. Until quite recently there was a weekend in September each year designated “Battle of Britain weekend,” when various RAF camps held a display open to the public. On these weekends nobody was allowed to leave the camp. On the Friday before that weekend in 1957, I was selected to be part of a group to stand guard all night over a Vulcan bomber which at that time was on the “secret list.” Quite unexpectedly, we were then released for the rest of that weekend. I felt compelled to go home though it was only for the Sunday.

Mr. David Housden of Bedford (later Pastor at Ebenezer Chapel, Hastings) was preaching. His text was, “I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them and not forsake them” (Isaiah 42. 16). He used the illustration that a dead person in a dark cellar would not be concerned about the darkness, but a living person would crave for the light. O, a soul that is seeking after the Light of life must be a living soul because the dead in sin have no desire for the light. I had been so earnestly seeking after the Lord and this was the first Gospel promise and glimmer of hope in Christ that I had ever received. It was confirmed a few weeks later when Mr. Arthur Wood (father of Clement) also preached from it in my home Cause.

Even the longed-for end of National Service was beset with difficulties and trials. About two days before my release I became very

unwell but kept it to myself so as not to delay returning home. I set out on the journey on 6 December 1957 carrying all my very heavy service kit crying to the Lord to give me strength. When I got to London I found that train travel was in chaos as the awful train crash at Lewisham had occurred the previous evening, when, in dense fog, a steam train ran into a stationary electric train and ninety people were killed. I eventually reached home safely and took to my bed with the Asian flu which was raging in the country at that time.

I have found writing these memories very humbling and profitable and desire to give God the glory.

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## A FEW CURRENT MATTERS

### **CofE headteachers - no need to be a Christian**

Church of England schools are finding it increasingly difficult to appoint Christian headteachers. Both primary and secondary schools are being forced to recruit “from other faiths or none at all.” Many dioceses have become more flexible around the requirement that headteachers need to be practising Christians. A needs-analysis report recognises that “in the long term there is a risk to the vision if sufficient numbers of teachers and school leaders with a deep understanding of and engagement with the Church of England cannot be deployed.” Sadly, the Accord Coalition, which campaigns to end religious discrimination in school staffing, said: “The growing number of Church of England schools that are appointing senior staff from outside the faith is encouraging.”

### **Assisted Suicide Bill defeated**

It is a cause of much thankfulness that the Bill to permit euthanasia was decisively rejected by the House of Commons by 330 votes to 118. Many religious, medical and legal concerns were raised in the lengthy debate. Fiona Bruce (Con.), who led the opposition said that the proposals were “legally and ethically totally unacceptable.” We believe life to be a sacred gift of God, and that He alone has the right to determine the time of our departure.

## Supermoon

On the night of 27 September (a wonderfully clear night) thousands watched the glowing blood-red moon that appeared over Britain, known as a 'supermoon.' The spectacle happens only once every 30 years when a lunar eclipse occurs while the moon is at its closest point to Earth, a distance of 226,000 miles. The moon appears 14% larger and 30% brighter than when it is at its furthest point away. The lunar eclipse, when the moon is covered by the Earth's shadow, makes it turn a



deep red colour as sunlight is scattered by the Earth's atmosphere. The last supermoon was in 1982. We think of the prophecy of Joel: "The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come."

## Britain among the least religious in the world

In the UK only 30 per cent of the population call themselves 'religious,' with 13 per cent who are 'convinced atheists.' In a survey of 65 countries, the UK came 59th. In contrast, 94 per cent of people in Thailand call themselves religious. Last of all is China, where only 6% regard themselves as religious, and 61 per cent claim they are atheists.

## Edith Cavell - Centenary of her death

"Standing as I do in view of God and eternity, I realise that patriotism is not enough. I must have no hatred or bitterness towards anyone." These words were spoken by Nurse Cavell early on the morning of her execution by firing squad on 12 October 1915. Her crime? Whilst nursing German soldiers in Belgium, she was part of a network that enabled allied soldiers caught behind enemy lines to escape. She was found guilty of treason. The outcry that followed astonished even the German government. The Kaiser himself ordered that in future no woman was to be shot without his personal consent. When the war was

over, her remains were returned to England for an impressive state funeral at Westminster Abbey, attended by Queen Alexandra and the Princess Victoria. She was finally laid to rest near Norwich Cathedral.

## Queen Elizabeth II



*Queen Elizabeth at the time of her Diamond Jubilee*

On 9th September 2015, at 5.30pm, the Queen became Britain's longest-ruling monarch. At the age of 89 she surpassed Queen Victoria's reign of 63 years 216 days. (The longest reign ever was King Sohuza of Swaziland - 82 years 254 days!)

As a young princess, Elizabeth had not expected to become monarch as her father George VI only took the crown when his elder brother Edward VIII abdicated in 1936 to marry American divorcee Wallis Simpson.

In a broadcast speech to mark her 21st birthday in 1947, Queen Elizabeth said: "There is a motto which has been borne by many of my ancestors - a noble motto, - 'I serve.' I declare before you all, that my whole life, whether it be long or short, shall be devoted to your service and the service of our great imperial family to which we all belong."

She was 25 when she ascended to the throne on 6th February 1952 following her father's death. That made her the 40th monarch in a royal

line that traces its origin back to William the Conqueror, who claimed the throne in 1066.

Since becoming Queen, she has seen twelve prime ministers, starting with Winston Churchill, and there have been twelve US Presidents from Harry S Truman to Barack Obama.

The Queen has made a Christmas broadcast to the Commonwealth every year of her reign except in 1969, when she issued a written message instead.

In her Christmas broadcast in 1957 she said: "It is inevitable that I should seem a rather remote figure to many of you, a successor to the kings and queens of history. I cannot lead you into battle. I do not give you laws or administer justice. But I can do something else. I can give you my heart and my devotion to these old islands and to all the peoples of our brotherhood of nations."

In recent Christmas broadcasts the Queen has openly included mention of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Last year she said: "For me, the life of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, whose birth we celebrate today, is an inspiration and an anchor in my life." In 2012 she said: "This is the time of year when we remember that God sent His only Son 'to serve, not to be served' [a reference to Luke 22. 27]. He restored love and service to the centre of our lives in the person of Jesus Christ." In 2011 she said: "God sent into the world a unique Person - neither a philosopher nor a general - but a Saviour, with the power to forgive."

We feel that her long reign is a cause of much thankfulness - her devotion to duty has been outstanding. If you look at any coin with the Queen's portrait you will see ELIZABETH II D.G. REG. F.D. The last letters stand for *Fidei Defensor*, 'Defender of the faith.' One of the Queen's titles is 'Defender of the Faith and Supreme Governor of the Church of England.' Do pray for her as exhorted by Paul in his epistle to Timothy: "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may live a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour" (1 Timothy 2. 1-3).

Our desire is that the Lord might be pleased to grant His blessing upon our Queen and Prince Philip in their increasing years.



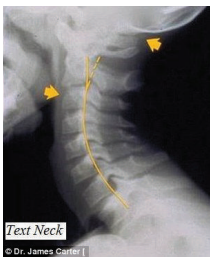
### Cecil the lion

The killing of Cecil the lion back in July by an American dentist caused a worldwide outpouring of revulsion. For such a magnificent creature to be killed merely for sport is indeed a dreadful act. However, it led one minister to remark in the pulpit: “Yes, it was a terrible thing. But what about the hundreds of babies killed daily in the womb? We do not hear much of an outcry about that.”



### We need a Sabbath break from Facebook, says Rabbi

Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis has urged people to consider setting aside time to switch off their devices to help them ‘connect’ to natural human relationships again. Orthodox Jewish Sabbath observance includes a ban on using electrical devices such as computers and telephones. Rabbi Mirvis, referring to the 21st century problem of smartphone addiction, said observing the Sabbath as a day of rest could be given new relevance in this age of social media. He has also spoken out against the Government’s plans to relax Sunday trading laws, offering his support to a campaign by church leaders to limit shop opening hours. “Although the Jewish Sabbath falls a day earlier than the Christian day of rest, the principles are largely the same,” he said. (The Government has broken its pre-election promise that there were no plans to change the law on Sunday trading hours.)



This comes at a time when an increasing number of young people are suffering from neck and spinal pain from spending too much time hunched over laptops and phones. Dr. James Carter, a leading chiropractor, has described the condition as “the curse of the modern age.” He said: “The number of people with text neck has more than doubled over the past year, and 50 per cent are now teenagers. The spine can easily be pushed more than an inch out of alignment.” Other experts have warned we are creating “a generation of hunchbacks.”

## SNOWDROPS

*“Who can stand before his cold?” (Psalm 147. 17)*

In the cold, dark days of January, there is no more lovely sight than the appearance of the snowdrop. The Latin name is *Galanthus* which means ‘milk flower.’ It is of the *Amaryllis* family and is closely related to the daffodil. These lovely flowers are the among the first to raise their heads in the new year. The plants are very hardy, and the colder the weather, the longer the flowers last, with some flowering into March. In God’s wonderful design, the plant has hardened leaf tips which can push through frozen soil.



On days when it is warmer they release a subtle fragrance. If you put the tip of your tongue inside a snowdrop after it has been open for a while you can taste the sweet nectar inside. The flowers close at night, and open in the morning to attract the early insects waking up after the cold winter days.

The snowdrop has long been recognised as a herbal remedy which can slow down Alzheimer’s disease. In the Caucasus Mountains’ region old people eat the bulbs to strengthen their brain and help them feel younger. Originally known as Candlemas Bells, some of the best displays are centred round churchyards and old religious foundations like ruined abbeys.