

PERCEPTION

A Quarterly Magazine for Young People



“Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When her branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is near” Mark 13. 28.

SPRING 2017

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Cover picture: A fig tree in full leaf.

PERCEPTION

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EDITORIAL

“Take with you words, and turn to the Lord” Hosea 14. 2.

The gift of speech to mankind is unique in God’s creation. True, to a limited extent animals can communicate with each other by various sounds, but never in what could be described as speech.

An interesting question often asked is: ‘How many languages are there in the world?’ The answer to this question cannot be given precisely, but in very general terms there are 6,500. Of these 2,000 are spoken by less than 1,000 people. The language with the world’s most speakers is Mandarin Chinese.

We were interested to read in the latest Quarterly Record of the Trinitarian Bible Society of the many projects they are engaged in with languages of which most of us have never heard: Thadou (300,000 speakers), Kom (25,000), Meitei (1.2m), Simte (12,000), Chothe (3,000), Vaiphei (28,000). It reminds us of Psalm 19. 4: “Their line (or sound) is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.”

It is thought that the active vocabulary of native speakers of a developed language without higher education is about 5,000 words, and 10,000 for those with higher education. However, most people understand far more words than they actually use, perhaps as many as 50,000.

Our much-loved King James Bible contains 783,137 words. If you could type at 60 words per minute it would take you over 217 hours to type out the entire Bible. Imagine how long type-setting must have taken in the early days, with over 3million letter characters to set! (The last edition of *Perception* contained 13,749 words.)

So much for statistics. If we turn to our text above, we find the prophet Hosea calling upon the children of Israel to return to the Lord their God - they had grievously backslidden through their idols. They were to approach unto God with *words*. Hosea even suggested to them

what they might say: “Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously.” They were not required to bring offerings or sacrifices, but rather, *words* of true repentance.

Caution is needed here. It is not sufficient just to bring our words before God. There is a little hymn in the Young People’s Hymnal that begins, “I often say my prayers” (number 120). It asks an important question:

“And do the wishes of my heart
Go with the words I say?”

Back in my days at Grammar School, we had a wonderful French teacher, a Professor, (Dr. Reid) who knew many languages. He loved to tell us that, wonderful though the English language was, it was not as richly endowed with words as was the French language! Perhaps he was prejudiced, although he did admit that even French did not equal Italian for beauty of language. The more I read the King James Bible, the more I realise what wonderful gifts the translators had been given. We owe so much to William Tyndale and others. But sometimes even they could not find quite the right word to express the original Hebrew or Greek words. So what did they do? They *made up* a descriptive word instead, words which have passed into our language.

lovingkindness: we are indebted to Miles Coverdale for this word. He could find nothing available adequately to express the love, grace and mercy of God to His people. He used the word twenty-three times in his translation of the Psalms.

atonement (at-one-ment): this was first found in Tyndale’s Bible, and appears to have derived from the use of the medieval word ‘onement’ e.g. Erasmus (of Rotterdam), writing to Queen Catherine Parr (one of Henry VIII’s wives), when speaking of reconciliation, refers to “the onement of mankinde with God the Father.”

scapegoat: again, we owe this to Tyndale. In his 1530 translation of the Bible we find: “And Aaron cast lottes over the ii gootes: one lotte for the Lorde, and another for a scape-goote.”

How much we love these words as they are read in our services. Sadly,

modern translations have for the most part abandoned these beautifully descriptive words: ‘thy lovingkindness’ has become simply ‘your love;’ ‘atonement’ has become ‘expiation’ or ‘ritual of forgiveness;’ and ‘scapegoat’ has many different translations, including in the NEB “the goat of the Precipice.” How much has been lost.

The words we speak tell others a lot about ourselves. We are judged not only by *what* we say, but *how* we say it. Sadly, our words are not always as they should be. We find it strange how Moses complained to the Lord that he was slow of speech, and not eloquent. But Stephen tells us in Acts 7. 22 that Moses “was mighty in words and in deeds.” In spite of his slowness of speech (perhaps even a speech impediment) his words carried weight - they were mighty. Although we may feel our insufficiencies as Moses did, and may often feel unequal to a task before us, we can still be of use as helped by God. “Who hath made man’s mouth?” the Lord asked Moses.

Finally, what of the words of God? David tells us that “The words of the Lord are pure words” (Psalm 12. 6). This is exactly in agreement with Proverbs 30. 5: “Every word of God is pure.” Frequently *our* words are not pure. How different are *God’s* words. We can rely entirely on all that God has spoken. After the angel Gabriel had told Mary that she should bring forth a Son, she visited her cousin Elisabeth in the hill country. On meeting each other, Elisabeth spoke out with a loud voice concerning Mary: “There shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.” Later we read: “And she brought forth her firstborn Son.” God’s words had been performed.

We end with a solemn thought - idle words. How many empty, exaggerated, insincere words do we speak every day. The Lord Jesus told the Pharisees “that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.” And notice - this is not *an* account; it is easy to give *an* account things. There will be nothing hidden in the judgment day. In Psalm 141 David said: “Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips.” May this be our prayer, too, that our words might always be acceptable in His sight.

With greetings and best wishes to you.

The Editor.

HOW SHOULD WE SING?

By Mark Janes

Not many years ago a minister said, “As I go preaching at the various chapels, I can always tell the spirit of the place by the singing.” What he was referring to, of course, was whether the hymns were being sung reverently.

There have been various articles in our magazines over the years regarding singing but it so often falls on deaf ears with Satan suggesting, “These things are not worth worrying too much about and anyway, that was how the previous generation carried on; we are now moving on.”

If hymns are sung all through loudly, regardless of the words that are being sung, there are various causes. One might be that we are not thinking what we are singing; another is that we have a very poor view of the Holiness of God or the preciousness of the blood of Jesus that was shed for sinners.

When a professional orchestra plays a piece of music there are loud parts and quiet and this variation gives the music its feeling. This should happen with our hymns. For instance, when we sing the first verse of hymn 485 in Gadsbys: ‘Christ, the Lord, is risen today,’ we sing it with a good volume but when we sing hymn 876, especially the last verse, ‘See the Lord of glory dying! See him gasping! Hear him crying!’ we sing it very quietly. Also, when we sing a hymn such as 196, ‘O Lord, how vile am I,’ we need to keep the volume down.

There are so many good singers in our chapels which are lovely to hear but how we need to pray that we will be helped to worship rightly and that the spirit of the world will not creep in so that we grieve the Holy Spirit.

May we each consider these things when we gather together to worship.

Year 1880. It is said that one girl of sixteen was so attracted to the preaching of the Rev. Alexander MacColl that she used to walk through Saturday night from Applecross on the western coast of the Highlands of Scotland to Lochalsh to hear him. (By today’s roads this is an incredible 40 miles.) When Mr. MacColl preached, the time passed so quickly that his hearers were always surprised when he stopped.

BUNHILL FIELDS - 'GOD'S ACRE'

Part 3 - Joseph Swain (1761-1796)

We continue our series with another hymnwriter buried in this ten acre plot off City Road in the middle of London. An uneducated man, but one with a God-given poetical gift, Joseph was much blessed under the preaching of Dr. John Rippon, (see *Perception* Autumn 2016 page 6).



Birth

Joseph's life began sadly as both his mother and father died when he was young. He was born in Birmingham in 1761, and was christened at St. John's Church on 22nd May. His education was scant, and while still quite young he was apprenticed to a local engraver.

In his late teens he decided to move to London to be with his brother. There he became associated with a group of young men who were extremely fond of plays and dancing. As he was naturally of a cheerful disposition, this suited him well. His gifts were directed towards writing songs and plays.

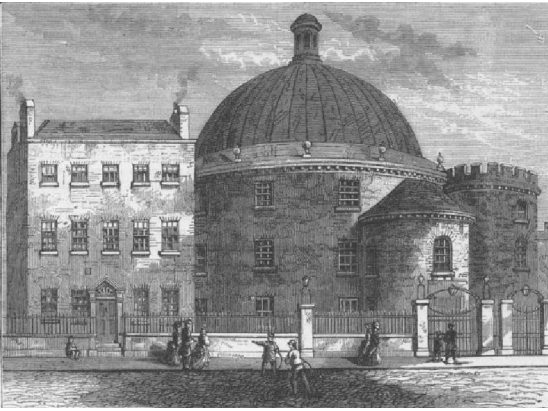
Concerns

While enjoying these pursuits, thoughts came into his mind that he was in the broad way that leads to destruction. So concerned was he that he bought himself a Bible. His concerns only increased. He wrote that for six months he feared that "by sickness I might be removed into the endless fire of hell." But he had to confess: "Still I loved my sins, and found I was not able to give them up."

One day, as he was going with his friends to some place of entertainment, he felt his heart gradually melted, so that he was able to say, "I saw myself as a sinner, and Christ as a Saviour. Yes; I saw and believed that He died for me, and that I should soon be with Him in glory."

Begins to write hymns

In the past he had written songs which he sang for the amusement of himself and his friends. He now began to write some precious hymns. As he was singing one of his hymns, a bystander hearing him asked, “Whose is it?” He replied, “It is my own.” This person invited him to go with him to Spa Fields Chapel, Clerkenwell. Originally built as a theatre, the building had been purchased by Lady Huntingdon for use as one of her “Countess of Huntingdon’s Connexion” chapels.



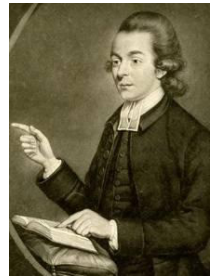
Spa Fields Chapel, Clerkenwell

On his first visit he heard a sermon preached by their Pastor, the Rev. Mr. Wills. Afterwards, he said, “I am sure what the preacher said is true; for he has described my feelings better than I can myself.” Later, discussing another sermon with a friend, the friend exclaimed: “Why, Mr. Swain, you are a

Calvinist.” Not knowing what this was, he replied, “I am not a Calvinist, I am a Christian.” The friend advised him to go and hear Dr. John Rippon, saying, “I think his preaching would suit you.”

Baptized by Dr. Rippon

After attending Dr. Rippon’s ministry at Carter Lane, Tooley Street, for some time, he made a public profession of his faith, and was baptized on May 11th 1783. By now he was 22 years of age.



Dr. Rippon



John Berridge

Hearing a sermon preached by John Berridge, he said to his wife: “My dear, I do think I shall die with joy.”

He began holding services in his own home for prayer, when frequently he would expound the Scriptures. Recognising Joseph’s gifts, the church sent him out into the ministry with their blessing. He

preached mainly to the congregation meeting at East Lane, Walworth, today a busy market street in the London Borough of Southwark, south east London. His preaching was accepted and profitable. A church of 27 members was formed, over which he was ordained pastor in February, 1792. The congregation rapidly increased. First, they erected galleries, but this was insufficient, and twice they were forced to enlarge the building. By now there were 200 members of the church.

His last illness

It pleased God to call His servant home in the midst of his ministerial usefulness. His constitution was always frail, and frequently he preached in great weakness. He became progressively more unwell, and for a while was quite delirious. After he rallied a little, he said to his wife: "I now feel I am very bad. I have been seeking the Lord about my case, and can get no other answer, but this, 'Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live.'"

During his last illness he spoke many precious things:

"O my dear Redeemer! Am I coming to Thee so soon? Is my work done?"

"It is just fourteen years since I first knew Thee, Lord. If it were Thy will, I should rejoice to labour a little longer with the dear people; yet, not *my* will, but *thine* be done."

"I am not afraid to die. I have not the shadow of a doubt: I know that I shall receive my crown."

His death and funeral

He lay fourteen days more until, on 14th April 1796, his soul took its flight to eternal bliss. He was only 35 years of age. His ministry had lasted just over five years.

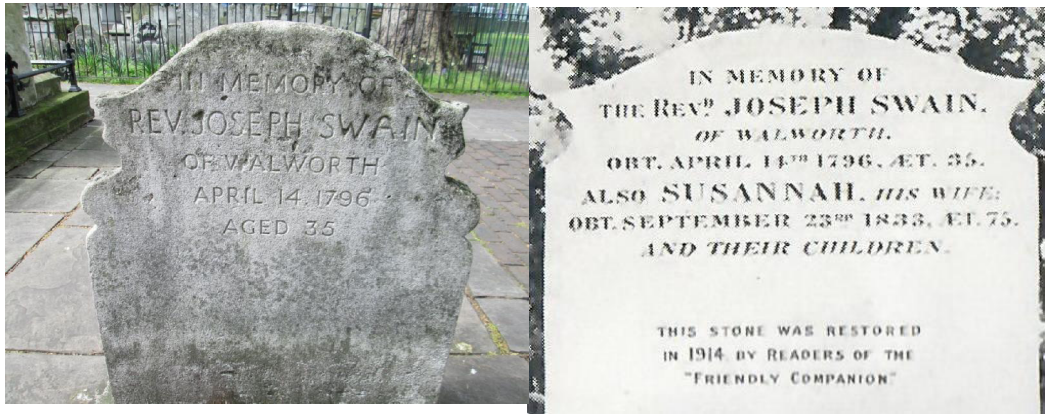
Thousands attended his funeral in Bunhill Fields, very many of whom were deeply affected that "they should see his face no more." Mr. Abraham Booth, for 37 years pastor of the Particular Baptist church at Little Prescott Street, London, officiated at the grave. A contemporary writer refers to him as "the truly venerable and revered Mr. Abraham Booth." It was said that if he sat with you for just a few minutes, you thought you had with you in the house a prince or great man.

On the following Lord's day, funeral sermons were preached at East

Lane, Walworth, to crowded congregations. The preacher in the morning was Dr. John Rippon, who some 40 years later was himself laid to rest in Bunhill Fields close to Joseph.

Gravestone in Bunhill Fields

In 1914 his gravestone was restored by readers of the *Friendly Companion*. This restored stone we were unable to find, although we have a photograph of it. Strangely, we found the original gravestone, from which it is clear that the 1914 stone was not a restoration but rather a completely *new* stone. The original stone was recovered following bomb damage in World War II, and is now located next to Daniel Defoe, most famous as the author of *Robinson Crusoe*. From the ‘restored’ stone we see that his wife was Susannah. It refers also to their children, but we have been unable to find out who these were. However, above two of his hymns it was stated: “The following two pieces were occasioned by the death of an only son.” One source states he had four children.



In Gadsby’s Hymnbook there are eighteen of Joseph Swain’s hymns. Perhaps the two best known are: “A Friend there is, your voices join,” and “Come, ye souls, by sin afflicted.” Also the hymn that is sung by some chapels when a new member joins the church (no. 371):

“With wonder we attend,
While they the sinner’s Friend,
With tears of holy joy, extol.”

OLIVET - A SACRED PLACE

The great traveller and writer, the Rev. William Thomson, D. D., comes out of the Church of the Ascension at Bethany with feelings almost of disgust with what he had seen. But Bethany and Olivet are to him the most sacred places on earth.

Olivet, including Gethsemane on the west, and Bethany on the east of it, has witnessed the most affecting and the most stupendous scenes in the history of our blessed Redeemer. It was in connection with this mount that the God-man - the divine Logos - chose to reveal more of His human nature than anywhere else on the earth. How often, after the fatigues and temptations of the day in this wicked and captious city, did He retire in the evening to Bethany to enjoy the hospitality and affectionate sympathy of Lazarus and his pious family! There He laid aside the awful character of prophet and teacher divine, to rest His hard-tried energies in the gentle amenities of social life; and such was the freedom of intercourse between these chosen friends, that Martha could even come to Him with her little domestic troubles.

Alas! how many Marthas there are, careful and troubled about many things; and how few Marys, anxious to sit at Jesus' feet and hear His word! As excuse for Martha, we should remember that she was the responsible house-keeper, and that they belonged to the class of society in which the women of the family performed the household work with their own hands, and hence it was perfectly natural that she should claim the assistance of her younger sister. What a touching exhibition of lowliness and divine condescension does this reveal! He who is Lord of the universe selects, of choice, the humble poor for His dearest friends and most intimate associates!

"He whom Thou lovest is sick," was the only message sent by the sorrowing sisters. Most honourable distinction! He whom angels adored, and from heaven to earth hastened to serve, lavishes His richest love upon a poor man called Lazarus! The Son of God groaned in spirit at the sorrow of Mary and Martha. He wept over the grave of His

friend. He did more. He asked of the Eternal Father, and received power to raise Him from the grave, and, standing at the head of that dark cave, He cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth!" Wonderful voice! It startled the dull ear of Death, and the inexorable Grave heard, and gave up his prey.

Here on Olivet the Christian learns to sing the song of victory over the king of terrors: "O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory?" No wonder that much people of the Jews came six days after, not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom He had raised from the dead. No wonder that on the next day they should take branches of palm-trees and go forth to meet Jesus, crying, "Hosanna! blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord!"

Again: it was on this mount, with the city and Temple in view, that our Lord sat down, and in private answered those three pregnant inquiries of the anxious disciples: When shall it come to pass that there shall not be left one stone of the Temple upon another? What shall be the sign of Thy coming? and the sign of the end of the world? And in response there fell from His sacred lips those wonderful revelations recorded in the 24th and 25th chapters of Matthew. It was from this same mount, also, that the compassionate Jesus beheld the city and wept over it, saying, "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes."

It was also unto Olivet that he retired to pray on that doleful night when "His sweat became as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." Here He was betrayed with a kiss; was surrounded by soldiers with lanterns, and torches, and swords; was rudely seized, bound with cords as a malefactor, and led away to Caiaphas.

And, finally, this favoured mount witnessed the glorious outcome and consummation of this mystery of sorrow and suffering. It had been watered by His tears, had drunk His bloody sweat, and it must also behold His triumphant and glorious ascension to the right hand of the Majesty on high.

Olivet first heard the grand commission to the Church: "GO YE INTO ALL THE WORLD, AND PREACH THE GOSPEL TO EVERY CREATURE." He had led out His disciples as far as to Bethany, and,

having thus spoken, “He lifted up his hands, and blessed them; and it came to pass that while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.” Men of Galilee! favoured of God above all the race, I would, oh! I would have been of your company on that triumphant morning - with you to look steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, and with you to worship; or, better still, I would have been among the heavenly host that

“Thronged His chariot-wheels,
And bore Him to his throne;
Then swept their golden harps, and sung,
‘The glorious work is done.’”



*Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives.
Between is the Kidron Valley.*

PETER'S DENIAL

“Thou knowest that I love Thee” - Peter’s answer to the Lord’s question, “Lovest thou Me?” After his denial of the Lord, he “went out and wept bitterly.”

We give here the account of Peter’s denial from Thomas Matthews’ Bible, published in 1537, seventy-four years before the AV was published. Thomas Matthews was not his real name - he was called John Rogers but used a pseudonym for his publications. The year following the publication of this Bible, King Henry VIII ordered that a large Bible be placed in every Parish church in the country. Matthews owed much to the work of Tyndale who had published his New Testament just seven years earlier.

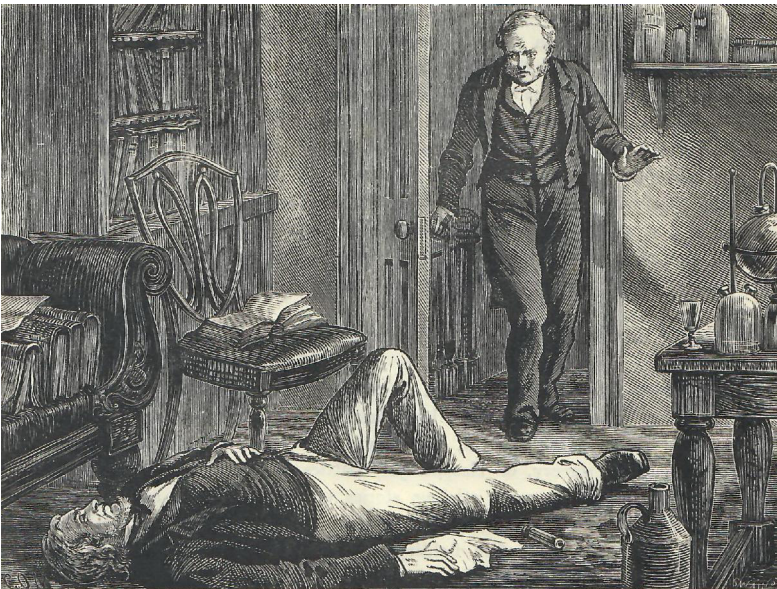
At this time the Bible had not been divided into verses, as this did not take place until the Geneva Bible was published in 1560. However, Bishop Langton (Archbishop of Canterbury) had divided the Bible into chapters as long ago as 1227, and these same chapter divisions appear in Matthews’ Bible, and are still used by us today.

Then toke they him and led hym, and brought him to the hye priestes house. But Peter folowed afarre of. And when they had kindled a fyre in the middes of the palace, and were set downe together; Peter also sate downe among them. But when one of the wenches behelde him, as he sate by the fyre, (and loked upon him,) she sayd; this same felowe was also with hym. And he denyed him, saying: woman, I knowe him not. And after a litle whyle, another sawe him, and sayde: thou art also of them. And Peter sayd; man, I am not. And about the space of an houre after, another affirmed, saying; verely, thys felowe was with him also, for he is of Galile. And Peter said, man, I wot not what thou sayeste. And immediately whyle he yet spake, the Cocke krew. And the Lorde turned backe and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembred the word of the lord, how he had sayde unto him; before the Cocke krowe thou shalt denye me thrise; and Peter wente out and wept bitterly.

PERILS OF SCIENTIFIC DISCOVERY

“He’ll kill himsel’ yet wi’ thae experiments; an’ he’s a big fule, for they’ll never find onything better nor chlory.” This was the opinion of Clarke, the butler of Doctor James Simpson.

“Chlory” was the name Clarke had given to chloroform, and the occasion on which he made the above remark, was when he came into his master’s room one day, and found him lying on the floor apparently unconscious, suffering from the effects of a recent experiment.



James Simpson (afterwards Sir James Simpson) was appointed a Professor of midwifery at Edinburgh in the year 1840. Early in his career as a doctor, he asked himself, “Is there nothing that can be done to render a patient unconscious while under acute pain?”

He set it down as a principle that the mission of the doctor was as much to alleviate human suffering, as to preserve human life. He set to work to find an anaesthetic that would destroy pain. (Anaesthetic comes from the Greek word *anaisthetos* meaning insensible.)

He became interested in mesmerism, or hypnotism as we are more likely to call it today. He asked himself, Might not the fulfilment of anaesthetics lie in that direction? He became quite proficient at it. One day at lunch, at the table was a very talkative lady. James decided he had had enough, and successfully hypnotised her to remain silent until he gave her back her speech. Unexpectedly, he was called from the room, found he was urgently needed at a distance, caught a train and was absent a few days. On his return home, weary with his journey, there were many written messages urging him to come at once. Conscience-smitten at having forgotten his victim, he set off immediately. On returning home, when asked if he had given her back her power of speech, he replied, "Yes, though I almost wish I hadn't, for her tongue, having been silent for so long, and her anger bottled up, I got it all." (This story is authenticated by his son.)

For ten years he continued to wrestle with the problem until in 1847 - the year in which he was appointed one of Her Majesty's Physicians for Scotland - he made a breakthrough. Excitedly, he wrote a letter to his brother, not only to announce his royal appointment, but to tell him: "I am far less interested in my appointment than in having delivered a woman this week without any pain, *while inhaling sulphuric ether*. I can think of nothing else." His patient was so delighted that she named her baby "Anesthesia."

No wonder he could think of nothing else, for only a short time before he had witnessed the most terrible agony of a poor Highland woman, while under the knife of one of the most skilful surgeons. From that time he had been desperate to find some way of relieving such suffering.

Whilst ether had been successful to a degree, it was a volatile and highly inflammable liquid, and quite dangerous to use. He was convinced that other agents existed which would be more effective. Eventually he succeeded in introducing chloroform, a fluid discovered only recently. Unlike ether, chloroform was non-inflammable.

James found that this new anaesthetic could be used with safety and excellent effect by doctors. He wrote about it, lectured on it, practised it, and freely experimented with it. Never did he spare himself, and on one or two occasions he was seriously ill, in consequence of inhaling vapours when in search of new anaesthetic agents. Whenever he

thought there was a danger in any new agent, he invariably first experimented on himself. This was perilous enough, requiring a kind of heroism that few would wish to experience. But there was another form of peril to which all great discoverers in all ages have been subject, and to which many have fallen victim - *opposition*.

James had to face the opposition of custom, of professional jealousy, of prejudice. He had to fight a terrible warfare with opponents who claimed there was hardly a criminal purpose to which his discoveries could not be applied. Others took up another line of opposition, and reported untruthful accounts of death from the inhalation of chloroform, reports which were almost daily in the newspapers. Others went so far as to circulate reports of people who had been entranced by the use of chloroform, and in this state had been buried alive!

But sadly the greatest storms of opposition were raised by almost every religious denomination, who declared that the administration of anaesthetics, particularly during childbirth, was in direct opposition to Scripture. They quoted Genesis 3. 16: "In sorrow thou shalt bring forth children." It was a great wickedness to endeavour "to avoid one part of the primeval curse on woman." From pulpit after pulpit it was denounced as an evil attempt to alter God's decree.

Simpson wrote pamphlets to defend the blessing which he had brought into use. When it seemed that the battle was about to be lost, he developed a compelling new argument. "My opponents forget," he said, "the twenty-first verse of the second chapter of Genesis. There is the record of the first surgical operation ever performed, and that text proves that the Maker of the universe, before He took the rib from Adam's side, for the creation of Eve, caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam." This was a stunning blow, but it did not entirely kill the opposition. His enemies maintained in reply that "the deep sleep of Adam took place before the introduction of pain into the world - in the state of innocence."

But a new champion intervened - the Rev. Thomas Chalmers, the renowned Scottish preacher. With a few forceful arguments Chalmers was able to scatter the enemy for ever. The greatest battle of science against suffering had been won. He told James that the opponents of anaesthesia were "small theologians" and should be ignored.

A further boost towards James' acceptance came when, towards the end of his life, he successfully administered chloroform to none other than the Queen herself (Queen Victoria) as she delivered Prince Leopold. Her labour and the birth of her baby had been rendered far less painful than was usual. The royal endorsement found doctor after doctor adopting the new anaesthetic. The blessing was at last acknowledged, and was shortly in almost universal use.

* * * *

The story of the battles fought by men of science is stirring. In every age there have been men born in advance of their time, who have wrested from Nature some of the secrets that have lain hid from the foundation of the world, and in making these secrets known, have been branded as infidels, and punished for the sins of witchcraft, sorcery, or blasphemy.

In the battle of science, it has always been one against a multitude. We will look briefly at the lives of some who have fought heroically in this warfare, and tell of some of the dangers which men of science have undergone for the sake of testing new principles.

Roger Bacon died in 1292 and is buried at Oxford. He spent much time in investigating optics and the refraction of light through lenses, leading to the development of spectacles. He had the courage in an age when experimenting meant death, or the direst persecution, to test his discoveries by experiments. He was charged by the church with being in compact with the devil, and his wonderful discoveries were branded as magic, sorcery, and necromancy. After years of struggle he was overcome. The General of the Franciscan Order - afterwards Pope Nicholas IV - summoned him to Paris, where his writings were condemned, and he was committed to close confinement. For fourteen years he was confined in prison, and when at length, at the age of eighty, he was released, it was only to die.

Peter of Abano (Pietro d'Abano, an Italian professor of medicine) was charged with heresy and practising magic. He was one who asserted that the world was round, and not flat, as had been believed for ages. To the church, this new dogma was regarded as blasphemy. Every effort was made to stamp it out, and only at intervals of centuries was it revived. Not till the fourteenth century did men venture to speak

out, and then they did so at the sacrifice of their lives. Peter was condemned to die, and only escaped by natural death in 1315 at the age of 49.

Twelve years later, **Cecco d'Ascoli** (another Italian physician), an old man of seventy, was burned alive at the stake, for daring (as they supposed) to oppose the word of God and the commonly held belief that the world was one vast, flat plane. He was the first university student to be burned by the Inquisition in 1327. It was not until Christopher Columbus started on his voyages, that many began to accept the new theory that the earth was round. Later still, in 1521, Ferdinand Magellan sailed round the world, and proved the doctrine beyond all doubt.

Nicolaus Copernicus was another to escape a violent death only through dying. That the sun and planets revolved round the earth was once the common belief. This man on the borders of Poland - one solitary man - thought otherwise. For thirty years he dared to breathe his secret only to a few trustworthy friends. He knew that to speak his doctrine publicly would be death. He wrote all his thoughts on the subject, but dared not publish the work, or rather, could not find a publisher ready to share the risk with him. A mutilated edition of it, however, he held in his hands on his death-bed. It was a priceless legacy to the world. But his book was condemned; to read it was to risk damnation. Even men like Luther and Melancthon branded him an "upstart astrologer," and a "perverter of truth." Melancthon described his findings absurd, accusing him as "the astronomer who moves the earth and stops the sun." But **Friar Giordano Bruno** dared to uphold the theory, and he did so at the cost of his life. In 1600 he was declared a heretic by Pope Clement, and the Inquisition issued a sentence of death. He was burned at the stake, and his ashes thrown into the River Tiber.

Then arose a scientist armed with proof: **Galileo Galilei** proved it with his telescope, in spite of the Pope and the Inquisition, and a thousand other foes. Gallantly he fought, patiently he bore, and bravely he suffered. Only when an old man, worn down with the struggle, did he abandon the contest. He was *forced* to recant, but even then the persecutions did not cease. He was sentenced to read the seven penitential Psalms once a week for the next three years. Then in a dungeon, in blindness and riddled with disease, the persecutions

continued. When he lay dying, his last request, that his bones might rest with those of his family at Santa Croce, was denied. He died in 1642. Amongst his discoveries were the rings of Saturn.

For a long time it seemed as if the battle had been lost. But other champions entered the field, men such as:

Johannes Kepler (died 1630) - best known for his *Laws of Planetary Motion*

Isaac Newton (died 1726) - built on Kepler's work and constructed the first reflecting telescope

Edmond Halley (died 1742) - catalogued the stars of the southern hemisphere

James Bradley (died 1762) - studied the earth's rotation

* * * *

The truths for which those forerunners of modern science were burned to death or persecuted are today accepted throughout the world. How careful we need to be that we do not brand all that is new as false.

I remember an elderly man, the organist at one of our chapels, was a member of the Flat Earth Society. The Society dates back to the early 1800s, when it was founded by Samuel Rowbotham, an English inventor. Rowbotham's flat earth views were based largely on the literal interpretation of Bible passages. He held that the earth is a flat disk centered at the North Pole and bounded along its southern edge by a wall of ice, with the sun, moon, planets, and stars only a few hundred miles above the surface of the earth.

Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego were amongst those "cunning in knowledge, and understanding science." Paul warned Timothy to be on his guard against "science falsely so called." May God grant us each the grace carefully to weigh up all new things, to see what is good in them, and reject the bad. The best test is this: "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely . . . think on these things."

Mr. Jabez Rutt when preaching recently, remarked that a new member coming before the church had said: "I can't stop reading my Bible."

PART OF SERMON PREACHED BY MR. C. A. WOOD

Many of our readers will remember Mr. C. A. Wood, the Pastor at Tamworth Road Strict Baptist Chapel, Croydon. His beloved wife, Phyllis, died suddenly on 11 December 1996 a few days after a fall as she missed her footing on a step making her way into chapel at Canterbury. This is part of a sermon preached by Mr. Wood the Lord's day *before* she died. It was the last sermon she heard. Afterwards Mr. Wood said, "As I preached, it came to me that it was like a funeral sermon. Not that I had thought of anyone dying."

Text: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15. 55 - 57).

We make many preparations in our life day by day. Rightly so - provided it is in the fear of the Lord; provided it is in the spirit where we say, "If the Lord will."

Beloved hearer, what preparation have you made for death? *What preparation have you made for death?*

We may be making preparations now for a family gathering at this time of the year, but none of us know whether we shall live to see it. Circumstances may arise of sickness and illness preventing such gatherings of the families. Uncertainties are in all things below in our life. There is no uncertainty whatsoever concerning death. "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." "A time to be born, and a time to die."

That moment fast approaches us each. As I have often said, every breath we draw, every second that passes, is nearer to the appointed end. *What preparation have you made?* Is it well with your soul? "For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ."

What is it that brings such fear of death? Literally speaking, of course, we view it with a measure of dread. We know not how we will draw our last breath, but the greatest concern is this, that death has a most dreadful sting. What is that sting? It is unpardoned sin.

You dear children, and perhaps some older friends, might be scared of a wasp. It buzzes around. What is it that makes you afraid? It has a sting. You are afraid because it could sting you. If it were possible to speak of a wasp without a sting you would not be worried about it at all, but it is because of the sting in that wasp that you are afraid.

When the Children of Israel were in the wilderness, God, for their sin, permitted fiery serpents to bite them. While the bite itself could be painful, there was something else to give fear concerning that bite. It was not a mere bite to make an incision or a wound or draw blood - that alone, under God's mercy, could be healed, but there was something else there - it was poison; it was venom. They were very frightened concerning those serpents, for a bite meant certain death.

Now, the sting then, of death, is sin, as we have in the verse of our text, "The sting of death is sin." Why is it such a sting, and why is it so very strong? Well, we have it here: "The strength of sin is the law." That is God's holy Word. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." "The wages of sin is death."

The law cannot bring pardon; cannot excuse sin; cannot forgive sin; cannot blot out sin unless a price is paid. The law is holy; the law is good; the law is just. It is for the blessing of mankind, but we have all sinned. The smallest transgression of that law - break one jot or tittle of that law we are all guilty, and, being guilty, we all come under condemnation. The law can condemn and does condemn. It does.

Laws are made in this land - rightly so, provided that they are good, and we will assume that they are good. What does man try to do? Find a way round it. I need not enlarge. Friend, there is no way round the law. There is no covering for yourself or for your sin under the law. There is no excuse before God. There is no hiding from God. Every sin brings us under the curse of the law. So then some will say, "Surely I can balance things up somewhat. My upright living; moral integrity; honesty. My kindness to people - surely that will help to meet the curse of the law? Friend, nothing that we can bring or do can turn that holy law away from us and the curse of that law, make no mistake about it.

You see, one might be tempted to think, "I have praying parents. I have a Pastor that prays for me. I go to chapel. I hear the preaching." All right and good in its place. May you never forsake it; never turn from it. But it cannot save you of itself. I say it with the deepest

reverence and the greatest care - *a Bible in your hand will not save you.* The Word of God with just an intellectual knowledge of the Word in your head will not save you.

But how is it that the Apostle here then says, “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” In other words, he is speaking of a death where there is no sting. He is speaking of a grave where there is no victory. Is it possible for a poor dying sinner to be delivered from this dreadful sting? To be granted such a victory? “Death is swallowed up in victory.” How can it be? The dear Lord Jesus in dying on Calvary’s cross and rising again, has answered for His people, and met all the demands of the law of God and the justice of God. The payment demanded has been met and that is the blood of the Lamb of God. This blood cleanseth from all sin.

The thought just strikes the mind as I speak - what if there was only Sinai? What if you could only stand at the mount and see and tremble and shake at the manifestation of the glory of Jehovah? But there is a cross. There is a Saviour. There is a Redeemer. There are good tidings of salvation!

The Apostle here says, “The gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand.” Now I need to be careful; you may receive it in the head; you may acknowledge that it is God’s Word and rightly so. But has it been received in your heart as a guilty, lost and ruined sinner in the sight of God. Has it brought you to cry for mercy, burdened with your sin? Does it find you out this morning, you seeking one? You that feel there is hardly any hope for your soul at all, yet you keep hoping. You say, “Lord, Thou knowest all things. Is it for me, Lord? Is it for me? My soul longs for it, I am reaching after it. I hear Thee say that word ‘come.’ Can it be for me? But I am helpless, I am hopeless, I am lost.” Then you *have* received it and you *will* receive it. The natural heart cannot receive that at all. Then you rest your whole hope of heaven on it and the sting of death is thus removed.

The Apostle tells us that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the scriptures. Now, why this emphasis on the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ? INSEPARABLE! The death of Christ made an atonement for sin. Justice is satisfied. The gates of heaven are

open. But there is still another enemy to be destroyed - that is death. That is the power of the grave.

The Apostle says, "How say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?" Multitudes say that today. Multitudes say, "Oh yes, but we are all going to heaven." The greatest lies are in a cemetery! It is very solemn. But the day of judgment will declare it.

GOD'S KIND PROTECTION OVER US

"A thief in the night" 1 Thessalonians 5. 2

"I then looked up, and standing over me was a man with a stocking over his head, so I couldn't see his face properly. He held *our* carving knife (which he must have taken from our kitchen drawer) a few inches from me, and a pistol pointing at my husband."

Mrs. Lily Levell (husband of Alfred) passed away on 2 December 2016 at the age of 100. She had been a church member since she was baptised at the age of 14. Here is her account of a terrifying night for her and her husband.

What I am about to relate happened in the very early hours of Wednesday, 7 March 1973.

My husband and I went to bed, very tired, as we had been busy emptying the spare room ready for the builders to come and re-decorate.

Owing to circumstances which it is not necessary for me to go into in detail, I had rather more money than usual in my handbag. Therefore instead of just putting it down beside my bed, I carefully wedged it between my bedside cupboard and the bed, and said within myself, "Anyone will have to wake me up to get that," and so I fell asleep.

The next thing I remember was being half-awake and thinking I could hear a mouse! Then a little later I heard a queer noise as though someone had dropped something, also there was a rustling kind of noise - by then, I was wide awake, opened my eyes and began to peer in the darkness. There seemed to be a slight ferreting noise *somewhere* but I could not make out where. Then I thought, Is our bedroom door shut? - we always have it shut at night. I looked at the frosted glass in our bedroom door and saw a light shining through. I had not heard the electric light switched on, so that puzzled me. At the same time I looked to see whether the door was properly shut, and it wasn't! The light moved about, so I thought it must be a torch. I said to my husband, "There must be someone about - I can see a light." Then the thought came whether our son David was sleep-walking, although he does not normally do so, but I *hoped* it was just that.

I quickly got out of bed to investigate, but at that moment the door slowly began to open. As I stood in the doorway, I couldn't believe my eyes! I thought, Am I awake or asleep? Something seemed to rise up before me, and in the semi-darkness, did not seem to have a face! What is it? An animal or a devil? Or am I having an hallucination? But no, it was real for it slowly rose and walked towards me - (I think it must have been kneeling before) - with such a queer-shaped head with a sort of topknot. The arms were stretched out in front, and there were things pointing at me at the end of the arms, but I could not see what. It looked like a torch and a sort of knife. It was all very bewildering. Then very, very quickly, far more quickly than I am able to write this down, I flung myself back on the bed, at the same time screaming to wake my husband and switching the bed-light on, for I decided whatever this *thing* is, we must have a light on the subject to see.

I then looked up, and standing over me was a man with a stocking over his head, so I couldn't see his face properly. He held *our* carving knife (which he must have taken from our kitchen drawer) a few inches from me, and a pistol pointing at my husband, who by this time was sitting up, and asked, "What do you want?" The robber, for such he was, said, "Well, you know what I want, I want some money." He became impatient and just muttered "MONEY" and held the pistol and the carving knife nearer to us each.

At this juncture in my writing, I would like to put down what I thought when I first saw the knife pointing to my chest. I thought, I suppose the next minute I'll be in heaven, but the poor children, I shall leave them behind. David is still alive, will come down in the morning, and find us both in a pool of blood, and the thought of the shock to my beloved family was just torture to me. I waited calmly, expecting death at any moment, but the Lord's time was not yet, and so He stayed the man's hand. My husband got out of bed, and took his wallet from his wardrobe. He was sorely tempted to shout loudly, but feels he was restrained; so instead, he quietly and simply handed over what was in his wallet.

Now we could both see more clearly, being more awake, and having been able to put our glasses on, I thought I would have a good look at the man, but he said to us both, "Don't you look at me," and held the pistol and knife more threateningly to us. I thought, "You are *quite* helpless and you cannot *move* that knife except God permit," and a wonderful calmness stole over me - I am quite sure that our God was watching over us all the time. But we were not allowed to look at the man at all, and if our eyes strayed toward him, he reminded us, so we have no real idea of his appearance. The man implied he was down and out. My husband then said, "Can I help you at all?" He replied, "I want a flat." I just sat there and listened to this extraordinary conversation! Though I was so helpless, the carving knife point being so near to me, I thought, fancy coming in the middle of the night, all done up in that queer head gear, asking for a flat! If the situation had not been so dangerous, I could have laughed outright.

The robber asked us not to report the matter, but my husband said, "It depends on what you have taken," and I said, "Besides we shall have to claim on our insurance, so the police will have to know." He then threw down on the bed four National Savings booklets, saying, "I've only taken these. Are they any good?" My husband said, "They are to me, but they are no good whatever to you." He accepted this, and by this incident, my husband knew that the robber had already been into his study, opened a locked drawer of his desk, undone the deed box, and taken the books from there. He then told us, he had been in our house for about four hours. The time was now just after 4 a.m. Wednesday morning, but it was still dark. He then told my husband that he knew

what he was. We were puzzled until he added: "I've seen all your holy books around - you believe in God, don't you?" My husband said, "Yes, we do." He then said, "I used to go to Chapel when I was a boy and would sit and cry."

He then asked us both to 'swear to God' that we would not report the matter until he had had time to get away. We agreed to delay phoning the police till after 6 a.m. Then he said, "Shall I tie you up?" and with that announcement, he produced three pairs of my clean stockings out of his pocket which he must have taken off the line downstairs. I *was* surprised. My husband said, "We have promised not to ring the police till after 6 a.m. and we shall not. That is my word as a Christian man, and you can rely on it," so he did not tie us up. Afterwards, we found one of the David's socks and a piece of kitchen soap in the bedroom, which we think he meant to gag us with.

Then he said, "Shall I cut the wire of the telephone?" My husband replied, "There really isn't any point in doing that; you will put us to a lot of inconvenience, and there is no need as we have made you a promise and we shall stick to it." Then the robber said, "It is all right for you, you believe in God, but there is no hope for me." My husband replied, "No-one is beyond God's mercy." Then I quickly, wondering which Bible incident would be most suitable for the robber in this situation, thought of the dying thief, which our Pastor had preached from the previous Sunday. I said, "Have you heard of the dying thief?" "No," he said. "You've heard of Jesus, haven't you?" "Yes." So I said, "When Jesus was on the cross, there was a thief on either side of Him on a cross also, and they were talking to each other, and one said, 'We deserve all that we've got, but that Man between us, He's only been GOOD. He had *helped* people and been *kind* to them.' Suddenly that thief realised that Jesus in between them was GOD, and he prayed to Him and said, 'Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom,' and Jesus answered him and said, 'TO-DAY thou shalt be with Me in paradise.' So you see, (I said to the man who by this time had backed towards the door,) If you are truly sorry and pray to God, He will forgive you."

After this, he said, "I'm afraid I've made an awful mess for you. Will you forgive me? I am very sorry." I replied, "If God can forgive you, I'm sure we can," thinking that a lot had to be forgiven me. I felt

my spirit within me trying to pray for the poor man. Then he suddenly said, “I feel all of a tremble.” My husband could not resist the comment, “So do we!” Actually, I was then feeling fairly calm, but I said nothing. Once or twice the man said to me, “I am not going to touch you, madam.” He then told us that the pistol was an imitation one; the carving knife, however, was real enough. He, of course, was fully dressed, whereas we were only in our night clothes, and nothing on our feet, so we were comparatively helpless. I thought, Whatever makes *him* tremble? It must be God! So with that thought in my mind, I said very firmly, “*God can see you.*” He said, “Can He?” I said, “Oh yes, God can see *you* and God can see *us*” (feeling so very thankful). “God can see everything, and knows what you are going to do. God knows what everybody does.”

He listened and then said, “Do you mind if I smoke?” How he would smoke with a stocking on his head and face I could not think, but my husband replied, “We don’t smoke and we don’t like the smell of it in the house, but if you want to smoke, I can’t stop you.” He didn’t! Then he said to my husband, “Come with me,” so I said, “I shall come too.” Then he said, “No, both stay here.” My husband had been secretly praying that the robber would go away quietly, and he said, “If you go downstairs, you can open the front door and let yourself out, and just give it a little bang too, so that we know it is shut.” The robber did exactly that. (Later our son found our carving knife and my stocking on the front lawn.) My husband then watched from our bedroom window and saw the robber, apparently a young man about 25 with fair hair, go out of the front gate, walk along the road and up, over the railway bridge and then out of sight.

After this, we looked in the study which is next to our bedroom. The floor was littered with papers, and there, near the door, was my handbag (I didn’t know it was missing). The contents had been strewn all over the place but only money and stamps were gone. So *that* was the *mouse* I had heard! The man must have crept into our bedroom while we were fast asleep and taken my handbag. I then realised how wrong it was of me to think I could look after it myself, instead of asking, as I usually do, for God’s care and protection.

Then my husband went up to David’s room wondering what he would find, but David was sound asleep. He soon woke up and came

down with us to the living room, and here again things were strewn all over the floor. My husband's deed box was also there, which the robber must have brought down from the study and then prized it open. Although everything had been turned out of it, the man had missed £15 which was in it.

We all three sat down, still in our night attire, and all amid the clutter my husband gave thanks for our lives, for not a "hair of our heads" had been touched.

The man had got in from the back of the house by cutting glass and forcing locks. He had no doubt been helped because our side entrance was undone, ready for the dustman in the morning, and he could see our spare bedroom at the rear was empty, so nobody would hear his activities.

A few days later I opened my Bible on this: "Thou hast delivered me from the violent man" Psalm 18. 48. How true I felt this to be. Although we have felt "nervy" at times, neither of us have had to take any tablets or go to the doctor which is very remarkable after such an unnerving experience, and so I will conclude as at the beginning of this writing: "GOD'S KIND PROTECTION OVER US."

Our Pastor's text the same evening (he knew nothing till after the service) was, "Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O Lord."

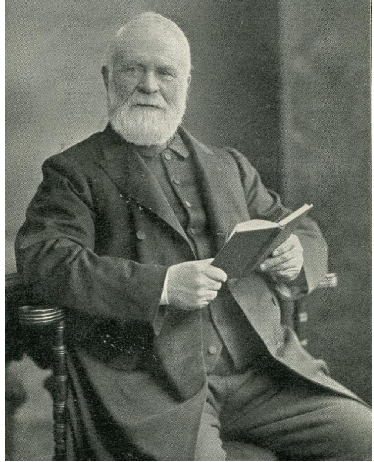


Mr. and Mrs. Levell around the time of this incident

WILLIAM SMITH - PART 5

He marries, but afflictions and death in the family follow. After encouragements in prayer, he is baptized by Mr. Dennett and joins the church at Bedworth

*(CONTINUED FROM WINTER 2016
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**Enters upon married life**

On the 3rd of October the same year, I and my wife were married at Nuneaton, as there was no chapel licensed for that purpose at Bulkington, where we lived. Our first child was born October 8th 1857, and died January 17th 1858, so it only lived three months. It was a great trial to us at the time, but afterwards we were brought to see the Lord had done right by taking it from the evil to come.

We now were brought to prove that there are joys and sorrows to be experienced in a married life, which those who remain single know nothing about, but when our troubles are sanctified, they prove to be among the all things that work for our good. We went on very comfortably until April 10th 1859, when our second child was born. It was very weakly and died May 28th 1859. During these seven weeks my wife was very poorly, and after the death of the child she was quite laid aside with what is called the white leg, and she had to be lifted in and out of bed in the sheet for several weeks. This was a great trial to me, as I had but very little rest during the nights, and I was at work two miles from home, so I had four miles to walk every day, for I was obliged to be there, as we were poor, and had nothing to depend upon but what I earned, and that was not more than fifteen shillings per week. Through being constantly disturbed of my rest during the nights, I felt weak and tired, and some days I could work but little. My work was all piece work, so I only had what that realized.

Wife's affliction

On one occasion when I returned home from work, I went upstairs to see how my wife was, and when I got to her bedside I felt so exhausted, I put my hands upon the bed and felt as though I should sink through the floor. Yet sometimes the Lord so filled my soul with His love, that my heart was filled with gratitude and praise to Him for all His mercies, and this made me contented with my lot.

I cannot remember how long this affliction lasted, but one day she was so ill, a messenger was sent to fetch me home because they thought she was dying. I hastened home as quickly as I could. When I got to the bedside where she lay I expected that every breath would be her last, but to the astonishment of us all, she whispered to the woman who asked her what the state of her mind was, to raise her up. She did so, and when she had been in this position a few moments she exclaimed:

“His love in times past forbids me to think
He'll leave me at last in trouble to sink ;
Each sweet Ebenezer I have in review
Confirms His good pleasure to help me quite through.”

In a moment it was suggested to my mind, that she would fall back and soon be dead. I trembled, expecting to see her fall, and her spirit depart, but bless the Lord, she remained in a sitting posture for an hour, and during that time some precious things dropped from her lips. I now saw the suggestion came to me from Satan; but the Lord proved him to be a liar, and so did I, for from that time she began to get better, and eventually was restored to health again.

Encouraged to continue praying

Up to this time we had attended Mr. Welland's ministry at Bulkington, where we then lived. He and I were very friendly. Sometimes I used to accompany him to Attleborough when he preached there on a week evening. At that time I was very much profited under his ministry, but there were some of the members in the church that I could not feel any union to, so I never joined that church, but my wife did. I used to engage in prayer at their prayer meetings, and according to report, my prayers were made a blessing unto some of the Lord's tried and exercised people; but I was sorely tried about my praying in public. Sometimes I used to tremble violently as I sat upon my seat in the

vestry, fearing I should be called upon to engage in prayer. I used to feel so dark in my mind, and so ignorant, that when I did try to say a few words I was all confusion, and hated both myself and my prayers.

I remember one night I was very much tried, and it was suggested to my mind, ‘You are not a member, you should not go, there is no need for it.’ So I made up my mind not to go. I had no sooner done that, than these words were applied with power to my heart: “Whosoever is ashamed of Me before men, of him will I be ashamed before My Father and His holy angels.” I began to tremble, and said, “Lord, what shall I do?” I started and went again, but whether I was called upon that night or not I cannot remember. But one night I was called upon to engage, and I was so confused all through my prayer, that when I sat down I felt to really hate myself, and as soon as the prayer meeting was over I picked up my hat and went out and down home, and spoke to no one. I felt so vexed as I stood looking at the fire, and in my own mind declaring I would not go any more, for I could not pray in public, and I would not try.

I stood with my back toward the door, and at length I heard someone open it. I thought it was Mrs. Smith, so I did not turn to look; but instead of her it was a poor tried woman whom I knew: she came from a village about three miles away. The name of it is Wolvey. I cannot remember her name, but I think it was Plover. She addressed me thus, “Bless the Lord for sending you to the prayer meeting this night. You have traced out my feelings better than I could describe them, and the Lord has made it such a comfort to my soul. I could not go home without coming to tell you.” I listened to what she said, but I really thought she was deceived, and while I stood speechless before her, these words dropped with power and sweetness into my soul, “Death worketh in us, but life in you.” I saw at once I had to feel the death that she might feel the life. My heart was melted into true humility at the Lord’s feet, and I said, “Lord, if this is the way Thou dost work to convey a blessing unto Thy people, I don’t mind being a fool for the elect’s sake, I will go again.” I thanked the poor woman, we shook hands and she went home.

This greatly encouraged me; but it did not deliver me from my fears, for on one occasion I was so tried while I was in the prayer meeting, that my nose started bleeding, and it bled so much that I

became faint, and the friends had to lead me out and give me some brandy to revive me.

In this way I went on, sometimes encouraged and sometimes cast down, until by the inconsistencies of a farmer who used to attend the chapel and sometimes prayed in public, using the tongue of a saint in prayer at the prayer meetings, but in the world the tongue of the serpent; I was very much tried about leaving the chapel, as what had happened spoiled my hearing.

His way directed to Bedworth

One Sunday morning I was so tried, that I felt I could not go to chapel, and I asked the Lord what I was to do, when these words fell with power and sweetness upon my soul:

“Go worship at Emmanuel’s feet,
See in His face what wonders meet;
Earth is too narrow to express
His worth, His glory, or His grace.”

I answered, “I will, Lord.” So I reached for my Bible and hymnbook, thinking I would sing the hymn first, then read and engage in prayer. I found the hymn and began to sing; as I went on, every verse seemed to come with more power and sweetness, and when I came to the last of the eighteen verses, I was so overcome with the love of God, I could neither read nor pray, so my worship began and ended in a real service of song.

My mind was now settled to go to hear at Bedworth. I heard Mr. Thornber there one Sunday, very profitably. Soon after, Mr. Welland left Bulkington, then the church invited a Mr. French to preach, and after a time he became their pastor; he did not stay long. After a time they invited a Mr. Fletcher, and he became their pastor. After he had been there a few months, the Arminian part of the church and congregation did not like his preaching, and they, having the majority on their side, began to devise a plan to get rid of him, but as I had left them and went to hear at Bedworth, I had nothing to do with this sad business.

Severe trial with a baby daughter

On July 15th 1861, our third child was born. She was a fine looking baby, but after a few weeks an abscess formed on her back. This was

very troublesome for some weeks. At length it broke and discharged, then it got well. We had a girl to nurse her. One day this girl took her out into a field with some other nurse girls and children, and they began to swing the children round by their arms; our girl turned our child round so long, that it caused her eyes to turn over in her head. When she saw what she had done she brought the child home; and when I saw it I thought I should go wild, it was so disfigured about the eyes, that it looked awfully ghastly. We had the doctor to it. He said he could do nothing for her, and this drove me and my wife near to despair.

One day while I was thus troubled, my heart was drawn to the Lord in prayer, and I was blest with nearness of access at the throne of grace. I told Him He was able to make the child's eyes come all right again, and I had faith given me to believe that He would do so. Every morning when my wife brought her downstairs, I called her by her name, which was Elizabeth, to see if my prayers were answered; but day after day passed away, and her eyes remained the same. This tried my faith exceedingly; but I still kept on praying, believing He could make them come right.

At last I began to think it was no use praying any longer; but, to our great surprise, one morning when she was brought downstairs, I called to her as usual, and she looked straight at me, and I saw that her eyes were restored to their proper state, and they remained so until the day of her death. I cannot describe the feeling of love and gratitude which I felt unto the Lord for His goodness and mercy thus manifested unto us in such a miraculous way, in answer to prayer. This strengthened my faith in the Lord, and I could say with Job, "I know that Thou canst do everything." If you, my reader, should be a tried believer, you know that when such gracious answers to prayer are granted, the feeling it causes in the soul is better felt than expressed.

Baptized and joins the church

Some few months after this, I and my wife having attended the chapel at Bedworth several months, were asked to join the church there, which was a large one at that time. I made it a matter of prayer to the Lord, asking Him to guide me in the matter; and one day while pleading with Him, these words dropped with power into my heart, "Follow Me." This made me willing, and I said, "I will, Lord." I told the deacons I was willing to join them; so they came to visit me and my wife; their

names were William Sage and Joseph Clark. Our testimony was received by them; and on the Sunday afternoon I, my wife, and seven others went and gave our experience before the church, friend Hull, now of Hastings, being one of the number. At this time the services were carried on by supplies, and Mr. Dennett was supplying on that Sabbath, so he heard our testimonies and was satisfied with all of them.

On the Tuesday afternoon following, we were all baptized, except Mr. Hull; he had been baptized before, at Foleshill. In the evening, Mr. Dennett preached and administered the ordinance of the Lord's supper.

At my baptism I felt very comfortable, but now my comfort had declined. I partook of the bread and wine without the least moving of soul towards the Lord, or the people with whom I had now joined in church fellowship. This tried me exceedingly, and especially when I heard some of them say how much they had enjoyed the ordinance for the first time; and my wife was among these. She had been weak and poorly for some time, and in the afternoon before she went down into the water, she looked like a corpse, and when she was in the water she lost all consciousness of where she was; after Mr. Dennett had put her under the water and got her to the steps of the baptistry, friend Clark put his hands under her arms and carried her into the vestry. She made no noise, therefore no one knew about her fainting until afterwards. She soon came to herself in the vestry, and began to sing, and she was favoured with the Lord's presence at His table.

As for me, I was passed by. I began to wonder what this could mean. We returned home after the evening service was over, and I was dreadfully tempted that I must be deceived. This was in June, 1862.

I was tempted and tried about it all the week, and I asked the Lord to show me where I was wrong. One day as I was wondering what it all could mean, these words dropped into my heart with divine power: "When He came up straightway out of the water, He was caught away by the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil." Such light came with them, that I exclaimed, "Lord, I see I am following Thee now." Thus the snare was broken and my soul was set at liberty. I was now favoured to enjoy the comfort of this gracious deliverance for several days, feeling all was right between me and the Lord.

TO BE CONTINUED

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Alzheimer's disease is named after the doctor who first described it, Alois Alzheimer, a German neuropathologist who died in Poland in 1915. Alzheimer's is a disease that affects the brain, with more than 520,000 sufferers in the UK. It is a progressive disease, which means that gradually, over time, more parts of the brain are damaged. As this happens, more symptoms develop.

For most people, the earliest symptoms are memory lapses, in particular with recalling recent events and learning new information. Later stages may include language difficulties, difficulty in making decisions, irritability, getting lost in familiar places, and not knowing loved ones.

There is no cure for Alzheimers, but there is loving care. This is captured by the following poem by Owen Darnell. A copy of the poem is displayed in our local chemist shop.

Do not ask me to remember.
Don't try to make me understand.
Let me rest and know you're with me.
Kiss my cheek and hold my hand.

I'm confused beyond your concept.
I am sad and sick and lost.
All I know is that I need you
To be with me at all cost.

Do not lose your patience with me.
Do not scold or curse or cry.
I can't help the way I'm acting,
I can't be different though I try.

Just remember that I need you,
That the best of me is gone.
Please don't fail to stand beside me,
Love me till my life is done.

FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE PASTORATE OF MR. B. A. RAMSBOTTOM AT BETHEL, LUTON

CONTRIBUTED BY A MEMBER OF THE CONGREGATION



Mr. Ramsbottom's 50th Anniversary thanksgiving service was held at St Albans High School for Girls on Monday, 2nd January 2017. The preceding days had been very foggy so that local airports had been shut, so we were very thankful when a beautiful sunny day was granted us.

This was a unique occasion of real gratitude to the Lord for granting us 50 years with Mr. Ramsbottom as our Pastor. Many of us remembered the joy we had when Mr. Ramsbottom agreed to become our Pastor in 1967. We remember the keen interest which our Pastor and his wife took in the Sunday School, and the monthly Saturday evening Young People's Meetings which were attended by up to 80 sometimes. The years have simply flown by and it is almost unbelievable that we have now reached 50 years.

The school at St Albans was opened up for 2 p.m. and streams of people poured into the car parks and roads surrounding the school. The Jubilee Hall had rake seating so that viewing was very good. Our Pastor had chosen all the hymns and tunes for the day and a hymnsheet had been provided. The afternoon service began at 3 p.m. On the platform at the front from left to right were Mr. David Christian (deacon), and the ministers Mr. Gerald Buss, Mr. Ramsbottom, Mr. Timothy Parish and Mr. Joseph Rutt.

The hearty singing of the hymns of nearly 400 people was grand. Pastor gave out the hymns and Mr. Christian read the Bible and prayed. Then Mr. Parish was the first speaker and he spoke much of his very



young days when he lost his father and how supportive Pastor had been. Mr. Rutt then spoke of his days at Bethel before moving to Matfield. After another hymn, Mr. Buss preached from the words, “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love

of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen” (2 Corinthians 13. 14). The afternoon service finished with “May the grace of Christ, our Saviour” to the tune Ebenezer Chapel.

After this, a lovely tea had been provided in the school’s dining room on the opposite side of the road where the adults and younger children had their tea, but the young people collected their tea and made their way back to the Rotunda which I think they all enjoyed.

At the end of tea, Pastor and Mrs. Ramsbottom cut a commemorative cake. This had been made by one of the congregation, Mrs Elisabeth Starkey. It was beautifully decorated with some of Pastor’s favourite texts.

Then it was back across the road to the Jubilee Hall for an epilogue. This time, Mrs. Ramsbottom joined Pastor on the platform, alongside Mr. Trevor Scott (deacon). Mr. Scott opened the proceedings by speaking of our thankfulness and gratitude for the fifty years and all that Pastor had meant to us. After this he presented to Mr. Ramsbottom a montage, a large frame with 70 photos of the congregation on it. This was followed by Mrs. Myrtle Christian presenting Mrs. Ramsbottom with a beautiful bouquet and a gold necklace. She made a short speech to which Mrs. Ramsbottom responded.

After this Pastor spoke of some of his remembrances, and then read from Isaiah 53. This was followed by prayer and then we sang, “The Lord Himself be with you all” to the tune Rose Hill. The singing raised the roof! The day ended with the singing of the doxology. Altogether it was a very very moving occasion.

Finally, our Pastor having said he would like to speak to a few, went

to the entrance and shook hands with nearly everybody which they all appreciated very much. It was a wonderful time and we look back on it with such a love to our Pastor and with hearty thanks to the Lord for sparing him to us for so long.

A commemorative Booklet has been produced and can be obtained free of charge from Mrs. Alison Kingham, 11 Sutherland Place, Luton LU1 3SY email: alison@kingham.org.uk

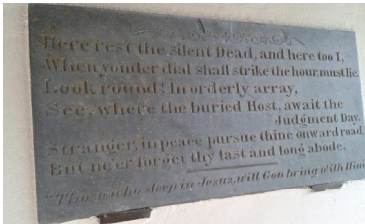
ST. JUST-IN-ROSELAND



The Church of St. Just



The Lych Gate



PICTURES: ANTHONY STARKEY

St. Just-in-Roseland is a Cornwall village some six miles south of Truro. The church of St. Just, which was dedicated in 1261, is set in a beautiful location by the edge of a tidal creek of the Fal River. An engraved stone, read by all who enter the Lych Gate, reads:

Here rest the silent Dead, and here too I,
When yonder dial shall strike the hour, must lie.
Look round! In orderly array,
See, where the buried host, await the Judgment Day.
Stranger, in peace pursue thine onward road,
But ne'er forget thy last and long abode.
"Those who sleep in Jesus, will God bring with Him."

A FEW CURRENT MATTERS

Do we take *our* Bibles for granted?

The Rev. Hehh, a Chin-speaking minister in Myanmar (also known as Burma), said: "I have never had a Bible of my own. I read the one community Bible that we have for the whole church. But I am happy now, because I have my own Bible." Chin is a local dialect spoken by a minority. Barnabas Fund has recently financed a Bible distribution project in the area.

Six generations

The only known six-generation family in Britain was completed on Christmas Day when baby Finley was born. Head of the family, great great great grandma, Mrs. Hilda Hanson is 103 years old. The world record is seven living generations, recorded in the US in 1989.

Divorce and marriage

In 1957 there were 22,000 divorces. By 2014 the number had leapt to 111,000. In 1957 the average age women married was 25, today it is 34. In the last twenty years, the number of married couples with children has fallen from 5,230,000 to 4,809,000. In the same period the number of cohabiting couples with children has more than doubled to 1,270,000.

Oath taken on the Bible

Donald Trump, the new USA president, took the oath with his hands upon two Bibles. One was given to him as a child by his Scottish-born mother. The other was used by Abraham Lincoln for his inauguration.

Oldest person in the world

The last person to have been born in the 1800's is 117 years of age. Emma Morano, who lives in Verbania, Italy, eats three eggs a day, two of them raw, plus a little raw mince. She eats almost no fruit or vegetables. She began this diet when she was 20 as a result of anaemia.

Longest earthworm

Gardener Paul Ress from Cheshire recently spotted a monster worm while tending his vegetable patch. The creature was 15.7 inches long, three times longer than the average worm. It weighed 26g - nearly the weight of three pound coins. The worm has been preserved in a jar at London's Natural History museum. It is thought to be a record.

Interestingly, worms are both male and female, known as *hermaphroditic*. Fertilised eggs take 2-4 weeks to hatch. The humble worm is one of God's great gifts to mankind. In one acre of land, earthworms will ingest 13.5 tons of soil over a year. "They shall move out of their holes like worms of the earth" (Micah 7. 17).

New human organ discovered

Scientists have classified a new human organ. Known as the mesentery, the organ is a membrane that attaches the stomach, small intestine, pancreas and other organs to the abdomen. The finding has led to the updating of *Gray's Anatomy*, one of the most widely-used medical textbooks in the world. It was first published in 1858. The latest edition of the book, the 41st, was published in September, 2015.

Silence of the sparrows

The RSPB reports a drop of 75 per cent since the 1970's in the number of the once-common house sparrow found in our cities. It is believed that fumes from vehicles may kill the insects that sparrows feed to their chicks. Country-wide it is believed the 12m pairs in the 1970's have now been reduced to 6m pairs. House sparrows are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, making it illegal intentionally to kill one, or to destroy its nest. "One of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father."

New chemical elements

Four new elements have been added to the tables. The new ones include nihonium (Nh) which is radioactive, moscovium (Mc), tennessine (Ts), and oganesson (Og). The first is the only one ever to have been discovered in Japan. The last is the heaviest element ever found. There are now 118 known elements. An element is a substance that cannot be broken down into simpler substances and are the primary constituents of matter. Doubtless there are other elements waiting to be discovered - but all created by and known to God.

Mexico stands firm for marriage

A move to allow same-sex marriage in Mexico has failed. Mexico's congress rejected the plan by 19 votes to 8. The Chairman said, "This means the issue is totally and definitely concluded." Over a million Mexicans attended nationwide rallies in 122 cities in support of

traditional marriage. (From *Coalition for Marriage*.) There are over 100m Catholics (91% of the population) in Mexico, making it the second largest Catholic country in the world after Brazil.

Baptism in old age

The Editor's local Newspaper recently reported the baptising by full immersion of an 86 year old lady. It is sometimes said that immersion precludes the elderly from being baptised. Although some *may* become too infirm to take this step, it is not necessarily the case, and certainly cannot be used as an argument against the institution.

The Moonbow

We are all familiar with the amazing spectacle of the rainbow. Less



common is a moonbow, which is formed when moonlight is refracted by moisture in the atmosphere. Our picture shows a moonbow photographed near the Yorkshire town of Skipton.

"I do set my bow in the

cloud" (Gen. 9. 13) - a token of the covenant.

Pomegranates

Recent research has centred on the pomegranate's anti-aging properties. It appears that the fruit has the ability to keep mitochondria, the tiny 'battery-packs' that power our cells, charged up. Chemicals in pomegranates are turned into a compound called



uroolithin which helps the body recharge cells. The fruit was listed with others as a blessing of the 'good land': "For the Lord thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of wheat and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive, and honey" Deut. 8. 7-8.

The Fig Tree

We first read of the fig tree in Genesis chapter 3. Adam and Eve used the leaves of the tree (as large as a hand) to sew garments for a covering to hide their nakedness. From this account we know that the fig tree was one of the trees found in the garden of Eden. The fig tree is the last tree to produce leaves and it does so just as summer arrives. In the text on our front cover, the Lord Jesus used this as an illustration of how His listeners would recognise that the things of which He had been speaking were near at hand.



Figs have always been cultivated in Israel. The spies brought back samples of the fruit before Israel entered the promised land (Num. 13. 23). Dwelling safely under his vine and his fig tree was a mark of peace and prosperity (1 Kings 4. 25). The fruit was highly nutritious. And remember how Isaiah used figs to treat King Hezekiah's boil.

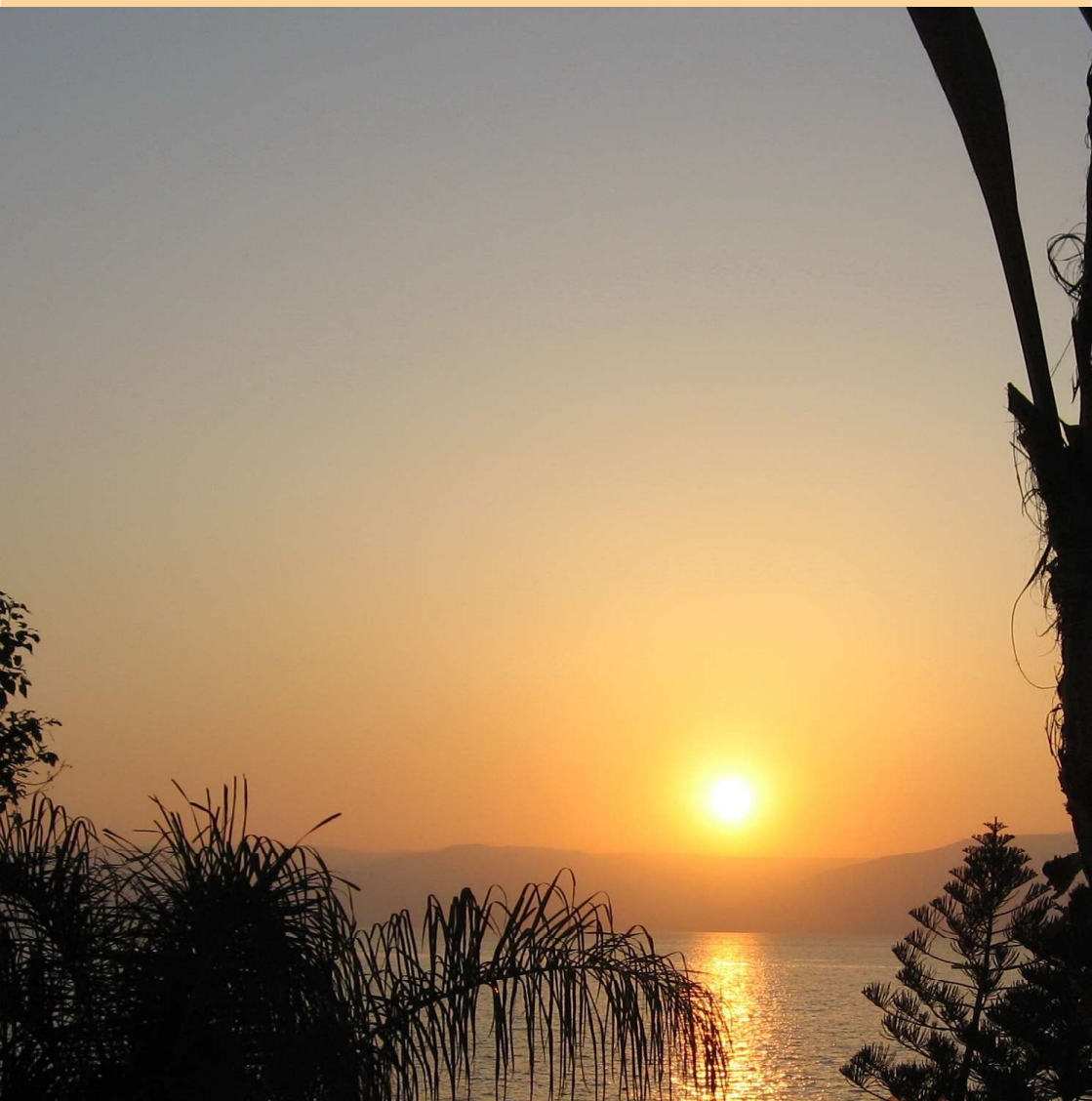
A successful fig tree requires time and effort properly to cultivate and nurture. In the parable of the unfruitful fig tree the gardener said "let me dig it dung it," with every hope of success. But the failure of the fig harvest was often God's judgment against the people, and His prophets Jeremiah, Joel, Habakkuk, and Haggai warned the people of this.

Today, Israel has an abundance of well-developed fig trees producing two harvests of fruit each year, the early crop around Easter time (before the leaves emerge) but with the biggest, best and most juicy fruits coming in September. The first crop is usually eaten fresh, while the second crop is dried for winter. A mature tree will reach 20ft (6m) in height, and provides a pleasant and welcome shade. The Lord Jesus found Nathanael sitting under a fig tree like "an Israelite indeed."

In England, given a sunny, sheltered site, figs can be grown outside with great success. One of the best for this country is an old French variety known as Doree which dates back well over 400 years.

PERCEPTION

A Quarterly Magazine for Young People



“When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair
weather: for the sky is red” (Matthew 16. 2).

SUMMER 2017

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Cover picture: Sunset over the Sea of Galilee

PERCEPTION

Volume 9

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EDITORIAL

“A name which is above every name” (Philippians 2. 9).

“There is a Name I love to hear,
I love to speak its worth;
It sounds like music in my ear,
The sweetest Name on earth.”

It is a legal requirement that all babies born in the UK are named. Currently, that is 64 million named persons. The name of the new-born baby must be registered and recorded within a period of 42 days of the birth. It is quite remarkable how names appear to go in and out of fashion. My grandchildren smile, and even laugh, when I tell them the names of some of the children in my class at school. But old names often eventually come back into fashion. In 2016 the most popular name for boys was Oliver and for girls Olivia. Sometimes we get surprises - in 2007 the most popular name for girls was Grace. Sometimes parents find it difficult to agree over a name. In theory you can call your child whatever name you like, however ridiculous, but a registrar does have the power to refuse to register a name that is offensive or misleading.

The first names in the Bible are, of course, Adam and Eve. God Himself gave Adam his name - a Hebrew word meaning *earth*, as man was formed by God “of the dust of the ground.” Adam appears to have been responsible for choosing his wife’s name, although possibly he received special direction from God: “And Adam called his wife’s name Eve” (Gen. 3. 20). Eve is a word that means *life*, “because she was the mother of all living.” Many names today have a meaning, although some (including the Editor’s) do not. At school I had a French teacher who, on the first day he taught the class, went round every boy to ask his name, and then he told you what it was in French. If you were

Peter, then you would be called Pierre, if you were Timothy you would be Timothée. However, if your name had no French equivalent he always called you George (in French, usually spelt Georges). So in French lessons I was always a Georges.

Many of the names we read in the Bible have a meaning. Some are sad names. Rachel, as she lay dying, named her son Benoni, meaning *the son of my sorrow*. Eli's daughter-in-law, Phinehas, when she heard that the ark of God had been taken by the Philistines, named her son Ichabod, meaning *the glory is departed*. Pharaoh's daughter gave the baby in the ark of bulrushes the name of Moses, meaning *drawn out of the water*.

But what of that name which is above every name? The angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "and thou shalt call His name JESUS." The angel then gave the reason: "For He shall save His people from their sins." Hymn 52 in the Young People's Hymnal expresses it well:

"Twas God who gave the precious Name
Of JESUS to His Son,
Because He knew His gracious work
By Him would well be done."

A week or so ago, there was a knock on my front door, and there stood two Jehovah's Witnesses, one an older man, the other a younger lady who told me she used to be a Methodist. They were an extremely pleasant and polite couple. The man began our conversation by saying: "What do you think is God's greatest gift to mankind?" I thought for a moment and answered, "Redemption." He looked a little startled, and then said, "Don't you think God's greatest gift to mankind is Jesus Christ?" I replied, "Yes, I most certainly do, because He is the Redeemer that *brings* redemption." I thought about this all the week - had I answered the man rightly? I trust I did. We should never speak sharply or unkindly to these people who call at your door. That is no witness at all. It may be an opportunity to speak a word in season.

Now, most importantly, is the name of Jesus a precious Name to you and me? Can *we* sing, "How sweet the name of Jesus sounds," and apply it to ourselves? And how do we feel when we hear that precious Name used almost as a swear word? "Thou shalt not take the name of

the Lord thy God in vain.” I once knew a man who, when something surprised him, would say *jeepers creepers*, derived of course from Jesus Christ. We need to be very careful of all those expressions such as *crikey*, *golly*, *heck*, *darn*, which derive from sacred or solemn things. They easily slip out. Others are *by jove* (from Jehovah), *strewth* (God’s truth), *jeez* (Jesus), *jiminy* (from the Latin *Jesu domine* - Jesus the Lord). Those that truly love the Lord will try to eliminate these kind of words from their vocabulary. “Sound speech that cannot be condemned,” said Paul writing to Titus.

Some years ago I went to an awards ceremony when the name of everyone who had graduated that year was written in a book. One by one the names were read out. Some were very short - I particularly remember one student was called Pik Yip (not as short as the name of that mighty King Og of Bashan), while others were exceedingly long. What was important though, was not whether the name was long or short, but that it *was written in the book*. On the great Judgment Day, will our names be found written in the Book of Life? If they are not it is very solemn. “And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire” (Rev. 20. 15).

The hymn at the top of this Editorial has never been sung much in our circles, probably because it is often sung unthinkingly. It is really a most beautiful hymn, in which the author expressed how much the Name of Jesus meant to him. (It was written by Frederick Whitfield who in the 1870's was vicar of St. John’s Church, Bexley.) What a blessing if we can truly sing the chorus of the hymn: “O how I love the Saviour’s Name, The sweetest Name on earth.”

Finally, returning to the Book of Life, may this be the heartfelt desire of all our readers:

“In Thy fair book of life and grace,
O may I find *my* name
Recorded in some humble place,
Beneath my Lord the Lamb.”

With greetings and wishing you all God’s richest blessing.
The Editor.

BUNHILL FIELDS - ‘GOD’S ACRE’

Part 4 - Joseph Hart (1712-1768)

“More people come to visit the grave of Joseph Hart than any other. He wrote a lot of hymns, you know. Of course, no-one sings them today.” This we were told by our guide. We hastened to correct her, and assured her that Mr. Hart’s hymns are still sung today, greatly loved by many people.

‘Dear Hart’

Dear Hart, as Joseph Hart is often affectionately called. Sadly, there is no known image of him. These were the days of knee-length breeches with stockings, waistcoats, and frock coats over linen shirts, as well as buckled shoes. Did he wear the three-cornered hat, so popular at the time? We shall never know. There were the very rich, and the very poor, and not much in between. For every 1,000 children born, 500 would die before the age of two. Before he died in 1768, the industrial revolution had begun.

Birth

Joseph Hart was born in London in 1712, but we do not know the date.

This was the period in our history when the Tories (mainly Anglican) had defeated the liberal Whigs. When Hart was two years old, the German Protestant, George of Hanover, succeeded Queen Anne to become King George I.

Early life

Information about Joseph Hart is rather scant, and his early life is hidden in obscurity. We are told he was a warm-hearted boy, but highly-strung. His parents were Calvinistic Independents. At some time in their life they attended the ministry of George Whitefield at the Tabernacle, Moorfields. “I imbibed,” says Hart, “the sound doctrines of the Gospel from my infancy.” This did not stop his life descending into sin and debauchery. He ran with the godless crowd.

Education

In a day when schooling was not compulsory, and usually only upper-class boys attended school, Hart had a good educational upbringing, learning the three classic languages of Latin, Hebrew, and Greek to perfection. Although he never went to university, he became a teacher of these ‘learned’ languages. He loved literature, and his greatest delight was to be found foraging among the dusty volumes of the bookstalls in Moorfields. In 1744 he translated the works of the Greek poet Phocylides (not Phycolides as virtually every book and article on Hart says - how easily one error can be perpetuated), and the Greek historian Herodian in 1749. To these translations he added his own notes. His biographer, Thomas Wright, observes that during this period, “with all his learning, the Bible was still a sealed book to him.”

Another of his early publications was a tract, *The Unreasonableness of Religion*, prompted by a sermon preached by John Wesley in which Wesley preached perfection in this life and universal redemption, opposing the Calvinistic position. Hart sprang to the defence of the Calvinistic preaching of Whitefield. John Wesley accounted Hart’s publication as “mere blasphemy.”



Dress of man 1740

His sinful life as a young man

His life sunk into one of deep sinfulness. Strangely, he had a persuasion that God had given him liberty to sin. In this state he continued for almost ten years, committing “all uncleanness with greediness.” Later he said that he lived as “an audacious apostate, a bold-faced rebel.”

Marriage to Mary

In 1752 Hart married Mary, fourteen years his junior - he was forty, she was twenty-six. Their early days were full of sorrow. A year after the wedding, their first child was born, but lived only a short while. Then a little boy was born in 1754, but soon they found he was an epileptic. A second son, Daniel, died at the age of three. Later, two further sons and one daughter were born into the family.

Soul concerns

Although Hart tells us that in 1734 he began to have serious concerns about his soul, it was not until the week before Easter in 1757 at the age of 45 that he had, in his own words, “an amazing view of the agony of Christ in the garden.” He said, “I was lost in wonder and adoration.”

On the following Whitsunday he felt truly blessed in his soul under a sermon preached by George Whitefield in the Moravian Chapel in Fetter Lane, London from Revelation 3. 10: “I also will keep thee from



Moravian Chapel, Fetter Lane - destroyed by enemy bombing in 1941

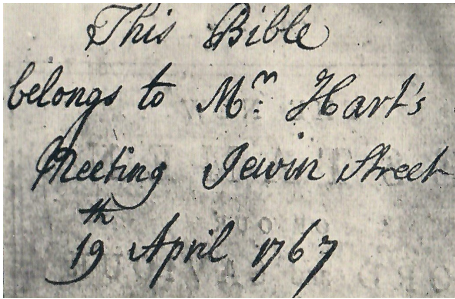
the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world.” “Tears ran in streams from my eyes,” he says. “I threw my soul willingly into my Saviour’s hands.” That year he wrote the hymn, “A Man there is, a real Man.” During the next two years he wrote many of his deepest hymns.

Preaching

Hart began to preach about 1760 at the age of 48. He is said to have preached his first sermon at the Old Meeting House, St. John’s Court, Bermondsey. Later, he became pastor at the Independent Chapel at Jewin Street, London, an oblong wooden building with multiple galleries and a prosperous congregation of significant size. Here he continued until his death eight years later. His ministry was



Meeting house in Bermondsey built for the Rev. W. Whitaker when ejected from his living in 1662



Mr. Hart's handwriting

most abundantly blessed. If incapacitated by illness, he said, "No Arian, Arminian, or any unsound preacher, shall occupy my pulpit. I will keep my pulpit as chaste as my bed."

Hymnbook

In 1759 appeared the first publication of his hymns. These appeared as *Hymns Composed on Various Subjects with the Author's Experience*. Supplements and an Appendix were added in 1762 and 1765. In his *Experience* he concluded: "I am daily more and more convinced that the promises of God to His people are absolute. I desire to build my hopes on the free electing love of Christ Jesus."

Infirmities and death

Early in 1768 his wife Mary fell ill and remained a semi-invalid for the rest of her life. Hart himself was by this time in much pain, and gradually became weaker. His brother-in-law, John Hughes, told the congregation, "You are witnesses that he preached Christ to you with the arrows of death sticking in him."

It soon became clear that he was coming down to his end. By the spring of 1768 he was unable to rise from his bed. He died at his home on the Strand on 26 May 1768, aged 56 years. In his last hours he confessed: "I know myself to be a child of God, and an heir of glory." He had laboured in the ministry just eight years.

Burial

The burial at Bunhill Fields was attended by a crowd of 20,000 who mourned his death, thought to be the largest number of people ever assembled in the cemetery. What an amazing sight it must have been to see the men, women and children spread amongst the tombstones and grassy mounds to pay their final respects! The funeral oration at the cemetery was given by Andrew Kinsman of Plymouth, one who had regularly supplied for Whitefield in his absence. Hart's own hymn was sung at the graveside:

“Sons of God, by blest adoption,
View the dead with steady eyes;
What is sown thus in corruption,
Shall in incorruption rise.”

As the last notes of the hymn died away, the silence was broken by Mr. Kinsman reading Isaiah’s words: “The voice said, Cry! What shall I cry? All flesh is grass.” Many of those listening sobbed aloud. Then, imagining Hart himself addressing them, he said, “Weep not for me, but for yourselves and your children.” The graveside service was concluded by singing a hymn specially written for the occasion by John Hughes, beginning, “Sleep on, bless’d man, in Jesus sleep.”

John Hughes later preached a funeral sermon from words found in the Epistle to Timothy: “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.” During his sermon, speaking of Hart, he said, “He was like the labourious ox that dies with the yoke on his neck.”

His memorial in Bunhill Fields

By 1877, his headstone was weather-worn and almost undecipherable. It had been a simple headstone with the words: “In memory of the Rev. Joseph Hart, late minister of the gospel in Jewin Street, who died May 24th, 1768, aged 56 years.” A number of those who loved his hymns then



subscribed to a replacement monument. Close to the original stone, which still stands, they erected a red granite obelisk, engraved on all four sides. Among the inscriptions is the hymn:

“Mercy is welcome news indeed,
To those who guilty stand;
Wretches that feel what help they need
Will bless the helping hand.”

Later were added the words; “Also of Mrs. Mary Hart, wife of the above, who died 9th February, 1790, aged 64 years; also of Daniel Hart, son of the above, who died 18th August, 1763 aged 3 years; also of Mary Mercy Ellis, granddaughter of Rev. Joseph Hart, born 16th October 1793, died 10 January, 1835.”

Mrs. Mary Hart

He left behind him a widow and five children in destitute circumstances. Mr. Hughes’ sermon was published for their benefit, and subscriptions for their support were raised among friends.

Mrs. Hart survived her husband twenty-two years, dying in 1790 at the age of 64, and was buried with her husband. The last survivor of Mr. Hart’s children, a barrister, died in the year 1836.

His will

When Hart’s will was published, this was the wording with which it began: “I commit my soul to Almighty God, in good and firm hope that He will save it from perdition, in and through the merits of His dear Son, in whom I have believed and do still believe.”

Hymns

Perhaps his most famous hymn is “Come, ye sinners, poor and wretched.” Many modern hymnals are loathe to use the word ‘wretched,’ but Joseph Hart knew the sinfulness of his own heart.

The metre 8.3.3.6 had been introduced into English hymnody by John Cennick the hymnwriter for the first time. Joseph Hart made use of this poetic novelty:

“Perfect holiness of spirit,
Saints above, full of love,
With the Lamb inherit.”

In Gadsby's Hymnbook there are four hymns of this metre: 104, 484, 799, 800. The twin rhyming three-syllable phrases in the middle lines sometimes must have taxed even Hart's ingenuity:

"Hell-born sin, once crept in"

"Chosen Jews must not use"

"He surveys all our ways"

"Foolish man never can"

"Jesus came to reclaim"

Most hymnbooks contain two verses from a longer hymn (slightly different in *Gadsby's*):

"How good is the God we adore,
Our faithful, unchangeable Friend!
His love is as great as His power,
And knows neither measure nor end!

'Tis Jesus, the First and the Last,
Whose Spirit shall guide us safe home;
We'll praise Him for all that is past,
And trust Him for all that's to come."

Hart's hymnbook became famous, even amongst those who did not highly regard it. The somewhat hypocritical Dr. Samuel Johnson, whose *Dictionary of the English Language* was the standard for 150 years, wrote in his diary:

'Easter Day, 1764. I went to church. I gave a shilling and seeing a poor girl at the sacrament in a bed-gown, gave her privately a crown, *though* I saw Hart's hymns in her hand.'

How could Sundar Singh explain to his countrymen, the Sikhs and the Hindus, what a *Christian* was? "A Christian," he declared, "is a man who has fallen in love with Christ."

SERMON PREACHED BY MR. C. A. WOOD

Last quarter we printed a sermon preached by the late Mr. C. A. Wood on the Lord's Day *before* the sudden death of his wife. We now print the sermon preached by the stricken Pastor on the Lord's Day *after* her death. She died on 11 December 1996 following a fall as she made her way into Canterbury Chapel.

Text: "The Master is come, and calleth for thee. As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly, and came unto Him" (John 11. 28 - 29).

"It was noised that He was in the house." Can this be said of our homes? A place where Jesus is loved, His presence felt, His Spirit manifest in every heart and life. An *earthly* home, with a *heavenly* home when called to die.

Even in such favoured homes on earth, there is sin, there is sorrow, there are trials, there are, at times, dark clouds and in time, the hand of death. But there is some sacred support; some divine comfort felt. Words completely fail to compare the most favoured home on earth, with the home that the Lord has prepared for all His dear people in heaven. O, what must it be to be there?

Now this home at Bethany was a very favoured home. It was a place, a home, into which the Lord Jesus entered from time to time. The Word of God, by the Holy Spirit (and I speak with deep reverence), opens as it were the door of that home, leading us into it, and we behold the anxious, burdened Martha who was "cumbered about much serving." Her distress and anxiety - yes, it was right for her to serve, but it was wrong for her to be over anxious and are we not just like that? Not only the dear women, but we men are just as bad, if not worse.

But there was also a dear sister there; a dear Mary. What a contrast and yet what love there was between those two sisters. Mary sat at the feet of Jesus. She wanted to hear the words that fell from His lips, but Martha had to be reproved. We need the Lord to reprove us. "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful" What is that one thing, you dear children and young people? Is it the one thing needful to you? To know Jesus Christ as your

Saviour? “One thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.”

This was the home. I look upon you, my dear people. I say *my people* as God has given you to me as a Pastor. How wonderful it would be, if it could be said that each one in your home is loved by Jesus, because we read these wonderful words, “Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.”

It will only be a simple sermon this morning, friends. That happy home; that home of love - and yet came the hand of death. An illness first. Sickness. What did those sisters do? What do you do? And you all did this recently - you all prayed for my dear one as soon as you heard she was in hospital. You see, it is in love. We are powerless. We cannot nurse them, nor minister unto them. We cannot heal them, but we bring them to Jesus.

I am so tried. I do not wish to speak too much of my dear one. I desire all for the glory of God and if I say anything about her, it is what God did for her. I could truly say this when she was in the hospital: “Lord, she whom Thou lovest is sick.” Can this be the Jesus we read of that cast out devils at a word, healed the lepers at His touch and caused the blind to see? Even healed one that was a distance away? Even raised the dead? But there was no going to Bethany; no word from the Lord. Silence! It is hard for the flesh, but

“Too wise to be mistaken, He,
Too good to be unkind.”

It is all in His love. You may have in your life, even this morning, something that is hard to bear. You pray earnestly, and there seems to be no answer. The Lord is moving in His love. He is making no mistake. Pray for patience; pray for submission. If you are passing through the fire it is burning up the dross. O that it may be sanctified. I do desire something good to come out of this time of sorrow. I desire it to be sanctified for spiritual profit and for the glory of God.

Lazarus died. That seemed to be the end. Now perhaps there is someone here this morning that has come to a situation such as this. You have come to the end. It is no good. It is too late. May the Lord help you to look up and trust in Him.

The Lord knew all about it. He said, “Our friend Lazarus sleepeth.”

What a comfort that word is. Jesus speaks of the death of His people as sleep; falling asleep. Jesus comes; comes to the weeping sisters; comes to this place of death. Many of the Jews came to comfort Martha and Mary. (One is humbled, comforted and supported by the love and prayers at such a time as this.)

Now, as soon as Martha knew that Jesus was approaching - and here we see the typical disposition of dear Martha - she immediately went out. She did not sit still; she was active. She said, "Lord if." That is what we often say: "If I had not done that. If that had not happened. If I had gone some other way." O, our unbelief! Almost charging God as though He is not in control of all things. Let us give one brief example in the Word of God: Joseph could have said, "If that man, a certain man, had not been in the field, I would never have found my brethren. I would never have been put in the pit; I would never have been sold as a slave." But the man *was* in that field; God put him there. So as I look back on the incident that took place last Lord's Day evening, one might have said, "If only she had not come." O friend, no! Away with it all! It is God's hand. Not only His hand; not only His will; not only His purpose, *but His love*.

This dear soul, dear Martha, said, "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." But she says even now - is there something in Martha; is there faith here? - "But I know, that even now."

Friends, this is a good word. This is a word of comfort to my soul. Maybe it is to you as well. "Even now," in such a path as you have never walked before. It may be a path of trial; it may be a peculiar difficulty; it may be that all things seem to be so confused. You cannot see any way through or any purpose. "Even now." It may be so dark to you. It may be the devil is getting at you. He has got at me, too. I have known much of the temptation of the devil this last day or two, but I believe I have been helped. "Even now." However trying it may be; however hard it may be; however perplexing it might be. "Even now."

The Lord Jesus said, "Thy brother shall rise again." Death is not the end of all things. Martha said, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." There comes out of this scene of death, sorrow, tears, perplexity and loneliness, words of comfort and support to all God's dear children to the end of time. Jesus said unto her, "I am the resurrection and the life."

Poor sinner look. Thy Jesus came to this earth. Thy Jesus laid down His life. His precious blood was shed, but He rose again and it is this same Jesus that is now in heaven. He is that life. "Because I live, ye shall live also." This speaks to us of spiritual life and a spiritual resurrection. God said through His prophet, "O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves." Look at it! Not only does He bring them out, but He is their life. They derive all from Him. What is the evidence in your soul, that the Lord is the resurrection and the life to you?

What a precious word this is: "He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." Now that does not mean that he will not die naturally. No. "It is appointed unto men once to die." But it means this: he shall never die spiritually. The physical life will end, but never the spiritual. It is eternal; it is everlasting; it is for ever and ever.

When I was a boy, dear old John Kemp, a former Pastor at Ebenezer Chapel, Luton, once said that in his boyhood days, there was invisible ink that could be used to write a message. It did not show, but if you wanted to read the message, it was put in front of the fire. This is so with Christians at times. When they are in the fire you will see their faith and they will see it too, when they thought they had none left. Indestructible faith!

Now we come to a poor weeping Mary, overwhelmed with sorrow and grief, who came and fell at His feet. Such a loving soul. She was full of grief. She came with the same word: if, if, if - "if Thou hadst been here." I think those sisters must have kept talking to each other, so perplexed about the things that had transpired. Sometimes husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, friend and friend, can be perplexed, (just like the two on the road to Emmaus), speaking together and tried about what is happening. But Jesus saw her weeping and we read, "He groaned in the spirit." He knows all that we pass through. Wonderful!

We come (and you dear children will know this) to the shortest verse in the Bible and yet one of the most profound. "Jesus wept." Tears flowed from the eyes of the Man of Sorrows. What did those tears mean? Weeping doubtless over their unbelief, but also in love because I believe His love was shown so clearly to them. If only they believed. He wept, and even the Jews said, "Behold how He loved him."

I come now more particularly to these words: "The Master is

come.” He has come from glory. Can you think of this world of sin without Jesus? If it were possible to think that from creation to the end of time no Jesus came to this earth, it would mean utter death and hell for everybody. But He did come! Did Jesus come for me? Did Jesus come for me?

I know my dear wife prayed for those young people that have left us and left the house of God, and have gone right out into the world. I know her heart yearned over them, and ours does too. You young people that are here in the house of God, when you grow older, are you going to go out into the world? I hope the Lord will bless your souls and hear our prayers for you.

* * * *

Now friends, I must come to a conclusion. Again, I do not wish to bring too much of my dear one before you, but you are my people and you have shown such love and affection to my dear one. I think it is only right for me to tell you one or two details of what transpired.

You remember last Lord’s Day morning I preached from the text: “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” That was the last sermon my dear wife heard, and as I preached, it came to me that it was like a funeral sermon. Not that I thought of anyone dying. The last prayer that she heard me pray here, was just before I pronounced the Benediction. I prayed:

“Death of deaths, and hell’s Destruction,
Land me safe on Canaan’s side;
Songs of praises,
I will ever give to Thee.”

I then pronounced the Benediction.

We were about to leave home and as our custom was, we stood in the hall and bowed our heads, praying for journeying mercies and if it was the Lord’s will, for Him to bring us home safely. I did not know that only one of us would come home, but that was in the Lord’s hands.

We journeyed to Canterbury. A kind friend drove to relieve me, and was such a help to us through all that transpired. Two minutes to half past six the service was about to begin after we had had refreshment. My wife went from where she was helping the friend washing up, to go into the chapel. She lost sight of a deep step and fell

very heavily. The friends there were so kind and our friend that was with me, so supportive. Well, I was shattered. We could not start the service until seven o'clock, having to wait for the ambulance. The text that the Lord gave me before I left home was: "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." I had chosen the hymns - there was no deacon. The last hymn was this:

"God shall alone the refuge be,
And comfort of my mind;
Too wise to be mistaken, He,
Too good to be unkind."

An operation was to be performed on Monday. She had a long wait. They were ever so busy. I sat with my dear one and a young friend came unexpectedly. It was a great help to us. Before I left I said, "My dear, I cannot stay longer." I said, "My dear, these are the words that have come to me and I trust you will feel them: "Leaning upon her beloved." I believe she felt it.

The operation was about midnight. I went down the next afternoon. She was very pale, very weak, but not in severe pain. Very quiet; so peaceful. I sat by her bedside and just spoke a word here and there. I sent love from all the friends here, and of course, from the family. The sweet memory of those hours of silent communion, as she would doze and then open her eyes. Every time she would just look at me and give me such a lovely smile. It was just like her.

Just before I left, I said to her, "My dear, did you have a word? Was some help given to you?" She said, "Yes; *Safe in the arms of Jesus.*"

I came home. At quarter to four the telephone rang. I drove to Canterbury, but it was too late. You may say perhaps I am grieving because I was not with her at the end - I am not. The Lord does not make any mistake. No mistake at all. He left me with the sacred memories of sitting with her and hearing those words from her lips. I was quite content. It was God's purpose that I was not there.

So we give thanks unto our God. We cannot grieve. We cannot mourn. We do mourn, but not as those without hope. I hope the Lord will mercifully pardon all spoken amiss this morning and bless His own word for His name's sake. Amen.

BREATH

Andrew Rayner

Breath. It's invisible, it's vital, it's the very sign of life. The midwife looks for it at the beginning of life. The relatives see the final inhalation at the end of life. A drowned person may appear to have died but they can seemingly be resurrected by resuscitation when breath returns.

Breathing is one of the basic body functions along with digestion and circulation. Its purpose is for the lungs to take in air and to extract some of the oxygen to feed our muscles via the circulating blood. At the same time, carbon dioxide which has been generated is removed. Normally, it is controlled unconsciously by the levels of oxygen and carbon dioxide being detected and triggering signals to the muscles in the heart, the lungs and the diaphragm to increase or decrease the rate of breathing. As well as the level of physical activity, the rate can vary according to factors such as temperature, the level of brain activity and emotional state.

However, unlike the operation of our digestion and heart circulation, breathing is more than functional because we can control it both consciously and sub-consciously. We can hold our breath for a time by a conscious decision, albeit, after some time, the unconscious control will override the conscious. Also, it is often controlled quite dramatically in sub-conscious ways by the brain. Our breath can be taken away with astonishment, it can be held in anticipation, it can emerge in expressive sighs, it is regulated by speech and especially by singing and it can be linked to our moods. Good swimmers have excellent control of their breath. The interaction between the unconscious control, the sub-conscious control and the conscious control is a subject which could be studied in depth.

There is the line of a hymn which says, "Prayer is the Christian's vital breath." Sadly, the Christian's breath of prayer is not generally automatic. It takes conscious effort and action to maintain it. Having said that, there are times when prayer 'bubbles up' in our hearts even when we are totally engaged in something we are doing. How precious this is and how we want it to continue, even though it may not be a convenient moment. "Quench not the Spirit." However, all too often,

prayer is hard work; it doesn't come naturally although, thankfully, the Lord will not let the Christian's prayer die out finally. Just as we cannot hold our breath for a long period, God forces us, sooner or later, to return to Him in prayer. Whether prayer is flowing or whether it is hard work, it is indeed the Christian's vital breath and if it were allowed to cease, spiritual life would soon cease along with it. Let us jealously guard our times of prayer, let us always seek to pray and not to faint, to pray without ceasing, to pray in season and out of season. The athlete's lungs become very efficient. Because his lungs can quickly and easily transfer oxygen into the blood, he can achieve so much more than an unfit runner.

Let, "everything that hath breath praise Him."

Some facts from *Answers in Genesis*:

- Our lungs incorporate about 800 million alveolar air sacs.
- It only takes about 1½ seconds for our hearts to spread blood over a lung area of half a standard tennis court and then shunt it back into circulation. This happens about 100,000 times every day, usually totally automatically.
- The weight of the total blood circulated through our lungs each day is around 8 tonnes. In an average lifetime, this is double the weight of the giant aircraft carrier USS Nimitz.
- The work of breathing at rest only takes some 3-5% of the body's energy consumption.
- To ensure smooth breathing without gasps, the basic nerve impulse controlling it sends a 'ramp' signal that begins weakly and increases steadily for about two seconds, then stops for three.

It was in the year 1830 that I found the Saviour, or rather, that He found me and laid me on His shoulders rejoicing, and I have never parted company with Him all these sixty-two years. (*Andrew Bonar, 1810-1892, Minister of the Free Church of Scotland, written on his 82nd Birthday.*)

THE LORD'S GRACIOUS DEALINGS

Dr. David Allen

We are grateful to Dr. David Allen for this account of how the Lord graciously restored him following a severe illness and operation, enabling him to resume his ministry, and continue his work in representing the Trinitarian Bible Society as a deputation speaker.

I would like to take this opportunity first of all to thank the auxiliary for their prayerful and for their practical concern for me over the past 18 months or so. The Lord has been very gracious and has seen fit to put me back into the ministry and to continue to represent the work of the Society particularly in the north of England, Scotland and Ireland.

It was on September 25th, 2015 that I saw the consultant at the West Suffolk Hospital at Bury St Edmunds. He took one look at me and admitted me immediately to hospital and ordered a CT scan. Within an hour of the scan he informed me that I had a large tumour attached to my bowel, and my bowel was completely blocked. He said to me: "You need an emergency operation. I fear that you will not survive the operation, but unless you have the operation I give you no more than three days to live." He then turned to me and said: "I have to say I can't carry out the operation, I am too tired, I have been on duty since early morning. I have sent for my colleague who is now rushing in to carry out the operation. In view of what I have had to say to you, would you like to see the hospital chaplain?" Well, I thanked him for the kind offer, but I declined. I said, "I have no need to see any hospital chaplain because I have a great High Priest and He is seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high and He ever liveth to make intercession for me." And the surgeon looked at me, and said, "I think I follow what you are saying."

The surgeon who had been rushed in eventually came at 1.30 on Friday afternoon. My wife was due to visit me at 2.30. I had no means of being able to communicate with my wife what had been reported to me. She doesn't have a mobile phone; like me she is *allergic* to these things. She doesn't have one. I knew she was on the way to hospital

with Michael Harley and she was not due to be there till 2.30. So I prayed that the Lord would delay the operation until I had had chance to say goodbye to my wife. They sent for one of those ECG machines. The mobile one didn't work. They sent for another one. That didn't work either. That delayed it. The Lord was answering my prayer. At 2.30 they found one that worked, took the recordings and then the porters came to wheel me to the theatre. At the very point that they got me outside the nurses' station which was crowded at the time, my wife and Pastor Michael Harley arrived. I was just able to say that they are wheeling me down to theatre for this operation and Michael Harley stopped the porters and said, "Stop there." And Pastor Michael Harley prayed to the Lord. It was a tremendous witness to have Michael Harley pray on that ward.

It was a long and complex operation. I think it lasted about eight hours and I came through that operation thanks to the prayers of the Lord's people and also we must not underestimate the skills and the care and professionalism of the medical profession. But the Lord answered the prayers of many and I came through the operation.

As far as I was concerned I was entering the valley of the shadow of death. But I feared no evil. The operation did go ahead and it lasted over eight hours and when I came out of the operation I was in intensive care for two days. On the Lord's day, the 27th, during the time of the evening service, I had a relapse. My life was fast ebbing away from me. I was conscious of the medical profession doing all they could to resuscitate me. At that time I was surrounded by all the powers of darkness. I could feel the infernal powers of hell itself attacking me and bringing lying accusations to me and trying to rob me of my assurance of salvation. And I remembered the words recorded in the book of the Psalms: "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the Lord; O Lord, I beseech Thee, deliver my soul. Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful. The Lord preserveth the simple: I was brought low, and He helped me."

And I *was* brought low that Lord's Day evening. I cried to the Lord - not to spare my life - I had never prayed that the Lord would spare my life; others may have prayed that, but not myself. I prayed the Lord would deliver me from the powers of darkness and he heard my cry and

from that moment he brought a verse of scripture to me: “Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him. For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust.” And from that moment the powers of darkness disappeared and, indeed, from that moment I began physically to recover.

The following day my wife came to see me and she said, “The Lord gave me a verse of scripture last night.” I said, “Well, what verse did he give you?” “Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him. For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust.” At the very same, precise moment, that the Lord gave me that verse, He gave it to my wife as well.

Well, I was in hospital for the better part of two weeks. Then there followed five months of intensive chemotherapy when I was kept in isolation at home. No-one could come and see me because my immune system was completely gone and then I had to have fifteen days of radiotherapy. And in the goodness of the Lord I’ve been enabled to resume preaching. It is exactly twelve months to this day when I was able to resume preaching. Throughout 2016 the Lord has enabled me to preach most Lord’s days and represent the Society midweek as well.

One verse that has been a great blessing to my wife and myself is that from Deuteronomy: “The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.” I can tell you, my dear friends, if you are a child of God it matters not how low you sink, you can never sink any lower than the everlasting arms of the eternal God. They are always there to uphold, to sustain, and to strengthen, and to help in time of need.

Curious Bible Fact

The number of letters in the names of the two sections of the Bible have a connection with the number of books the Bible contains:

Old = 3. Testament = 9.

3 and 9 = 39 (number of books in Old Testament).

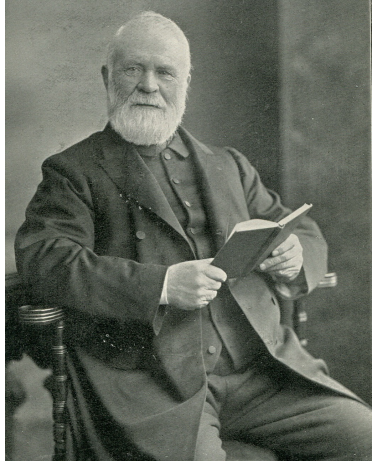
New = 3. Testament = 9.

3 x 9 = 27 (number of books in New Testament).

39 + 27 = 66 (the number of books in the Bible).

WILLIAM SMITH - PART 6

Many trials continue, including the death of two of his daughters. He goes with others to hear Mr. Philpot preach, but going only to hear *the man*, it was sadly a great disappointment. He has exercises concerning the ministry, in which he receives considerable encouragement from the people.



(CONTINUED FROM SPRING 2017 PAGE 33)

Reproach for His name's sake

As I had to work among fifty or sixty wicked men, I had much to endure in the way of reproach and persecution. The day I was baptized they came out of a public-house as I was passing by and held up a pot of beer, and called after me in the street, and asked me to come and drink; and many times they tried to injure me in my work, by sending me bad stone to cut; and as all my work was done by the ton and by the yard, I only had what money I thus earned, which some weeks was very little, in the winter especially, as it would not average ten shillings per week.

This quarry was like a Sodom. Sometimes they would watch me on a Monday evening to see if I left work to go to a prayer meeting. When I did so, some of them would follow me, and try to get me into the public-house where I used to accompany them in the days of my unregeneracy, and sing songs with them; but the Lord mercifully kept me from yielding to their entreaties, although they promised to pay all expenses.

Brought low by sin, but delivered by grace

On one occasion my master asked me to go near to Coventry with

two other men, to mow a field of grass. I went, and it was very hot weather. After we had been mowing a few hours, I perceived one of the men was not doing his share of the work. I told him of it; but what I said amounted to a lie, and when I perceived it I felt condemned, though he took no notice of it. This brought me into great trouble of soul. I thought if I was one of the Lord's people I should exercise more patience, and bear my trials better. This was at the beginning of the week, and we did not finish until Saturday. During the week we lay on some straw in a barn, with our clothes on; but I got no rest either night or day. I had guilt upon my conscience, and it remained there until the Sunday morning.

After I got home that morning, I was so distressed, I felt I could not meet with the Lord's people, but while I lay on my bed the Lord dropped these words with divine power into my soul twice over, namely: "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace." I was so overcome by the goodness and mercy of my covenant God, I felt as though I should sink through the bed. All my guilt was removed from my conscience, and I had joy and peace in believing. I soon got up, had my breakfast, and was ready to go to chapel to meet with the Lord's people for praise and prayer, and hearing His Word preached.

Scarlet fever brings death to four children

In 1864 the scarlet fever broke out in Bulkington, and many people were attacked with it; and it became so bad that many died. Among the victims was my daughter, who was then about two years and eight months old, and two of my wife's cousin's children, who lived next door to us on one side, and a neighbour's little girl on the other side of us. Thus four children were taken out of three houses, which a few weeks before sat at the table in my house at play. This made a sad breach. My child died March 1st. Just before she was taken ill I sat in the house with her upon my knee, and I felt very comfortable in my mind, so I began to sing the following lines:

"The dearest idol I have known,
Whate'er that idol be;
Help me to tear it from Thy throne
And worship only Thee."

In an instant the Lord showed me my daughter was the idol, and I cried out, “Not the child, Lord.” I did not want her torn away, but she had to go; God will have no rivals. This was a sore trial to both me and my wife but she was enabled to bear it better than I, because she was sustained by these words, “I shall go to her, but she will not return to me.” But I was left to murmur, and on one occasion I was left to say, if I could not have my own children, I would not look at other people’s.

Goes to hear Mr. Philpot preach

About this time, myself and a few friends hired a conveyance and drove from Bulkington to Leicester, which was about eighteen miles. I felt so pleased all the way I went, to think I was going to hear this good man, Mr. Philpot, of whom I had heard such a good report by some of the Lord’s people who had heard him.

We started about six o’clock in the morning, and got there all right, had a little refreshment at a friend’s house, who was related to one of our company; and when it was time we went to the chapel, full of expectation. I heard him in the morning, but felt as insensible to what he said as any mere professor would. After the service, we went to the same friend’s to dinner, and after dinner I went into another room and pretended to go to sleep, but I could hear all their conversation in the room I had left, and it was not very profitable. We had tea, then went again in the evening, and I heard Mr. Philpot, and that was all; I did not hear the Lord’s voice through him, so we returned home after the evening service, and I felt very disappointed.

We arrived home safely about twelve o’clock the same evening. On the next day I began to wonder what had caused my disappointment on Sunday, and I was led to see my mind was taken up with the man, and I had not sought the Lord’s blessing upon what I was going to hear. I only went in a thoughtless way and manner, and I believe many of the Lord’s people are disappointed in hearing a minister through that very thing. I fell under the reproof, and wept nearly all day on Monday, to think I was so foolish. I believe it taught me a lesson that I did not quickly forget.

Hears Mr. Philpot a second time

Time rolled on and nothing particularly transpired, though I still worked at the stone quarry. But in October of the next year, which

would be 1864 or 1865, a number of us agreed to go and hear Mr. Philpot again at Leicester. On the Sunday morning we started about six o'clock, and I believe I prayed most of the way there that the Lord would bless His servant, and bless my soul through his instrumentality. We got there all right, and after we had taken some refreshment at the same friend's house, we went to chapel and I kept asking the Lord for a blessing upon the service of the day. I felt nothing through the first hymn and the reading, but his prayer began to move me, and when he got up and took his text, which was the seventh chapter in the Song of Solomon, verses 11-13, and began to describe who this beloved was, it so corresponded with what I had felt all the way I had come that morning, that I was so overcome with the goodness and mercy of the Lord, I had hard work to keep from shouting out, "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name."

After the morning service we went to the same friend's to dinner, but we went to the chapel in the afternoon and took tea with the friends there. I did not pretend to go to sleep this time, but was enabled to speak a little of what the Lord had done for my soul. We went again in the evening, and my soul was so refreshed again that I made up my mind to go and speak to Mr. Philpot in the vestry.

Attempts to speak to Mr. Philpot

I went round the corner of the chapel, and stood there waiting until others who were speaking to him came out; but while I stood it was suggested to my mind that he was a gentleman, and those that went to speak to him were rich people, and he would not care to speak to one like me. With these suggestions the devil prevailed, and I went off after my friends. So I was prevented from speaking to him whom I dearly loved for his work's sake. I heard him several times after this with comfort and encouragement, but never could find courage to speak to him. After we had taken a little refreshment, we started home again, and we arrived there safely between twelve and one o'clock in the morning.

The next day, I wept to the praise of the mercy I had found; and my comfort abode with me for a season; but being placed among such a lot of wicked men, what with their oaths, the devil's temptations and my own wicked heart, I was greatly exercised in my mind.

Restrained by Grace

One day I was so tried with one of the men, that I thought I would do him some injury in some way; but while I was thinking what I would do, these words were applied with power to my soul, “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” They broke me down at the feet of the Lord, and scattered all my wicked intentions to the four winds, and I began to confess my sin unto Him, and to repent as in dust and ashes; and I thanked him for preventing me from doing that which would have brought a reproach upon myself and upon His cause, and would have wounded the hearts of His dear children.

On one occasion I was invited to accompany a few friends to a meeting at Attleborough, about two miles from Bulkington; I got up about three o'clock in the morning and got all my work done by dinner time; but the foreman of the works tried to throw every obstacle in the way he possibly could, to prevent me from going. At last I got angry, and declared I would go, and so I did; but I might as well have stayed at home, for my dreadful feelings and what I had said made me very miserable all the time I was there.

I was still led on in the old beaten path of tribulation, and on March 25th, 1867, our fourth child was born. My wife was in a very weak state of health at that time; but the child seemed all right for several weeks, then it gradually went off in consumption, and died on August 29th the same year. So in five months we were deprived of our fourth child, which was a daughter. We felt it very much at the time, but were brought willingly to submit to the Lord's will.

A Change of Occupation

At length the Midland Railway Company bought the Moira Canal, which ran by the top of the quarry, and we had a landing stage by the side of the water, where we used to draw the stone up to load the boats. Some of the railway directors came to inspect the canal, thinking that my master had trespassed too near their boundary, and thought that the water in the quarry had drained out of the canal. So by the advice of their solicitors they entered an action against my master to recover damages for loss of the water which they thought ran out of the canal.

As soon as the lawsuit began, my master discharged all the men, and let the quarry fill up with water. This suit was pending two or three years, and when the case was tried it was proved that the water in the

quarry did not come out of the canal, but from the land springs; so all the expenses and damages fell on the railway company.

After we were discharged from the quarry I worked with my wife's brother at Bulkington. I helped him to make leashes for ribbon looms. They are made on a frame, and consist of cotton spun for that purpose; each leash having an eye in the middle, through which the silk is passed of which the ribbon is made. This is a business which is very fluctuating; sometimes we had to work twenty hours a day for three or four weeks together, but then very little to do for several weeks. This being the case, I used to go out mowing and reaping in the hay and corn harvest, which helped us to pay our way. Our fifth child was born September 5th, 1870.

Leaves Bulkington

In May, 1871, I left Bulkington, and went to live at Bedworth. There I worked at the same business for Mr. Peake, his factory being close to where I lived. As there was not work enough to employ me constantly, I used to do odd jobs for anyone who wanted me. At the chapel, where my wife and I were members, there was a nice graveyard, where the members that died, and their children, were buried.

Nearly buried alive

One day I went to help the chapel-keeper dig a grave nine feet deep, and the soil being very light and loose, it was not safe to go that depth without planking the sides up. We planked them up about every two feet. When he was digging he came to some sand about eight feet below the surface. I told him, as I was stronger than him, I would dig out the last foot, so he came up the ladder and I went down. I had only thrown up very little, when, suddenly, I felt prompted to go up. I asked him to put the ladder down, as I felt I must come up; he did so, and I went up. Just as I turned round at the top, the sand at the bottom began to boil up like a spring, and both sides of the grave gave way, so that all the planks and earth fell in, and filled up the grave; if I had remained in it five more minutes I must have been buried alive. I hope I felt grateful unto the Lord for warning me of the danger I was in, and causing me to escape unhurt.

Exercises about the ministry

I might say that about this time these words were deeply impressed upon my mind when reading Proverbs 31 verse 8 : “Open thy mouth for the dumb in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction.” From this time I became very much exercised in my mind about the ministry, but I told the Lord I could not stand up to speak to poor condemned sinners for even ten minutes. I kept my exercises to myself, and watched to see what the Lord was about to do with me. I felt very unfit for the ministry, but I knew if He had designed me to preach in His name He could qualify me for the work, and make a way for me to go forth.

On September 6th, 1872, our sixth child was born, and died with inflammation on the chest, October 4th, the same year. This tried me very much, and I was tempted to have hard thoughts of God, because He allowed it to suffer so much at such an early age; but the Lord rebuked the tempter, and he left me, and I was enabled to feel resigned to His gracious will.

Takes a funeral service

At this time we had Mr. Sinkinson as our stated minister. He took the pastorate at Bedworth in 1865 or 66. At one of our church meetings it was agreed by him and the church that I was to bury any person who might die, and whose friends wished them to be interred in the graveyard, when he was away from home.

It happened on one occasion, when he was away, that a young man was killed in one of the coal mines. I heard he was a wicked man, and as he was a son of one of the seat-holders, they wished him to be buried in the chapel graveyard. This tried me very much, as I had to bury him. I made up my mind not to say much, either in the chapel or at the grave. I thought there would be no one at the funeral but a few of his friends; yet I felt very much exercised about what I was to say.

On the day I had to bury him I woke very early, and was very restless. My wife asked me what was the matter. I told her I had to attend a funeral that day. She asked me what part I was going to take in it, and when I told her, she said, “The Lord will be with you.” I begged He would.

After dinner I dressed and went down to the chapel. I went into the vestry, and told the woman who was there to let me know when the

funeral was coming. In a short time she told me it had entered the gates that led down to the chapel. I went up into the pulpit, and to my great surprise the first thing I saw was two men with a large flag. I then knew they were of the Order of the Oddfellows. They carried the corpse into the chapel, and in a few moments the place was filled with men, women, and children, so that some had to stand. All fear was taken from me, and I got up and read the 14th chapter of Job, and part of the 15th of the first Epistle to the Corinthians; after which I said a few words to the congregation, engaged in prayer, and then retired to the grave. Here the Lord enabled me to deliver an address with the greatest freedom, which I believe was made a blessing to some of the hearers, and many of the friends said they believed I should be called to preach. So I proved what my wife said to be true.

This event deepened my exercises respecting the ministry, but I never divulged it to any creature, not even to my wife. I knew if the thing was of the Lord, He would make it manifest, and I do wish all who are exercised about the ministry would do the same, and wait and watch until the Lord opens the way.

Repairs to the chapel

In 1871 the chapel was closed while some repairs were done. On May 14th it was re-opened by Mr. Dennett. There were collections made morning and evening, which amounted to twenty pounds. One hundred and twelve pounds had been subscribed by friends; that just cleared off the amount due to those who did the repairs, which was one hundred and thirty-two pounds.

Leadings to the work of the Ministry

Up to this time, when Mr. Sinkinson went out to preach in different parts of the country, the services were carried on by myself and the other deacon. One of us used to give out the hymns and engage in prayer, and the other read a chapter and then read one of Mr. Philpot's sermons, and many a blessed season we had in these services of the sanctuary.

Mr. Sinkinson was away from home the first Sabbath after the chapel was repaired, and the deacon said to me in the vestry, "You must conduct the services yourself, and if you feel your mind led while reading to speak anything to us, do so, for I believe the Lord has got a work for you to do." Then he at once walked down the chapel and took

his seat with his wife in their pew.

I trembled very much when I went into the desk, but I gave out a hymn, and while they were singing I found a Psalm, and when they had finished singing I got up and read it, and such light and understanding was given me while I read that I began to expound; and my mind was so taken up with the subject that I forgot to pray or to read the sermon I had brought to read. I happened to look at the clock and saw the time was gone. I made an apology to the people for my not thinking to conduct the service in order, but after I had concluded in prayer, the deacon came to me in tears, and shook my hand and said, "May the Lord bless you," and none of the rest complained. I cannot now remember what Psalm it was I read, but it appears my speaking was talked about among the friends.

TO BE CONTINUED

THE INTERNET, SMART PHONES, AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Amanda Woodhams

Due to the nature of my job in working with children and their families I have to periodically have training updates regarding Child Protection issues. Whilst attending my latest training I felt it laid on me to share, or simply remind us of, some of the current temptations and exploitations that young people are open and exposed to via Smart Phones, Social Media and the Internet in general. This is not an easy or comfortable subject to discuss but the reality is that in a world where access to the Internet is so readily available to children, they can be a very easy target for those with evil intentions and vile imaginations. This is more of an issue in our country than many may realise and appears only to be getting worse.

I wish to be clear that I do not in any way feel it is my prerogative to tell anyone what they should or should not be doing, particularly when I am not a parent myself, but with God's help I wish merely to raise a few points for consideration. I feel it is only right that we are aware of and understand the temptations children and teenagers are currently facing, so that we can try and support them and pray for them.

A study was conducted in a school when all the parents were asked if they thought they knew everything that their child accessed on their Smart Phone. Seventy-five per cent of parents said they thought they knew but in reality only 20 per cent did. Many children know more about how to work modern-day technology than their parents realise is possible! Social Media Apps such as, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Snapchat are free to download on any device. Without parental control settings, any child can access these and all sorts of other inappropriate, vile material. Signing up to social media accounts may be innocently done from the young person's point of view as it seems to be the modern way of keeping in touch with friends. However, do not forget this opens them up to all sorts of people being able to see their pictures and work out their whereabouts from the things they put and say on their profile, which was a point that was reiterated through sad examples given during my recent training day.

I would just remind the children and teenagers that it is easy for anyone to create an account within Social Media and pose as someone they are not with a fake name and age. If you use any of the Social Media Apps, you need to be aware of who is requesting to be your 'friend' and only accept the people you know. If anyone you do not know asks you to have a private conversation via a chatroom or even the likes of Facebook messenger where no one else can see what they are writing, you must not engage with it. Also, be mindful of what you are accessing when the phone 'Location' setting is switched on. Many Social Media Apps will pick this up and it will be easy for others to know your whereabouts. Be open with your parents about who you are seeing and contacting for the sake of your own safety. We all like to think, "It will never happen to me" and we trust and pray God will keep you, but we must face the reality of these things and understand that in this evil world there are sadly people who have wicked and harmful intentions.

I know from experience that in teenage years it is easy to bow to peer pressure and not to want to stand out from others, but ask God to help you and to give you wisdom and discernment regarding these things. My heart truly aches for those of you growing up in this modern world and for your parents who must feel to need so much God given wisdom.

Paul writes to Timothy, that “Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse” (2 Timothy 3. 13). How true it is of our ungodly world today! May we pray and strive for a closer walk with a holy God.

THE INCREDIBLE HUMAN HAND

The authors of an article on the human hand in the research publication *Plos One* (Public Library of Science) made two statements:

“The mechanical architecture is the proper design by the Creator for dextrous performance of numerous functions.”

“Hand coordination should indicate the mystery of the Creator’s invention.”

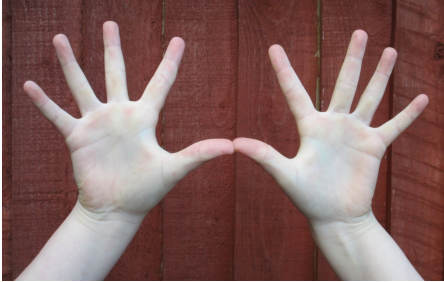
These two statements caused an uproar in the scientific world. People were “freaking out” over what had been said.

- The co-editors of the publication threatened action, including resignations, if the paper was not retracted.
- “This is outrageous,” wrote a researcher of genomics (a branch of molecular biology). “If the paper isn’t retracted my students and I will have no choice but to refrain from reading published papers in the journal.”
- A university biologist from Switzerland wrote: “It is inappropriate to mention the creator with a capital C in the paper.”

After the social-media storm, the journal issued a statement: “In the light of the concerns identified, the editors have decided to retract the article. We apologise for the errors and oversight leading to the publication of this paper.”

Why was there such hatred towards the mention of creation and a Creator? How strange that the illogical evolutionist will happily talk about wonderful design and engineering - but without a Designer: by definition, anything that is engineered requires planning and design. It does not happen by chance. Someone has rightly said: “The assumption

that nature itself engineered the hand and foot seems similar to finding the *Mona Lisa* painting in the middle of a forest and claiming it was done by nature with the passing of time.”



Sir Isaac Newton, one of the foremost scientific intellects of all time, said: “In the absence of any other proof, the thumb alone would convince me of God’s existence.”

So what can we say about the incredible human hand, which gives us such a powerful grip yet allows us to manipulate the smallest of objects?

The muscles of the hand are strangely arranged, since most of the hand’s movements are controlled by muscles not located in the hand, but in the forearm. The fingers are connected to the forearm by long tendons that pass through a flexible, lubricated sheath. This arrangement gives the fingers movement and strength that would be impossible if all the muscles were in the hand.

The skin in the fingers has cells of fat that give cushion-like protection for the huge number of nerve endings underneath. The fingers have four types of skin receptors that respond to pressure, touch, pain and temperature. The nails, made of the tough protein keratin, help to judge how firmly to hold anything.

Human hands are unique. The combination of an opposing thumb (the thumb being able to touch the tip of any other finger) and our being able to rotate the hand freely (palm up or palm down) gives us an ability to manipulate objects and tools like no other creature.

Dr. Paul Brand, a surgeon who devoted his life operating on the clawed hands of leprosy sufferers, said: “I loved human hands, had always loved them but especially since I came to understand their incredible, beautiful mechanism, making them the most skilful and exquisite tool, except perhaps the brain, which God ever devised.”

The hand is indeed one of the most complex parts of our bodies, perfectly engineered to perform its many tasks. “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!” Romans 11. 33.

WHAT HATH GOD WROUGHT

From the autobiography of Canon Richard Hobson,
Vicar of St. Nathaniel's, Liverpool



There was in the parish an unskilled labourer, a terrible fellow, upon whom my eye had long rested. He would, for a wager, eat three pounds of raw steak, or lift a hundredweight by his teeth. He drank heavily, swore shockingly, beat his wife brutally; in fact, he was about the vilest fellow in the district.

One day, when he was going home to dinner, I put myself in his way. As he passed, I said, in a genial tone, "How are you, my friend?" at which he frowned, and went on. We met again, on another occasion, when I hoped he would stop, but his look said, 'What have you to do with me?' I felt, notwithstanding, that the Lord had laid him on my heart, and that I must take him in prayer and faith to the One who alone could soften his heart and save his soul.

Shortly afterwards, hearing that he was very poorly, I set off at once to see him, and just as I reached his door he came out, with an emaciated infant in his arms. I said, "My friend, what a nurse you make," to which, with a glance at the little one, he replied, "Ah, my poor babby is dying, I fear." At that my heart leaped for joy, feeling sure that the victory was already won, in that I had got his ear. We were friends then and there!

It would take a long chapter to record all that passed between us afterwards. I shall content myself with stating that the death of the 'babby,' and then that of the wife, gave ample opportunity for putting before the poor fellow the way of life very simply, for he could neither read nor write. By grace, he came openly to the Lord's house, signed the pledge, and was the wonder of the place. In a few years his previously shattered constitution gave way, and he died, resting in Jesus. I buried him, as I had done his child and his wife. Glory be to God for this triumph of grace.

THE NEW SOUTH CHARD STRICT BAPTIST CHAPEL

The presence of Strict Baptists in South Chard, Somerset can be traced back to the 1830's. At that time the population of the village was less than 500 people. From a Gazetteer of the period we learn:

CHARD (South), a tything in Chard parish, Somerset; 2 miles S by E of Chard. It includes the hamlet of Chilson, and part of the hamlet of Perry-street; and has a post office under Chard. Population: 471.

The first baptising recorded in the church book took place at Ford Waters on the Lord's day morning, 3rd April 1836, when nine people were baptised by Mr. Money, the Pastor. After the death of Mr. Money, another Pastor was appointed, Mr. William Shepherd, who came from Exeter, and served for 29 years. He was succeeded by Mr. Thomas Dare, who laboured for 36 years until his death in 1929. During the earlier period of Mr. Dare's pastorate many were added to the church, but with the coming of Word War I the congregation began to decrease, with a number of friends moving away.

The old chapel at South Chard was quite an ancient building. From its name, St. Margaret's, it appears it was once connected with the Church of England, and was probably a chapel of ease in connection with Chard, going back to the 1600's. The walls of the chapel were very thick, one being three feet thick.

For a long time there was an exercise about building a new chapel. The Pastor, Mr. Dare, when going to the chapel for the morning service,



Mr. Thomas Dare

had the words come to his mind: "He cast out the heathen and planted them." Later he wrote: "We could not tell what was meant by the words, but from that time we were exercised about some property close by. Last year the owner of the property died, and all was sold." It seemed that the way was closed up, but the Lord went before the Pastor and deacons in speaking to the owner of another property close by. The owner was willing to sell land for the building of a new chapel, and the site was purchased for £60.

chapel, and the site was purchased for £60.

An account of the Foundation Stone-laying Service held on Friday, 9th April 1909 (a Good Friday) has come down to us from a local paper:

FOUNDATION STONE-LAYING AT SOUTH CHARD

On Friday, in the presence of a number of friends, the foundation stone-laying ceremony in connection with the new Strict Baptist Chapel, now being built, took place. The old chapel by reason of age has become unfit for use. The proceedings were commenced by a prayer meeting, held in the old chapel, presided over by the Pastor (Mr. T. Dare). The open-air ceremony commenced at three o'clock, by singing the well-known hymn, "God moves in a mysterious way," after which Pastor Raddon, pastor of Bethel Chapel, Bath, offered prayer.



The first stone was laid by the Pastor, in a cavity beneath which was deposited a bottle containing a few particulars relating to the cause and to the erection of the new chapel, also a copy of the Articles of Faith of the Gospel Standard Societies, a "*Gospel Standard*," and "*Friendly Companion*" for April. The stone being laid, a portion of Scripture was read by Mr. Dare from a new pulpit Bible, presented by Mr. D. Catt,

secretary of the Calvinistic Protestant Union, London, expressing a wish that it be used on this occasion, and not again until the chapel was completed and opened for worship. After a short address by the Pastor, and the singing of the hymn "Happy the church, thou sacred place," other stones were laid by the three deacons, Messrs. T. Bennett, P. Hayball and J. C. Parsons, and Mr. J. Bennett, representing the congregation, in the absence of Mr. J. Larcombe, unable to be present by reason of sickness. The hymn, "Glorious things of thee are spoken" was next sung, then short addresses were given by Pastor A. Raddon and Mr. D. Catt, closing this part of the service with the hymn, "All hail the power of Jesus' Name." About 130 sat down to tea arranged in the Chapel. The evening meeting commenced at 6.30 presided over by the Pastor, when addresses were given by Messrs. A. Raddon and D. Catt. With the collection on this day the building fund now reaches a little over £420.



The chapel immediately after completion with Pastor Thomas Dare in front.

The particulars enclosed in the bottle are as follows:

“This stone was laid by Mr. Thomas Dare, pastor of the Strict Baptist Church worshipping in the Old Chapel at the corner, called St. Margarets, and which had become by reason of age unfit for use, on Friday, April 9th, 1909, in the reign of King Edward VII, in the presence of a goodly number of friends, and a bright sunny sky. Pastor A. Raddon, Bath, and Mr. D. Catt, secretary of the Calvinistic Protestant Union, London, were present and took part in the proceedings. The builders are Messrs. Parsons Bros. and Dunster, all members of the Church. Architect, Mr. J. Madge, F.S.I., Chard. The site was purchased for £60, and the estimated cost of building between six and seven hundred pounds, towards which friends have contributed within the space of about two months over £400. The new chapel will be vested in trustees according to the articles of faith of the Gospel Standard Societies. With this is enclosed a copy of the articles, a Gospel Standard, and Friendly Companion for the current month.

Other Pastors have been Mr. Joseph Simm (1957-1966), followed by Mr. W. Arnold Priest (1967-1974). The present Pastor since 1976 is Mr. J. Clifford Woodhouse.

(We are extremely grateful for the information supplied by the church at South Chard.)

A FEW CURRENT MATTERS

Russia's anti-religious freedom laws

President Vladimir Putin last year signed into law new anti-terror legislation which includes many anti-Christian clauses. Any attempt to evangelize or share the Christian faith outside of registered church premises will meet with heavy fines. If a church member mentions his faith to a work colleague, both the church and the member could be punished. To invite a neighbour to attend a church service is outlawed. There are also restrictions on the extent to which churches can have

contact with foreigners. The main branch of the Russian Orthodox Christian Church is exempted from the legislation. Their Archbishop has commented: “As the Russian Federation has drifted back to its Soviet roots more and more over the past 25 years, it has increasingly sought to harass, persecute, and destroy any religious organization that it might consider competition to its own state church.”

Killings on Palm Sunday

Forty-three worshippers were killed and 100 wounded in terrorist attacks in Egypt when bombs went off in two Christian Coptic churches on Sunday, 9 April 2017. One of the bombings was inside St George’s Church in Tanta, the other outside St Mark’s Cathedral in Alexandria.

Super-cool liquid

Scientists have made a liquid from the chemical element rubidium which appears to defy the laws of physics. When pushed, the liquid, instead of moving away, accelerates towards the direction the force came from. The fluid is made by cooling the atoms to almost absolute zero (-273 degrees centigrade). The effect is known as negative mass. Prof. Michael Forbes of Washington State University explains: “With negative mass, if you push something, it accelerates towards you.”

World’s highest suspension bridge

Suspended at twice the height of London’s Shard, the world’s highest bridge has opened to traffic in south-western China. Known as the Beipan River Bridge, it cost £121 million to build. It is 16 feet higher than the previous record holder, the Si Di River Bridge, also in China. The country now has eight of the world’s ten highest bridges. William Gadsby mentions a *bridgeless river*: “There is a bridgeless river Which Adam’s race must pass” (Hymn 258 YPH).

More centenarians

In the past decade, the number of people in the UK aged 100 and over has risen by 65 per cent to 15,000. Of these, 850 are aged 105, double the number ten years ago. According to the Office of National Statistics, Worthing in West Sussex has the highest proportion of centenarians in the UK.

Opposition to the ordination of women

The incoming Bishop of Sheffield, the Rt. Revd. Philip North, has been severely attacked over his opposition to woman priests in the Church of England, so much so that he has decided not to take up the post. He has been criticised for supporting views described by the dean of Christ Church, Oxford as “rather fogeyish serialised sexism at odds with the thoroughly modern city of Sheffield.” How sad that the church continues to adapt to whatever views are current, rather than regarding the Scriptures that say, “Let your women keep silent in the churches.”

May God protect our youngsters

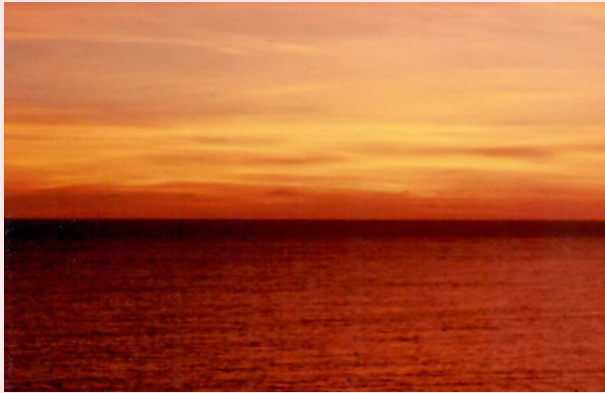
In April the National Union of Teachers voted for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) matters to be taught to children aged two to four. The previous month the Government had revealed that primary schools are likely to be legally required to teach about same-sex couples. Laura Perrins, co-editor of the Conservative Women website, said: “Parents send their children to nursery to be cared for - not to be confused by this transgender nonsense pushed by a minority of activists who care nothing for the needs of young children.”

Prayer answered - after 65 years

Pastor ‘K’ from south east Asia never owned his own Bible. Every time he tried to obtain one, it was confiscated by the authorities. “Five times I went across the border and bought a Bible, but two times the border police took my Bible away from me and burned it up. Three times the border police took my Bible and destroyed it by throwing it into the river.” After praying for 65 years he finally has his own Bible following a distribution by Barnabas. Pastor ‘K’ says: “I am still praying for hymnbooks. I started praying in 1985 for hymnbooks, but still not yet. After praying for 65 years, God answered my prayer for Bibles. So 31 years of praying for hymnbooks is still not a long time.” (*Information from Barnabas Fund.*)

THE SUNSET

There is no more glorious sight than a spectacular sunset. Sunlight is made of all the colours of the rainbow. Small particles of dust and pollution in the air cause a scattering of gas molecules that make up our atmosphere. At sunset the sun's rays travel through a long path of atmosphere, so these scattering processes are enhanced. More of the blue light is scattered away, leaving primarily reddish wavelengths by the time it reaches the observer on the earth.



“Red sky at night,
Shepherds’ delight.”

This often proves to be true, since a red sky at night generally means fair weather is heading towards you. The saying is most reliable when weather systems come from the west as is normally the case in mid-latitudes including the UK.

The power of the sun reaches to the outermost planets in the solar system. As proof of God’s mindfulness of our own planet, if Earth receives 1,400 watts of solar radiation per square metre, Mercury receives 14,400 watts (far too hot for life), and Pluto only 1.5 watts (far too cold). Earth is ‘just right’ to sustain life.

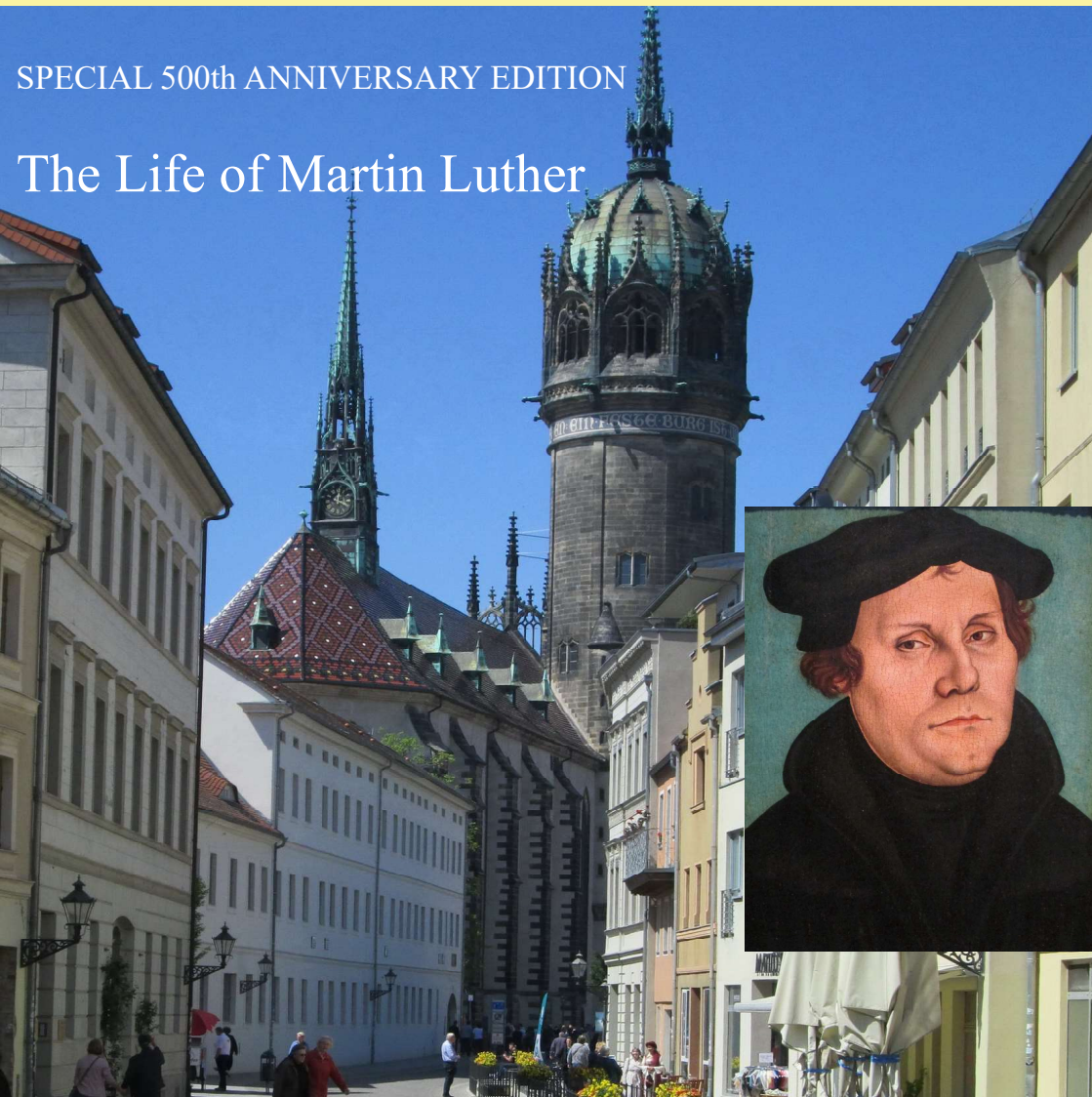
Children (and grown-ups too) often wonder whether one day the sun will burn out. Scientists (falsely) tell us that for over 4billion years the sun has been burning hydrogen into helium, and in due course the sun will run out of hydrogen, and is now already halfway through its stable life. They anticipate that eventually the sun will become a “red giant” causing the seas to boil and evaporate. However, the Bible-believing Christian need have no fears that the creating God cannot maintain His own creation until that day “in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burnt up” (2 Peter 3. 10).

PERCEPTION

A Quarterly Magazine for Young People

SPECIAL 500th ANNIVERSARY EDITION

The Life of Martin Luther



“The just shall live by his faith” (Habakkuk 2. 4).

“God is our refuge and strength” (Psalm 46. 1).

AUTUMN 2017

SPECIAL 500TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

THE LIFE OF MARTIN LUTHER

It was on 31st October 1517 that Martin Luther nailed to the doors of the Castle Church, Wittenberg his famous Ninety-five Theses.

This edition re-tells the story of his remarkable life.

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Cover picture: Castle Church, Lutherstadt Wittenberg, Germany.

PERCEPTION

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AUTUMN 2017

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EDITORIAL

We make no apology for devoting the whole of this edition to the life of Martin Luther. The 31st October 2017 marks the five-hundredth anniversary since he nailed his handwritten poster of ninety-five short sentences to the door of the Castle Church at Wittenberg - his famous Ninety-five Theses. Europe was set alight.

We are, perhaps, guilty of failing to appreciate the enormous debt we owe, under the hand of God, to the work and life of the Reformer. Gross darkness covered the countries of Europe, including our own beloved country England. Through the writings and preaching of Luther, gradually the darkness lifted and the light of the Gospel began to spread throughout Germany and the rest of Europe.

Bishop J. C. Ryle, writing 150 years ago, gave us this summary:

- 1 The Reformation delivered us from the most grovelling, childish and superstitious practices in religion.
- 2 The Reformation delivered us from the degrading tyranny and swindling impostures of the Romish priesthood.
- 3 The Reformation delivered us from the plague of unholiness and immorality among the clergy.
- 4 We owe to the Reformation an open road to the throne of grace and the great fountain of peace with God.
- 5 We owe to the Reformation a true idea of Christian worship.
- 6 We owe to the Reformation a true notion of the office of a Christian Minister.
- 7 We owe to the Reformation a right standard of Christian holiness.

Although we remember Luther, we do not forget the labours of men such as John Wycliffe (1320-1384), and the martyr John Huss (1371-1415), whose life story you can read in *Perception*, Autumn 2015.

MARTIN LUTHER AND THE GLORIOUS REFORMATION

I wonder if any of our readers are 33 years of age.

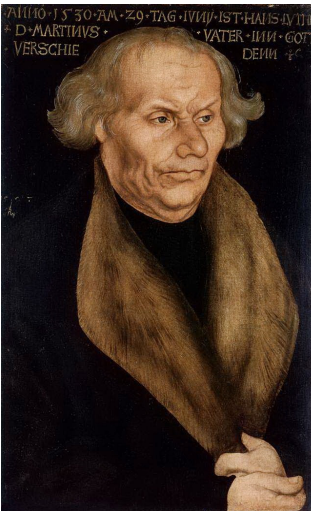
Well, that was the age of Martin Luther when he nailed to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg his Ninety-five Theses.

It set the whole of Europe alight. In a wonderful manner the light of God's truth broke in upon the people.

His birth (1483)

Almost 534 years ago, on the eve of the Feast of St. Martin, 10th November 1483, in the little village of Eisleben in Germany, a baby boy was born. That baby was Martin Luther.

The next day he was christened in the Roman Catholic Church and was named Martin in honour of the saint.



Luther's parents

John Lotter, Martin's father, was a miner. The name of his wife was Margaret. They were a God-fearing couple. It was Martin himself who changed his name to Luther.

When Martin was six months old, his father moved to Mansfeldt, a town noted for its iron mines - and also accounted a very

holy place with its monasteries and nunneries. Here his father struggled for a time with extreme poverty, but at length he became the owner of two furnaces, where copper and silver were smelted, and he was able to support his family with more comfort.

Luther said, “I am a peasant’s son, and my father, grandfather, and great grandfather were all common peasants. They were very poor. My father was a mine-digger, and my mother often carried wood upon her back, that she might earn something wherewith to bring us children up.”

Schooling

He was sent at an early age to school. His father often invited clergymen, schoolmasters, and other learned men to his house, so that the young Martin might benefit from their conversation. At school, he learned the Ten Commandments, the Apostles’ Creed, the Lord’s prayer, Latin grammar, and church music.

Luther’s schoolmasters were very severe. He tells us that once he was whipped fifteen times in one day. The pupils spent a great part of every day in the church, praying to the virgin Mary and the saints, but of true religion they knew little or nothing.

When Luther was about 14 years of age, his father sent him to the Latin School of the Franciscan monks at Magdeburg. In this magnificent city, with its cathedral, and the beautiful palace of the Archbishop (who engaged twelve trumpeters to play for him at dinner), Martin had a hard time. He was often obliged with his companions to go out into the streets to beg for bread. He tells us: “One day, about Christmas time, we were all going through the neighbouring villages, from house to house, singing in concert the usual hymns on the infant Jesus at Bethlehem. We stopped in front of a peasant’s house which stood at a little distance from the rest, at the end of the village. The peasant hearing us sing, came out with some food, which he meant to give us, and asked in a rough, loud voice, ‘Where are you, boys?’ Terrified, we ran away as fast as we could. But the peasant had a kind heart, and continued to call after us, and we forgot our fears, ran to him, and received the food he had offered to us.”

After remaining a year in Magdeburg, Martin was sent to Eisenach, to its celebrated school. Here, as in Magdeburg, Martin was accustomed to go out and sing in the streets for a morsel of bread. Often, instead of bread, the poor boy received nothing but harsh words and unkind looks.

Taken into the Cotta family

One day, after he and his young companions had been singing in front of three different houses and had received nothing, they passed on to Conrad and Ursula Cotta’s house in St. George Street. As they were

standing before the house, feeling very sad, Madam Cotta came to the door, spoke kindly to them, and invited them in. She had seen the young Martin at church, and his earnest manner and sweet voice had made her love him. She afterwards invited Martin to make her house his home, and strove to do all in her power to make him happy. It was while in her house that Martin learnt to play the lute and the flute.

Martin spent two or three years in Madam Cotta's family, and they were among the happiest years of his life. When Martin had become a noted professor at Wittenberg, he did not forget the debt of gratitude which he owed to Conrad and Ursula Cotta, and wishing to repay their kindness to him, he received into his family their son, Henry Cotta.

In after years he said, "Do not despise the boys who try to earn their bread by chanting before your door. I have often done the same."

University years (1501-1503)

Martin was now 18 years old. He longed to continue his education. His father sent him to the celebrated University at Erfurt, with between a thousand and thirteen hundred students. The students looked down on other universities as 'mere academies.' What a different life Luther led at Erfurt from that at Eisenach. His father was now able to support him comfortably, so he gave himself up entirely to his studies. A friend related: "The whole university admired his genius. He often pressed his teachers with inquiries and was soon well ahead of all his schoolfellows." Martin was beloved by all. His cheerfulness endeared him both to professors and students.

In April 1503, with others he decided to walk to Mansfeldt to visit his parents. They had not gone far when by some accident he ran his sword into his foot, cutting into a main artery. A friend ran back to Erfurt for a doctor, but he had great difficulty in closing the wound. They carried him back to Erfurt. In the middle of the night the wound burst open again with profuse bleeding. He, and those sitting with him thought death was close at hand. Prayers were made to the virgin Mary. The doctor successfully closed the wound, and the flow of blood was stanchd. His life was spared.

Four months later, in August, he was dangerously ill, and the professors and students were in great anxiety. But an aged priest came to him, and said, "Be of good comfort, my brother, you will not die at this time; God will yet make a great man of you, who shall comfort

many others. Whom God loveth and proposes to make a blessing, upon him He early layeth the cross.” Martin recovered.

He discovers the Bible (1503)

One day, now about 20 years of age, as Martin was looking over the books in the library of the University, he found one which he had never seen before. It was an old-looking book, with heavy clasps. On the title page were the words *Biblia Sacra* - Holy Bible. It was a copy of the Latin Vulgate Bible, translated by Jerome in the 5th century.

He turned over the leaves eagerly until he came to the place where it tells of Hannah and God calling the young Samuel. Luther said, “I had no notion that there existed any other gospels or epistles than those read in the services.” How he longed for such a book, and how he wished to continue reading it. But the bell rang for his lecture, and he was forced to go. Now, day after day, whenever he could spare time from his studies, he was in the library poring over the leaves of the old Bible. Little did Luther know that in that book lay the power which was to rouse the world from its slumber, and cause the pope to tremble on his throne at Rome.

His discovery of the *Biblia Sacra* was in the year 1503, the year in which he took his first degree, his B.A.

In the year 1505 Martin took his second degree, that of Magister (today’s equivalent of a Master’s degree). He now began the study of the law in accordance with the wishes of his father. With his undoubted talents there were brilliant prospects before him. But Luther was not happy. He felt that he was a sinner. He wanted to become holy, to lead a life consecrated to God. He even had thoughts of entering a monastery. About this time, a dear intimate friend of his (called Alexius) was one morning found cruelly murdered. This affected Luther very deeply. He asked himself, “What would become of me, if I should be called away thus suddenly?”

Enters the monastery at Erfurt (1505)

Shortly after this he paid a summer visit to his parents at Mansfeldt. As he was returning to Erfurt, a violent thunderstorm overtook him. Lightning struck the ground very near to him. Luther, completely terrified, fell on his knees. To him, it was the voice of an angry God. He cried out: “Help me, St. Anna, and I will straightway become a monk.” He believed only in this way could his life be pleasing to God.

He gave three days' notice to several friends to meet in his rooms. There he told them of his resolve to become a monk. They tried hard to dissuade him, but his mind was fixed. That night, 17 August 1505, he entered the monastery of the Augustinian Hermits at Erfurt. He took none of his books with him apart from two Latin poets. The rest he gave away. His friends were seized with consternation. What a shame, they said, that a man of Luther's talent should bury himself in a cloister! For two days they besieged the doors of the monastery in hopes that he would change his mind. It was in vain. The porter was firm - no one was allowed to see him for a month. He wrote to his parents informing them of the step he had taken. His father was very much displeased, and wrote him an angry letter.



Luther begging in the streets of Erfurt

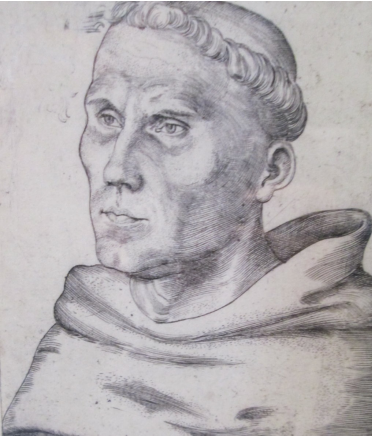
In the monastery, Martin was made to perform the most menial offices such as opening and shutting the gates, winding the clock, sweeping the church, and cleaning the rooms. When all this was done, he was obliged to take the bag and go about the town, begging from door to door. He made no complaint - after all, he had become a monk in order to mortify the flesh.

Some of the members of the University begged the Prior of the monastery to release Luther from these duties, and to allow him time to study. So it was that Martin began to study the ancient fathers, especially St.

Augustine. In the cloister at Erfurt there was a Latin Bible chained to a pillar, the same *Biblia Sacra* he had found at the university. Martin turned to it with unwearied delight.

But he had not yet found that peace of mind which he so earnestly

sought. He fasted, he watched, he prayed. All was in vain. The monks could not understand him. Their dull round of monkish ceremonies served to quiet their consciences - but not his.



*Luther's earliest known portrait,
thin and gaunt*

At one time, feeling very sad on account of his sins, he shut himself up in his cell, where he remained four days without eating or drinking. One of his friends became uneasy about him, burst open the door, and found him lying unconscious on the stone floor of his cell, worn out with fasting, lack of sleep, and sadness of heart. Nothing could arouse him, until the young choristers began to sing a hymn. The sound of their voices acted like a charm upon the poor monk, and by degrees he recovered. He was

worn down almost to a shadow. He was pale and thin, and his eyes were sunken.

Afterwards he wrote: "Verily I was a devout monk, and followed the rules of my order so strictly. If ever a monk entered heaven by his monkish merits, certainly I should have obtained an entrance there."

A visit from Dr. Staupitz (1505)

When Dr. John Staupitz, the vicar-general of the Augustinian order, visited the monastery his attention was directed to the young brother, so sad and dejected. He talked kindly to him, and knowing himself something of the love and mercy of Jesus, tried to comfort him.

When Martin told Staupitz of his struggles with sin, of his desire for holiness, and of his fears of God as a just and holy Being, Staupitz said, "Why do you distress yourself with these thoughts? Look to the wounds of Christ, to the blood which He has shed for you." And again, "Trust in Christ, in the righteousness of His life."

When Staupitz left the monastery, he gave Martin a Bible. "Let the study of the Scriptures be your favourite occupation," he said. This, with the



John Staupitz

works of St. Augustine, was now Martin's whole study. He liked especially Augustine on the Psalms.

Takes his vows (1506)

His novitiate (probationary period) having ended, his novice dress was laid aside, and his monk's gown put on. He took his vows in Latin: "I, Brother Martin, do make profession and promise obedience unto Almighty God, unto Mary, ever virgin, and unto thee, my brother, prior of this cloister of the order of the Eremites of St. Augustine, the bishop and his regular successors, to live in poverty and chastity after the rule of the said St. Augustine until death."

The monks then burst forth with the hymn, *Veni Sancte Spiritus*, (Come Holy Spirit).

Consecrated a priest (1507)

Martin had now been a monk for almost two years. As the time drew near when he was to be consecrated a priest, he wrote to his father, who had now become reconciled to him, asking him to set the date. His father did so, naming 2nd May 1507 (a Sunday). This was the day Martin would celebrate his first mass.

The consecration was carried out by Bishop Jerome of Brandenburg. On the occasion of the ceremony, his father brought his son a present of twenty florins. He dined at the monastery with Martin and his friends. The conversation turned upon Martin's entering the monastery. The monks spoke of it as a very meritorious act. But John Luther, turning to them, said, "Have you never read in Scripture that it is a duty to obey your parents?" A look of sharp pain came over Martin's face. These words made a deep impression on his mind, and he remembered them long after.

Moves to Wittenberg (1508)

Along a scenic stretch of the River Elbe lies the neat little town of Wittenberg. Frederick the Wise, Elector of Saxony, who lived there in his castle, had founded a university in the town. He was determined it should be the best university in the world - exceeding even that of Paris. Frederick was seeking to fill his chairs with the best scholarship he could find. Staupitz recommended Martin Luther, and in 1508 he was appointed teacher of theology. Luther moved into the black monastery - black as the monks all wore black habits rather than brown.

So inextricably is the town associated with Luther that in 1922 it re-named itself LUTHERSTADT WITTENBERG.

Soon after his appointment, he delivered a course of lectures on the Psalms and the Epistle to the Romans. He expounded them in a very different manner from what had ever been heard before. Great crowds were attracted to the university by the eloquence of his teaching. Even professors came to his lectures. One of them said: “This monk will put all the doctors to shame. He will bring in a new doctrine, and reform the whole church, for he builds on the word of Christ.”

John Staupitz encouraged Martin to commence public preaching. He made many excuses, but at last submitted to the wishes of his friend. He delivered his first sermon in the little chapel of the monastery.



Town Square, Wittenberg. Near Luther's memorial stood the rickety church.

Martin's fame as a preacher spread far and wide throughout Germany. Even the elector, Frederick the Wise, came to hear him. In the town square of Wittenberg was a rickety old wooden church, thirty feet long and twenty feet wide, so precarious it needed to be propped up on all sides. It was sarcastically called 'the shed.' From the ancient wooden pulpit made of planks three feet high Luther broke the silence of centuries with the gospel. One of his hearers said: “This chapel might be compared to the stable in which Christ was born at Bethlehem. In this miserable building it was the will of God that His gospel should be preached. Not one among the

cathedrals or grand churches did he choose.”

Soon the church was overcrowded, dangerously so, till the timbers of the ancient building creaked. The town council invited him to become their preacher and make use instead of the town parish church.

Luther once gave this advice to a preacher: “When you preach, regard not the doctors and learned men, but regard the common people, to teach and instruct them clearly.” He had a clear voice, and an expressive countenance.

Sent to Rome (1510)

In the year 1510 Martin was sent to Rome. A conflict had broken out between the seven monasteries of the German Augustines and their Vicar-General. It was agreed to submit the matter to the pope. Luther with his wisdom was felt to be the right person to settle the dispute. How his heart beat high with excitement as he thought: “Now I shall see Rome, the Eternal City, where lived and died those famous men of whom I have heard and read so much; where St. Paul wrote and laboured, and suffered a martyr’s death; where so many others have shed their life’s blood as a testimony for Jesus. Rome, the queen of all cities, and the seat of the pope, God’s vicar upon earth.”

His journey took him across the Alps, and the fertile plains of Lombardy. The luxury of the Benedictine monasteries in which he lodged on his journey shocked him. When he saw the splendid apartments, the rich dresses, marble, silk, and every form of luxury he hardly knew what to say. Even on a Friday, a fast day with Roman Catholics, the table was covered with all kinds of meat and fruit. He boldly said: “The church and the pope forbid such things.” The anger of the monks was unbounded. He was secretly told to leave, as there was a threat to poison him.

When Martin arrived in sight of the hills on which Rome is built, he could restrain himself no longer, but fell on his knees, saying: “Hail, holy Rome!” Martin imagined he was going to a city of holiness and purity. How sadly he was deceived. Julius II, one of the worst popes that ever lived, then filled the see of Rome. The city itself was the very sink of corruption and iniquity.

Luther was distressed at the hurried way in which the priests celebrated mass. Once Luther conducted a mass, when he found priests at an adjoining altar had repeated seven masses before he had finished one. When he was halfway through, the priests became impatient.

“Make haste, make haste: send back her Son to our lady quickly,” they called out. “Have done with it quickly.”



Ascending the Holy Staircase

The pope had promised an indulgence to all who would go up the *Scala Sancta* (Holy Staircase) upon their hands and knees - fifteen years indulgence from purgatory. Martin believed, like everyone, that the marble staircase had been brought by angels from Pilate's house in Jerusalem to Rome. They were the steps which Christ descended from the hall of judgment. (The steps lead today to the pope's private chapel.) One day, as he was slowly climbing up the stairs on his hands and knees, he had got half way when suddenly he seemed to hear a voice thundering in his ears, “The just shall live by faith.” Luther started to his feet in amazement - this was the third time these words had powerfully come to him. Ashamed, he stood erect, turned, and walked slowly down again. He rushed from this place of humiliation.

Luther was beginning to have a clearer knowledge of the truth, but remained still firmly attached to the Roman Catholic church. His stay in Rome lasted only two weeks, but in that short time he had learned lessons he would remember all his life. He had witnessed the corruptions of popery. It was another step in preparation for his life's work. He declared, in later years, that he would not have missed his visit to Rome for “an hundred thousand florins.”

Doctor of Divinity (1512 - 1517)

In the year 1512, on 19th October, Friar Martin was made a Doctor of Divinity at the Wittenberg University. At first, Luther declined the honour of this degree feeling he was too young. Eventually he consented, and the elector, Frederick the Wise, generously agreed to pay all the expenses. The great bell of the city church was rung, and the university authorities marched in procession through the streets. Martin pronounced the oath: “I swear truly to defend the faith contained in the Holy Scriptures.” (Wittenberg was one of the two German universities



"The great bell of the city church was rung"

required to swear this oath.) He solemnly promised to study and proclaim the word of God all his life. After this, he was invested with the doctor's robes, hat and ring presented to him by the elector. His annual professor's salary was to be 100 gulden, but later this was increased to 400 gulden.

In July 1517 Martin preached in Dresden, before Duke George of Saxony. The Duke was highly displeased at the plain manner in which Luther explained the gospel, and he was never allowed to preach there again during the Duke's lifetime. In many ways he was a good Duke, but Luther's reformation was the grief of his life. However, the sermon he preached was blessed to the soul of a lady of high rank, who, a month afterwards, died trusting in Jesus alone.

John Tetzel - seller of indulgencies (1517)

We come to the time when Martin made his first public attack on the church of Rome. The Roman Catholic church taught that forgiveness of sins could be obtained by the payment of money. When this money was paid, a certificate, called an indulgence, was given to the buyer. These indulgences could not only be obtained for sins that had been committed, but also for sins which a person *intended* to commit. The church had published a book, in which was set down the price to be paid for the forgiveness of various kinds of sin. Murder cost eight ducats; church robbery nine.

Added to this was the people's great fear of purgatory. The church taught that scarcely anyone was good enough to go straight to heaven. Before you merited heaven, it was necessary to go to a place called purgatory - a place with no mention at all in the Bible. It was a dreadful place, with much suffering, and only when you had been there a long time would you be good enough to go to heaven. However, if you were able to buy an indulgence, this would shorten your time in purgatory.

The pope, Leo X, was engaged in renovating and rebuilding St. Peter's church in Rome. But he had a problem - the cost was proving immense. The papal treasury was much exhausted, and the pope had excessive personal debts. How could more money be raised? The solution was to open a special sale of indulgences in all the countries of Europe. The licence to sell was granted to the highest bidder, and the price paid in advance to the pope. In Germany the licence was granted to Albert, the Archbishop of Mainz.



Pope Leo X

The Archbishop sought out a suitable person to peddle indulgences throughout Germany. He found a man just suited to his purpose. This was a bold and impudent Dominican monk - a rogue named John Tetzel, the son of a goldsmith in Leipzig. It was of no importance that this man

had been convicted of a shameful crime at Innsbruck, and sentenced by the Emperor Maximilian to be put in a sack and drowned in the River Inn, and was reprieved only by powerful intercession.



The rogue, Friar Tetzel

Friar Tetzel went about from place to place with great display. He had a splendid carriage and horses, and a number of servants attended him wherever he went. His arrival at any place caused a great stir. It was announced that "The Grace of God and of the Holy Fathers is at your gate." The procession advanced amid the beating of drums, the waving of flags, and the pealing of bells.

Tetzel carried about with him a great red cross, ornamented with the arms of the pope. After the cross was set up, he would commence his preaching. He had the voice of a

town crier, and the eloquence of a trickster. Great crowds of people gathered round to listen.

“Come,” he would say, “buy, buy. Now is the day of salvation; now is the accepted time. This

cross,” pointing to it, “has more efficacy than the cross of Christ.” Again he said: “Indulgences are the most precious and noble of God’s gifts. Come, and I will give you letters all properly sealed, by which even the sins you



Tetzel’s money chest

intend to commit may be pardoned. But more than this,

indulgences save not the living only, but also the dead. Do you not hear your parents who are dead, cry from the bottom of the abyss, ‘We are suffering dreadful torments? A trifling payment would deliver us; you can give it, and you will not.’ But the very moment the money rattles at the bottom of the chest, the soul escapes from purgatory and flies free to heaven. How can you neglect so great salvation? If you have but one coat, you ought to strip it off and sell it in order to obtain this grace.”

One day, a poor miner ventured to ask, “Is it true that we can, by throwing a penny into the chest, ransom a soul from purgatory?” “Indeed, it is so,” replied the indulgence-monger. “Ah, then,” replied the miner, “what a merciless man the pope must be, since for want of a wretched penny he leaves a soul crying in the flames so long.”

Tetzel’s excesses knew no bounds. Once he said, “Were a man to take the virginity of the Virgin Mary herself, an indulgence of forgiveness could be given him.” Elector Frederick was revolted by this trade and had forbidden Tetzel to enter Wittenberg. When Luther first heard of him, he said, “By the help of God, I will make a hole in his drum.”

Luther refused to admit to the Holy Sacrament any who relied on this indulgence without evidence of confession and repentance. An indulgence certificate said (amongst other things): “I absolve thee from all the excesses, sins and crimes which thou hast committed, however great they may be. I remit for thee the pains thou mightest have endured

in purgatory. I restore thee to participation in the sacraments. I re-establish thee in the innocence and purity in which thou wast at the time of thy baptism. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen. I, Brother John Tetzel, Commissioner, has signed it with his own hand.” A space was left for the price paid to be written in.

Luther’s 95 Theses (1517)

At Wittenberg, the elector, Frederick the Wise, had recently built a church, known as the *Schlosskirche* - the Castle Church. The previous year he had sent John Staupitz to the Low Countries to add to his already huge collection of relics pertaining to saints and various other articles. Amongst his vast collection was a straw from the manger at Bethlehem, a feather from the angel Gabriel’s wing, the body of one of the babies killed by King Herod, some of the wise men’s myrrh, a thorn from the crown of thorns, and even a link from Peter’s prison chain. Records show that in all he had 19,013 relics! He stored them in the church and exhibited them once a year. To visit the relics earned the visitor a substantial indulgence. Large



The Castle Church

crowds were expected to be in Wittenberg to view the relics the following day, All Saints Day, 1st November.

Martin decided the time had come publicly to attack the sale of these indulgences. On Wednesday, 31 October 1517, the eve of All Saints Day, he nailed up his *Ninety-five Theses* (propositions or short sentences) against the abuse of indulgences on to the door of the Castle



Luther nails up his Ninety-five Theses

Church. On the same day he sent a handwritten copy to Archbishop Albert at Mainz and to the Bishop of Brandenburg. The printing presses were busy. In less than a month these theses had been translated into nearly all the principal languages of Europe, and had been carried as far as Jerusalem. Even the pope himself read them in the Vatican, but issued a rebuttal in the form of a papal bull entitled *Exsurge Domine* (Let God Arise). All Europe seemed to be in commotion.

What did the theses say? Here is one of them: “XXI. The sellers of indulgences are in error when they say that by the Papal indulgence a man is delivered from every punishment and is saved.”

Another, number 86 posed a difficult question: “LXXXVI. Why does the pope, whose wealth today is greater than the wealth of the richest Crassus, build the basilica of St. Peter with the money of poor believers rather than with his own money?”

“I began this affair with much trembling,” said Luther. His enemies raged. Tetzel was furious - he bellowed with rage - and publicly burned Luther’s theses near the city of Frankfurt. From his pulpit he denounced

Luther as “a most damnable heretic.” He raked together what little theology he knew, and attempted a reply to the doctor of Wittenberg in a set of his own theses. In return, the students at Wittenberg made a bonfire of eight hundred copies, holding in derision the literary and theological attainments of the indulgence-monger.

The original door has long since gone - destroyed in the Seven Years' War. It has been replaced by a bronze door, on which Luther's theses are inscribed in Latin. There is *always* a crowd round the door.



The replacement door

Summons to appear at Rome (1518)

In the spring of 1518, Luther attended a public disputation at Heidelberg, where he discussed and defended the various points he had made. Many monks were impressed with the strength of his arguments.

The pope realised the danger of all that was happening. In August of the same year Luther received a summons to appear at Rome. He said: “I saw the thunderbolt descend upon me.” The elector and the members of the University did not want him to go to Rome. So strong was their opposition that at last the pope consented that Luther's cause should be tried in Germany. It was agreed that Luther, together with the pope's legate, should meet at Augsburg. If he still continued obstinate, then he, and all who followed him, were to be declared heretics and outlaws, and were to be accursed. Nevertheless, even before he reached Augsburg, Martin had already been condemned at Rome as a heretic.

Dangers thick and fast now gathered round the reformer's head. His friends continued to dissuade him from going to Augsburg, fearing that some snare might be laid to take his life. But Martin saw clearly where his duty lay.

Luther set out from Wittenberg one morning at daybreak, and pursued his journey alone until he reached the city of Nuremberg. Here

were several of his friends. After rest, two of these friends accompanied him as he continued his journey to Augsburg. When yet some distance from the city, Luther was seized with a violent illness, which weakened him so much that he was unable to walk any farther. His friends then procured a carriage for the rest of the journey.

Augsburg (1518)

They arrived at Augsburg on 7th October. There Cardinal Cajetan's representative endeavoured to persuade Luther to recant; that is, to take



Cardinal Cajetan

back all that he had said concerning faith. "Remember," said he, "that you are to appear before a prince of the church. I myself will conduct you to the Cardinal. But first let me tell you how you must appear before him. When you enter the room where he is sitting, you must prostrate yourself with your face to the ground. When he tells you to rise, you must kneel before him, and you must not stand erect till he orders you to do so."

Martin refused to appear before the Cardinal without a safe-conduct. Very reluctantly Emperor Maximilian granted it.

When he entered the room where Cardinal Cajetan was waiting, he prostrated himself humbly upon the ground at the cardinal's feet; nor did he rise till the cardinal had three times bidden him to do so.

The room was filled with courtiers and attendants of the Cardinal, who looked on with eager eyes, curious to see how the poor monk would conduct himself before the pope's representative.

Two of his theses were brought forward as proof of his heresy. He was told he must withdraw all he had said concerning faith and indulgences, and promise to teach no more such doctrine. But Luther desired again and again to be showed where he had erred, and if convinced of his error from holy Scripture, he was willing to retract.

The cardinal referred to the decrees of the pope. Luther appealed to the Scriptures. The cardinal silenced him, telling him the pope was above all.

The interview closed without anything definite being done on either

side. The cardinal gave Luther time to reconsider.

Twice again did Luther go to the cardinal but with no better result than before. His offer to submit his defence to the judgment of the universities of Basle and Paris was firmly rejected by the cardinal.

Luther's friends advised him to leave the city as they knew he was in danger. His friend John Staupitz, who had been at Augsburg, had left a horse for him. Accompanied by a guide, Luther left Augsburg on the night of 20th October. When he was barely out of the city, he praised God aloud in the words of Psalm 124: "Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers: the snare is broken, and we are escaped."

Should he remain at Wittenberg? (1518)

Luther arrived once more in Wittenberg, almost to the day one year after he had posted up his Theses, safe and in good health. There came no crowd of pilgrims this year to view the relics - Luther's blow had brought to an end the trade of Rome in these parts. In the meantime, his enemies were greatly enraged when they found that he had escaped them. Cardinal Cajetan wrote an angry letter to Elector Frederick, complaining of Luther, and commanding the elector to send him to Rome, or at least to banish him from his dominions. "Shame," said Luther, "that these people should set so high a price upon me. They would give many crowns to have me in their power, while our Saviour Christ was sold for thirty pieces of silver."

Luther was uncertain whether he should remain at Wittenberg or not. At first the elector advised him to leave, but then changed his mind. But his friend Philip Melanchthon, recently graduated from the University of Heidelberg, had been appointed Professor of the Chair of Greek at Wittenberg. It was a friendship which ended only in death, and a good reason for Luther to remain at Wittenberg. Melanchthon at this time was about 20 years of age. (Melanchthon was not his real name - he was born Schwartzertdt,



*Philip Melanchthon in 1526
aged 29, his youngest portrait*

which means ‘black earth.’ It was his students who translated this into Greek, and the name stuck.) He was short (under five feet), unimpressive in appearance, giving the impression of a young boy. Although he was so young, he was one of the most able Greek scholars of his time. Melanchthon was gentle, Luther was impetuous. Melanchthon moderated Luther. “I,” said Luther, “was born for struggling on the field of battle. But Philip goes forward quietly and gently.” God had made them necessary to each other.

About this time, in January 1519, Maximilian, Emperor of Germany, died. A new emperor, Charles V, was elected in June, although not crowned until October 1520. Now the pope was so much taken up with his own interests that he did not pay much attention to Luther. Luther continued to be busily engaged studying the Scriptures.

Dr. Eck seeks to have him excommunicated (1519-20)

In June 1519, one Dr. Johann Eck, chancellor of the German University at Ingolstadt, published thirteen theses attacking Luther’s teaching. He offered an open challenge to a public debate at Leipzig. Luther accepted the challenge. The debate took place in Pleissenberg Castle, lasted ten days, and dealt with such matters as free will, grace, purgatory, and indulgences. Dr. Eck, a skilful debater, was confident he could crush Luther by the weight of the pope’s authority. Luther quietly replied, “The pope is but a man, and may err.” Clerks recorded everything said. The university hall was full of spectators.

Early in 1520 Dr. Eck went to Rome seeking to have Luther excommunicated. His mission was successful. The pope issued a Bull of Excommunication against him - a bull being an official document issued by the pope and bearing his seal (his *bull*). Triumphantly, Dr. Eck carried the bull back to Wittenburg and personally delivered it into Luther’s hand.

Luther burns the Papal Bull (1520)

Early in the morning of Friday, 10th December 1520 the town of Wittenberg was astir. Many of the people knew that something important was going to happen that day. As they went out into the street, a procession of town dignitaries, with professors and students of the university, and Luther at their head, could be seen wending their way towards to the East Gate of the town.



As they neared the gate, it was seen that a bonfire had been prepared.

A professor of the university drew near and set fire to it. As the flames soared, the same professor cast into the fire a bundle of Decretals of the pope, (letters of his decisions concerning ecclesiastical law), and the false Epistles of St. Clement, books by Dr. Johann Eck and other forgeries. Luther then stepped forward and solemnly laid in the flames the pope's Bull of Excommunication against himself, saying, "Because thou hast troubled the holy One of God, let eternal fire

trouble thee." Later he wrote: "The papal arsonists will notice that it does not take too much effort to burn books they are unable to refute."

Luther had now cut the last tie which held him to the church of Rome. He had publicly defied the pope and the church. On the spot where Luther burnt the papal bull, an oak tree was planted, a living monument of the reformer's fearlessness in the cause of truth. Visitors to Wittenberg always visit 'Luther's Oak.'

The Imperial Diet of Worms (1521)

Early in January 1521, Charles V, the newly-elected Emperor of Germany, a pale-faced, melancholy looking man of twenty, called his first Imperial Diet (a Parliament) of all the princes and lords of Germany, to consider matters of church and state. The meetings of the Diet were



Emperor Charles V

generally held at Nuremberg, but owing to the plague raging there at this time, the Diet was instead held at Worms, a splendid and ancient city on the West Bank of the Rhine.

Luther was called to appear before the Diet. The emperor himself affixed his name to the summons. He also sent a ‘passage of safe conduct’ by the herald who was to accompany Luther to Worms. On the Tuesday of the week before Easter, 26th March 1521, the herald arrived in Wittenberg.

At length, Luther set out on his journey towards Worms. He travelled in a wagon provided by the magistrates of Wittenberg, furnished with an awning to protect him from sun and rain. At nearly every town he came to, the people came out to meet him in great numbers to see the man whose name was on everyone’s lips.

Many attempted to discourage him on his journey. “There are plenty of cardinals and bishops at Worms. You will be burned alive, and your body reduced to ashes, as was done with John Huss.” But Luther replied, “Though they should kindle a fire whose flames should reach from Worms to Wittenberg, and rise up to heaven, I would go through it, in the name of the Lord, and stand before them.”



Georg Spalatin

As they approached Worms, a messenger arrived from his faithful friend Georg Spalatin, the emperor’s chaplain, begging Luther not to enter the city. Luther turned to the messenger, and said, “Go, tell your master that though there were as many devils at Worms as there are tiles on the roofs of the houses, yet I would enter it.”

Early on the morning of 16th April, he came in sight of the ancient towers of Worms. Rising up in his carriage, he began to sing a hymn of his own composition: *Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott* - A mighty fortress is our God. The words and music he had composed two days before while at Oppenheim. How often had he said to Melanchthon: “Come, Philip, let us sing the forty-sixth Psalm!”

The sentinel on look-out in the cathedral tower, seeing the approach of the cavalcade, sounded his trumpet. When they entered the city, the citizens left their dinner (it was mid-day) and crowds awaited Luther.

More than two thousand people were in the streets - a greater number than witnessed the public entry of the emperor himself. Most were sympathetic. Others crossed themselves as they looked at him, as though he had been the devil. As Luther alighted at the door of his hotel, called the Knights of Rhodes, he said, "God will be my defence." Conveniently, the hotel adjoined the hall of the Diet.

Appears before the Diet (1521)

Early the next morning, Wednesday, 17th April, Luther received notice from the Marshal of the Empire to be in readiness to appear before the Diet at 4 o'clock. He spent the rest of the day in prayer. As they reached the hall of assembly, the crowd was so dense that the soldiers were unable to force a passage through. They entered a private dwelling, and through the back garden brought him to the hall.

As Luther was about to enter the hall an aged knight stepped up to him. Laying his hand upon Luther's shoulder, he said, "My poor monk, my poor monk, if thy cause be just, and thou art sure of it, go forward in God's name, and fear nothing."



The doors of the hall were opened, and the son of a peasant miner stood in the presence of that vast and grand assembly. There was Emperor Charles in Spanish dress and ostrich-plume, his brother the Archduke Ferdinand, six electors of the empire, twenty-four dukes, eight margraves (marquis), thirty archbishops, seven ambassadors, the deputies of ten cities, princes, counts and barons, and the pope's nuncios

(ambassadors) - in all more than two hundred illustrious persons, all arrayed in their richly ornamented robes and insignia of office. For a moment Luther was over-awed and bewildered. Seeing him affected, some of the princes spoke kindly to him.

Luther was asked by Dr. Johann Eck (not to be confused with the Dr. Eck with whom he disputed at Leipzig - this one was the assistant to the Archbishop of the diocese of Trier) who asked, in a sonorous voice, "Do you acknowledge these books," pointing with his finger, "to have been written by you? Secondly, are you prepared to retract and disavow the opinions you have advanced in them?" The titles of the twenty books were read to him. Luther replied that if they had not in any way been defaced or altered, they were his.

On being asked if he would retract the opinions expressed in his books, he replied: "As this is a question which has reference to the salvation of souls, I should act rashly if I were to answer without reflection. Therefore I most humbly beg of your Imperial Majesty to allow me time, that I may answer without offending against the word of God." The Diet allowed him one day. He was to appear the next day at the same time.

"Ah," said his enemies, "he has begged for time. He is going to recant. His courage now forsakes him."

But a few minutes after his return from the Diet, he wrote, "By the help of Jesus Christ, I will not retract a single letter of my writings."

His second appearance before the Diet (1521)

On the following day, he felt a great darkness descend upon his soul. He felt unequal to the task. Later, he felt a calmness of spirit, and a deep peace. At the time appointed, the herald again came to conduct Luther to the place of assembly. He was obliged to wait two hours before he was admitted.

It was now 6 o'clock in the evening. The hall was filled to overflowing. The question was put to Luther: "Will you, or will you not, recant?"

Luther spoke modestly and respectfully, yet firmly. If he was in error, he was willing to be convinced from the writings of the prophets and apostles. Until then, he could not retract.

Luther was well-nigh exhausted. He had spoken for two hours but was now requested to repeat everything in Latin, as the emperor was not

fluent in German. All present were astonished at his reply. Even the emperor said, "The monk spake with unshaken courage."

Luther was now asked to give a direct answer to the question, without argument - would he retract his writings or not?

To this Luther replied: "Since your Imperial Majesty and the princes require a simple answer, I will give it thus: unless I shall be convinced by proofs from Scripture, or by evident reason - for I believe neither in popes nor in councils, since they have frequently erred and contradicted themselves - I cannot but adhere to the word of God who has possession of my conscience. Therefore I neither can nor will retract anything; for it cannot be right for a Christian to speak against his conscience." Turning to look on the assembly before which he stood, he added the words gone down in history: "HERE I STAND. I CAN DO NO OTHER. GOD HELP ME. AMEN."

The Diet adjourned to meet the next morning, in order to hear the emperor's decision. Luther returned to his hotel.

The emperor's decision (1521)

The emperor insisted that as a passage of safe conduct had been granted to him, Luther must be allowed to return in peace to his home.

The pope's party was for destroying Luther immediately. "As a heretic," they said, "his safe conduct ought not to be respected. He ought to be burnt like John Huss, and his ashes thrown into the Rhine."

But even Duke George, one of Luther's bitterest enemies, said, "The German princes will not endure the violation of a safe conduct."

Luther then received a message from the emperor, commanding him to quit Worms immediately. He was given twenty days in which to complete his journey home, but on his way he must neither preach or disturb the public peace. Luther, when he received this message said, "As it seemed good to the Lord, so has it happened. Blessed be the name of the Lord." He sent his thanks to his Imperial Majesty and the electors for so graciously hearing him, and observing his safe conduct.

On Friday morning, 26th April, Luther, having taken an early breakfast, prepared to depart. A large company of his friends were there to bid him farewell.

It was a beautiful day when he left Worms. Luther's heart overflowed with gratitude and praise to God. "The devil," he said, "has been forced to confess that Christ is stronger than he."

On 2nd May, Luther reached Eisenach. Here he parted from all his attendants except one, whose name was Amsdorf. His brother Jacob was also with him. On his way, he turned aside to the village of Mora to visit some aged relatives.

“Captured” (1521)

The next day, on a lonely road passing through the Black Forest, there galloped towards him a party of five horsemen, masked and heavily armed. Three of the masked horsemen forced Luther to alight from the wagon. They then threw a knight’s cloak over his shoulders, and set him on a horse they had with them.

At that moment Luther did not know that they were a troop of friendly soldiers belonging to Frederick, the Elector of Saxony.

The horsemen and Luther set off, first riding this way, and then that, and frequently changing course. They rode rapidly until nearly midnight, when they reached the Castle of Wartburg. The drawbridge was let down, and the portcullis raised. Luther was led up a single flight of stairs and ushered into an apartment. Here, he was told, for his own safety he was to remain a prisoner, dressed in knight’s clothes, and addressed by the title of Knight George. His hair and beard grew long. No one would have known him.

Throughout Germany, the cry went up, “Luther has fallen into the hands of his enemies.” His friends mourned, his enemies rejoiced.

But Luther was safe. The elector had devised this plan to protect Luther from the rage of his enemies.

For ten months Luther remained at Wartburg. Occasionally he made short excursions to the neighbouring towns and villages. He was close to Eisenach where he spent his schooldays, and the home of Conrad and Ursula Cotta who had befriended him in his time of need. But he was not idle. Volume after volume followed one another in quick succession from his pen. It was here at



Wartburg Castle

Wartburg that Luther began the translation of the New Testament from Greek into his native German.

Returns to Wittenberg (1522)

But the time was coming for Luther to leave his prison. Disturbances were daily breaking out at Wittenberg. There were difficulties with images and changes were being made to the form of public worship. His friend Melanchthon urged him to return at once. He left Wartburg on 3rd March and on the 7th reached Wittenberg.

While Luther was still in hiding at Wartburg, on Christmas Day 1521, in the Wittenberg Town Church of St. Marien, Archdeacon Andreas Carlstadt, in his sermon, spoke of the necessity of replacing the idolatrous sacrifice of the ‘mass’ by the ‘holy supper.’ He announced that he intended to administer to the people both the bread and the wine. Until then, the priests only, not the people, had partaken of the wine. The service was now to be conducted in German rather than Latin.

He then proceeded to administer the holy supper in all its simplicity, wearing neither a cope or outer liturgical garment. He discarded the kneebendings, crossings, and kissings. He repeated the act on New Year’s Day, 1522. The mass had fallen.

On the 20th January 1522 the pope ordered the elector, Frederick the Wise, to undo the changes. In a letter to the Wittenberg Town Council, Frederick expressed his sympathy towards Carlstadt’s position.

In the same month, the Wittenberg Town Council authorized the removal of imagery from the churches and affirmed its agreement to the changes introduced by Carlstadt on Christmas Day. *Sola scriptura* (Latin - scripture alone) was beginning to be the rule. Luther, however, for the time being continued to value images as illustrations of the faith.

In the first week of March 1522 Luther returned from Wartburg. He preached eight sermons where he signified his general approval to many of Carlstadt’s changes, and yet he urged caution - Carlstadt had mystical leanings. But from this time there were gradual changes for the better: instead of the sacrifice of the mass, they had the Feast of the Holy Supper; there was no elevation of the host; private masses for the dead were no longer said. The prayers were in German rather than Latin. Most importantly, Luther made known his view that the Holy Scriptures taught nothing of purgatory. The just departed “to be with Christ, which is far better.” “*Today*,” he pointed out, “in Paradise with Me.”

There were more troubles in Wittenberg. Men, claiming to be prophets, appeared in the town claiming they were directly inspired from heaven. It was, they said, a waste of time to translate the Scriptures since God had revealed its meaning to their hearts. Opinion was divided. Melancthon hesitated, and advised trying the spirits, whether they were of God. However, Archdeacon Carlstadt was much impressed with them. One of the men claimed to have seen and spoken to the angel Gabriel in the night. Another said it was time to sift the chaff from the wheat, and to form a church of none but saints. A better-taught mother said: "That would never suit me, then. I must stay outside in the church of redeemed sinners."

The German New Testament published (1522)

In September 1522 his German New Testament was ready to be published. Called the *September Testament*, it was in two large volumes. The initially 3,000 copies printed sold out almost immediately. By December a second edition was needed. It was noted for its vividness and clarity of language. The cost was half a guilder, the weekly wage of a carpenter. It was read by the people with the greatest eagerness. The word of God was carried into the homes and around the firesides, and made its way into the hearts of the people. Neither the pope nor the emperor could stay its progress.



Luther translating the Bible

People were now able to read and examine the Bible for themselves. Frequently, those that were able to read, read the scriptures aloud to others. Attendance at public preaching grew.

In England, King Henry VIII issued an attack against Luther. For this act he received from the pope the title of "Defender of the Faith," a title retained ever since by the kings and queens of England.

The first Reformation martyrs (1523)

Pope Leo X was enjoying his life of luxury at Rome, and did not concern himself too much with Luther. However, he died suddenly towards the end of 1521. His successor was Adrian VI. He immediately made plans to crush the Reformation. He urged the German princes to put Luther and his followers to death. Duke George of Saxony took the lead in imprisoning and persecuting those who favoured Luther's doctrines. In 1523 the first martyrs of Luther's reformation were burnt at Brussels in Belgium. This was within territory ruled by Charles V, but outside Germany. The same fate might have awaited Luther had he not been protected by the German princes.

Hymnbook published (1524)

Luther was very fond of music, playing both the lute and the flute. Very often he gathered around him his friends and children for singing and music. He once told Melancthon: "We ought not always to serve God with labour, but also with resting and recreation. For this reason He has given us the fourth commandment, and instituted the Sabbath."

In 1524 Luther published his first collection of psalms and hymns. He was helped by a Roman priest turned Protestant preacher, Paul Speratus. Speratus was condemned to be burnt at the stake for his beliefs, but was released from prison before the sentence was carried out. While in prison he composed a hymn, which later Luther heard a Prussian beggar singing. Luther was moved to tears on hearing it sung. He gave his last coin to the beggar. Three of his hymns are included, and one by Justus Jonas. Some were composed by Luther, and others translated from the Latin. The Romanists hated Luther's hymns as much as his writings. "The hymns of Luther," they said, "have ruined more souls than all his writings and sermons."

Luther's view was: "The singing of spiritual songs is good and well-pleasing to God. I like to see music used in the service of the One who gave and created it." In the preface to his hymnbook, Luther said: "These hymns are set to music in four parts, that the young people might be rid of their silly songs, and instead, learn something good and useful." Another time he said: "The devil, that lost spirit, cannot endure sacred songs of joy."

Here is a translation of the first verse of Speratus' hymn, *Es ist das Heil uns kommen her*, that moved Luther to tears. There were fourteen

verses - a hymn of God's free grace through faith in Jesus Christ:

Salvation unto us has come
 By God's free grace and favour;
 Good works cannot avert our doom -
 They help and save us never.
 Faith looks to Jesus Christ alone,
 He is our mediator.

Death of the Elector, Frederick the Wise (1525)



Frederick the Wise

His friend and protector, Frederick the Wise, Elector of Saxony, died while Luther was away from home - on the Hartz mountains attempting to put down the peasants' revolt. He was recalled to attend the funeral. In his earlier years, Frederick was a devoted papist. We have already mentioned the many relics he had collected for his church in Wittenberg. He had made a will, commending his soul to the virgin

Mary and the saints, and appointing that fifty masses should be said for the repose of his soul. But in His mercy God freed him from the bonds of such darkness and superstition. Before his death he knew something of the light and liberty of the gospel. He died trusting in Christ alone for salvation. His will was brought forth and burned. He dictated another in which he placed his hopes "on the merits of Christ."

The preaching of Luther, who he faithfully upheld to the end, had greatly affected him. We have a firm hope that he made a good end - truly he "loved the brethren."

A few facts of his deathbed have come down to us, recorded by Joachim Sack, one of his household. Verses from the Bible had been copied out for him, which he was able to read for himself. He then repeated in Latin the words of Job: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." After receiving the holy communion in *both kinds* (i.e. both the bread and the wine), he called

his servants round him and said, “Dear children, weep not for me. It will not be long with me now.” These were amongst his last words. At five in the afternoon he departed this life. So peaceful was his death that his doctor only by bending over him knew his breath had left him.

It was a solemn day for Wittenberg when he was buried in his Castle Church. The knights and burghers met the coffin at the city gate. He was carried to his resting place by eight noblemen. A long procession followed. There was great grief amongst the peasantry, who felt they had lost a father. Around his tomb they sang the old German hymn:

“In Fried und Freud fahr ich dahin”
“I journey hence in peace and joy.”

The money which would have been given to purchase masses for his soul, was instead given to the poor. Luther preached a sermon on the text: “Them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.”

Frederick was succeeded as elector by his brother John the Steadfast, who through God’s mercy also supported Luther’s cause. Without Frederick and John’s protection, it is doubtful that Luther’s life would have been spared.

Marriage (1525)

Luther had for some time been fully convinced from the Bible that it was right for priests to marry. He drew his arguments from the fact that God had created his creatures male and female for a purpose.

In 1525, he married Katherine von Bora, who, with eleven others, had escaped from the nunnery of Nimbschen in 1523. Erasmus of Rotterdam informs us “that Luther had married a very beautiful but completely destitute nun who was now 26 years old.”

The story of Katherine is interesting. Her mother died in 1505 when she was five years old. Her father, Hans von Bora, married again, but was in no position to bring up the little girl in his own house. So, in 1508, her father put his daughter into a convent at Nimbschen. The Abbess was Katherine’s own aunt, Margarethe, her father’s sister. It was a convent for the nobility.

Here the young girl learnt reading, writing, chant, basic Latin and embroidery. Life in the convent was strict, with only two meals a day. Even so, her horizons were wider than would normally have been the case with a girl of her age living at home.



Katherine von Bora



Town Church of St. Marien

We do not know how the teaching of Luther entered the convent - we only know that it did. Many of the nuns were affected by what they heard, and began to study the scriptures. Twelve nuns decided together that they would leave the convent. Early on Easter Sunday morning, 7th April 1523, Leonard Koppe, a fishmonger, came to the convent and spirited away the twelve nuns concealed in his wagon amongst the fish barrels, including Katherine. He was a brave man - according to both church and secular law the penalty for abducting nuns was death. Three returned to their own homes, so for a long time only nine nuns were talked about. The nine entered Wittenberg on 8th

April meeting great public sympathy. It is thought that Katherine lived at the house of the town clerk, Philipp Reichenbach. Luther quickly printed a tract: *Why Nuns May, In All Godliness, Leave the Convent*.

It seems that Katherine took the first step towards matrimony. Luther was concerned that she was of the nobility (somehow related to the King of Denmark), but he of the bourgeoisie - at best, middle class. When they married, he often referred to her as Katherine von Bora and not simply as Katie Luther. He did not want the



Dr. Bugenhagen

lineage of his wife to be forgotten. They were married by Dr. Johannes Bugenhagen on Saturday, 13th June 1525, in the Town Church of St. Marien. Their six children

were all baptised in the well-preserved font still in use in the church.

Luther was now in his forty-second year, Katherine in her twenty-sixth. On the occasion of the marriage feast, the city sent to Luther a present of fourteen cans of wine of different sorts, and the right to the wine cellar of the city for one year. The university also gave Luther a large silver tankard, plated within and without with gold. The new elector, John the Steadfast, an open supporter of Luther, presented the family with one hundred gulden as a foundation for their family. Katherine's wedding ring was a gift from King Christian II of Denmark.

Not everyone was happy. That a monk should marry at all was bad enough. That a monk should marry a nun was scandalous. The Wittenberg penal judgment book records that Clara Jessner was fined two groschen for "reviling and abusing Dr. Martin and his honourable wife during the wedding celebration."

Philip Melanchthon was devastated. For some reason Philip had not been invited to the wedding, and he was feeling very injured. "Unexpectedly Luther has gone and married Bora," he wrote, "without even informing at least one his friends beforehand of his intentions." Melanchthon later became a great friend of hers. The press defamed her character, calling her an "unfaithful, perjured, runaway prostitute." They referred to Luther's "supposed" wife. "The entire world and the devil himself will laugh at the monk's marriage," they said. "Rather," said Luther, "the devil will *weep* at the marriage."

But Luther's married life was a happy one, in spite of their poverty. Of his wife, he said that he "valued her more than the kingdom of France, or the wealth of the Venetians;" and again: "Katy is kind, submissive in all things, and pleasing; so that I would not exchange my poverty for the riches of Croesus." There are many playful allusions in his letters to his 'Ketha,' and 'My Lord Katy,' as he called her. In public, she always referred to her husband using the German *Ihr* (the



Wedding Ceremony

formal you), never the familiar second person singular, or frequently Sir Doctor, thus showing the greatest respect to him.

Later he gave his advice to one who was to be married: “Dear friend, do as I did, when I would take my Katy. I prayed to our Lord God with all my heart. A good wife is a companion of life, and her husband’s solace and joy. When a man and a woman love each truly, the devil has little power to hurt them.”

They lived in the Black Cloister of the monastery. One of the first things they had to do was to dig a new well. Their poverty was somewhat relieved when, in the second year of their marriage, the elector gave Luther a salary, and things improved a little.

Katherine’s first act as wife was to throw away Luther’s bed. The straw-filled sack upon which he slept, turned out to be completely rotten. She had a very practical way of thinking, and was competent and resourceful in difficult matters. She was very independent, and sometimes this created enemies for her.

Luther found his wife tender, loving and gentle. He often playfully reproved her for being too careful of him and fearing too much for him. On one occasion, he shut himself up in his study for three days. His wife, feeling very anxious, looked for him all over the house. She knocked at all the doors, but received no answer. She then called a locksmith to come and force open the door of his study, and there found him deeply engaged on an explanation of the twenty-second Psalm. She chided him for having caused her so much anxiety; but he, pointing to the Bible, said: “Did you think I was doing any thing bad? Do you not know that I must work as long as it is day? for the night cometh, in which no man can work.”

In 1527 Luther was very ill. When it was thought he was dying, he asked for his little son John. When the child was brought to his father’s bedside, Luther said: “I now commend my dearest Kate and thee, poor little orphan, to my dear, faithful God. You have nothing; but God, who is a father of orphans, and a judge of widows, will, without fail, sustain you and provide for you.”

Katherine was much alarmed, but calming herself, she replied: “My dearest doctor, if it be the will of God, then I choose that you be with Him rather than with me. I pray you, my dearest, not to be concerned on my account. I commend you to His divine will. I hope and trust to God, He will yet graciously preserve you.” Mercifully, he recovered.

His children

Luther had six children: John, Elisabeth, Magdalene, Martin, Paul, and Margaret.

John, their first son, was born on 7th June 1526 and was baptized in the Town Church (where they had been married) the same day by Deacon Georg Rorer. The sexton was directed to provide warmed-up water. The baby was baptized quickly as Luther at this time thought it was impossible for an unbaptized child to enter heaven.

Elisabeth died when only eight months old. Luther at this time wrote to a friend: “My little daughter Elisabeth is taken from me, and hath left me with a bleeding and almost womanly heart, so sad am I on her account. I never thought the heart of a father was so tender towards his children. Pray the Lord for me.”

Magdalene was born on 4th May 1529 and named after her father’s sister, but died at the age of 13 years. Her death broke her father’s heart. We have provided a separate paragraph on her death a little later in this article.

Martin junior was born on 9th November 1531.

Paul was born in 1533, the only son who made a career of note. He became a doctor at Wittenberg and was personal physician to Duke John Friedrich.

The baby of the family was Margaret, born on 17th December 1534 and named after Luther’s mother.

Luther’s own father had been very hard on his son, sometimes flogging him until the blood came. He was much more lenient with his own children. Katherine, too, was devoted to her children, but they had taken at least six orphans into the household, and so had her hands full. In the winter of 1540 she almost died of a miscarriage.

Family life

Luther was never happier than when surrounded by his wife and children. He entered into his children’s sports with almost as much enthusiasm as they did. His children’s playmates were ‘Philly and Jussy,’ Philly being Philip Melanchthon’s son (also Philip) and Jussy the son of Justus Jonas (also Justus). It is sad that little ‘Jussy’ ended his life under the executioner’s axe at Stralsund (for conspiracy).

One day, as little Martin was playing with his dog, Luther said: “This boy preacheth God’s word by his deeds and acts; for God saith,

Have dominion over the fishes of the sea, and over the beasts of the field. See how the dog puts up with everything from him!"



With his family, Melancthon watches on. (Painting: Gustav Spangenberg.)

The children were versed by Luther in the catechism, and there were daily family prayers. Luther did not forget the old German custom of celebrating Christmas, and every year kept it with his family with a great deal of joyfulness.

Melancthon was also a family man - he and his wife Katharina had four children. A visitor found Melancthon reading a book in one hand and rocking the cradle with the other!

His garden

In summer, Luther spent much time in his garden. He was a keen admirer of all the beauties of nature as God's work. In one of his letters to a preacher friend named Wenceslas Link at Nuremberg, he asks him to send him seeds for the garden. He says: "If I can serve you in my turn, I will do so with pleasure. For as Satan is now raging by means of all his members, I will laugh at him meanwhile; and look at the gardens, in order that I may enjoy the blessings of the Creator, together with everything that will redound to His praise." (Luther once borrowed a

‘frock’ from Wenceslas when his own was travel-worn.)

On another occasion, he wrote to Spalatin: “I have planted my garden, and in the middle of it have made a fountain. Come and see us, and you shall be crowned with lilies and roses.”



The Augustinian Monastery courtyard. The official Wittenberg guide says: “Katherine von Bora cultivated her fruit and vegetable garden here.”

One fine spring day, when all nature seemed to rejoice, he said to Justus Jonas: “If there were neither sin nor death, we might be satisfied with this paradise. But all shall be more beautiful still, when the old world shall have been renewed, and a new spring shall open and remain for ever.”

His wife Katherine was also a keen gardener

and acquired several garden plots in and around Wittenberg.

The Diet of Spire - the term *Protestant* born (1529)

In 1529 the Diet again met at Spire, a place of great wealth and importance. Ferdinand, the emperor’s brother, who was to preside at the Diet, together with a great many other Roman Catholic princes, entered the city with great pomp and military display.

The Roman Catholics, feeling that they had granted too much at the last Diet, resolved to pass a decree prohibiting further reform. Against this the reformed princes made their solemn protest. “*We protest* before God, our only Creator, Preserver, Redeemer and Saviour,” they said. This protest was read before the Diet on 19th April. From this was born the term *Protestant*, which has continued ever since.

In 1530 the Diet met again, this time at Augsburg. Here, the Protestant princes and Melancthon drew up a confession of faith which was read before the emperor and the whole Diet. The reading of it took two hours. The Protestant cause had now been fully and clearly stated in public. This statement of faith, called The Augsburg Confession, was the equivalent of the 39 Articles of the Church of England.

The Romanists worked hard on Melanchthon to yield. Sometimes, he did not stand as firm as he should. Luther wrote to him as “Philip Pusillanimity” - meaning one who lacked courage - begging that he remain firm on justification by faith.

Death of his mother (1531)

In the year 1531, Luther was much grieved at the death of his mother at the age of 68. He could not be with her in her last illness but he wrote an affectionate letter to her, comforting her, and exhorting her to trust only in Christ. At the close of the letter, he said: “All the children and my Katy pray for you. Some of them weep, and some say ‘grandmama is very sick.’ The grace of God be with us all. Amen.”

The monastery gifted to Luther (1532)

The new elector, John the Steadfast, on 4th February 1532, formally gifted to Luther the Black Cloister building of the Augustine Monastery in which they had always lived, and so the property became his own home, with the gardens attached. The monastery had been dissolved nine years before.

Meals were usually taken in the refectory. Luther said, “Pure, good, simple food - that’s what I like.” He very often ate nothing but a little bread and salt, and he was perfectly contented if he had a herring or his favourite pea-soup. Fish from the River Elbe was also eaten. He was extremely large-hearted and liberal. His house was at all times open to the poor, those unwell, or the oppressed. Besides this, he often aided his poor relatives and others who were in need. Yet Luther’s mode of living, when without company, was very simple. His annual income was two hundred guilders, while his family expenses were more than five hundred guilders.

Luther often entertained at his table persons of great rank, so that he was obliged to keep a number of servants. Elizabeth, the sister of the King of Denmark, once stayed three months at his house. Sometimes he was obliged to take expensive journeys on reformation business. All this made heavy demands on his purse,



Martin Luther's Table

so that at times he was burdened with debt. Indeed, were it not for the many presents which he received, and the economy and good management of his wife, he could scarcely have got along.

After the meal Luther retired to his study for conversations with his friends and students. These ‘table talks’ were sometimes so crowded that many had to stand, and the students who took notes had to write standing up. The presence of Katherine at the table talks, which otherwise took place in solely male company, was an exception. After his death Luther’s table talks were printed, and remain widely available.

Katherine owned some land which had been given to her. She was keen to purchase more land and farms. She wanted an inheritance for her children if anything should happen to her husband. Under Saxon law, when a man died, the status of the wife could become acute as the man’s family would be entitled to the house and property. However, by cleverly wording his will, Luther managed to a large degree to circumvent this old law. In his will he stated that Katherine had always acted towards him “in a dear, worthy and beautiful way.”

Luther’s children were now growing up around him; and when someone reminded him that he ought to lay up something for them, he replied: “That I will not do; for otherwise they will not trust to God or their own exertions, but to their money.”

His generosity

Luther’s disregard of riches was remarkable. As a monk, he had no realistic relationship to money. His enemies hoped they could buy his silence for gold or honours; but one of them, an Italian, said, “This German beast regards not money.”

Cash always remained tight in Luther’s house, partly because he was generous in giving to the needy. Sadly, he was often taken in by deceitful individuals.

On one occasion, a poor man applied to him for help. Luther had no money on hand. His wife was at the time lying in bed sick. So he took money which had been made a donation to his child, and gave it to the man, at the same time telling his wife: “God is rich; He will provide in some other way.”

Another time, a young man who had just finished his course of studies at the university, and was about to leave the city penniless, came to Luther for help. But Luther was again without money, and expressed

his regret to the young man that he could do nothing for him. But when he saw how sad the young man looked, his eye fell on a silver cup which had been given him by the elector. He looked at his wife, as if to ask her permission to give it, but her countenance seemed to say, No. However, Luther took the cup, and gave it to the student. The student looked surprised, and seemed unwilling to take it. Katy also, by significant looks and nods, intimated to her husband not to press it on him; but Luther said: "I have no need for silver cups; take it to the goldsmith, and keep what you get for it."

One day, as Luther, Dr. Jonas, and others friends were riding together, Luther gave alms to the poor people around. Jonas then did the same, saying: "Who knows in what way God may return these alms to me." Luther replied, saying: "Just as if God had not given it to you before. Truly, we must give out of pure love, and cheerfully."

Completion of the German Bible (1534)

In 1534, Luther finished the translation of the Old Testament and the first complete edition of the German Bible was published. In all it had taken him twelve years. Someone once asked him how it was that

he could complete so perfect a translation of the Bible amid so much other labour. Luther replied, "*Nulla dies sine versu*" - "not a day without a verse." In his work he was greatly assisted by Justus Jonas, and Philip Melanchthon, who Luther always admitted had far greater linguistic skills than himself.

The hardest book was Job. Luther said, "In the book of Job we took so many pains, Master Philip Melanchthon and I, that sometimes after four days we had scarcely dealt with three lines."

Those competent to judge declared the style "pure, clear, vigorous, and beautiful."

Like the King James Bible in England, it fixed the standard of the language. By the time of Luther's death one million copies had been sold.

In the autumn of 1535, Luther promised his wife 50 gulden if she read through the entire Bible by Easter of 1536!



*Philip Melanchthon, dated
1532, aged 35*

Illness (1537)

In the year 1537, while attending a convention at Schmalcald, Luther was taken very ill with stones in the bladder. For eleven days he had a stoppage of urine. It was thought he would not recover. The elector often sat at his bedside, and among other things, said to Luther: “If it be God’s will to remove you out of this world, be not concerned about your family. Your wife and your children shall be mine.” “Comfort my Katie,” said Luther. “Twelve happy years she was with me. She took care of me not only as a wife, but also like a maid. God bless her for this.”

Thankfully, he made a partial recovery. When he was a little stronger, he was conveyed home in the elector’s carriage. But Luther’s health was now rapidly failing. His enemies would have been very glad to hear of his death.

The same year, 1537, Duke George of Saxony, Luther’s enemy, died. His brother Henry succeeded him. Mercifully, Henry was friendly to the reformed religion, and soon sent for Luther to come and preach at Leipzig in St. Nicholas’s Church. Although the largest church in Saxony, there was such a crowd that many stood and listened at the open doors and windows - today it seats 1,400. Many fell on their knees and thanked God for the things they heard. In later years the great J. S. Bach was appointed organist here, and harmonised a number of Luther’s tunes.



Portrait thought to be Magdalene

Death of daughter Magdalene (1542)

Luther’s dear daughter Magdalene died in 1542, in her fourteenth year. While she lay on her bed very ill, her father said to her: “Dear Magdalene, my daughter, you would like to remain here with your father, but you also willingly go to yonder Father?” She said: “Yes, dearest father, as God wills it.” Then he said to those around him: “My dear

child, oh, how I love her! the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” He then took the Bible, and read to her the passage in Isaiah: “Thy dead men shall live; together with my dead body shall they arise.”

When her last moments were come, she raised her eyes tenderly to her parents, and begged them not to weep for her. “I go,” she said, “to my Father in heaven;” and shortly after she breathed her last in the arms of her father.

After all was over, Luther said: “The will of God be done; she has gone to her Father in heaven.” As she was placed in her coffin (which they had made too short), he said: “Dear Magdalene, how happy art thou! Oh, thou dear Magdalene, thou wilt rise again, and wilt shine in the heavens like a star, yea, like the sun.” And again: “It is a marvellous thing to know that she is certainly in peace and so happy - and yet for us to be so sad!”

Katherine being greatly grieved, and weeping very bitterly, he turned to her, and said: “Dear Kate, consider whither she has gone. Ah, she has made a blessed exchange. The heart bleeds without doubt, but the spirit rejoices. Happy are they who die young. Children do not doubt; they believe; with them all is trust.”

To his friends who came to the funeral and sympathized with him, he said: “You should not mourn; I have sent a saint to heaven. Oh, may we all die such a death! Gladly would I accept it now.”

Soon after, we find him writing the following letter to his friend Justus Jonas: “Dear Jonas, I doubt not that thou hast heard of the birth of my little Magdalene into the kingdom of Christ. My wife and I ought only to think of rendering thanks for her happy transition and peaceful end; for by it she has escaped the power of the flesh, the world, the Turks, and the devil. Yet nature is strong, and I cannot support this event without tears and groans, or, to speak more truly, without a broken heart. On my very soul are engraved the looks, the words, the gestures, during her life and on the bed of death, of my obedient, my loving child. Even the death of Christ (and what are all deaths in comparison with that?) cannot turn away my thoughts from her death. She was, as thou knowest, lovely in her character, and full of tenderness.”

Another letter he wrote to Jacob Probst, pastor at Bremen: “My most dear child, Magdalene, has departed to her heavenly Father, falling asleep full of faith in Christ.”



Magdalene is buried behind the cafe in front of St. Marion Church

Luther wrote an epitaph and had it placed on Magdalene's grave (translated from the German):

"Here sleep I, Magdalene,
Dr. Luther's little daughter,
Resting with all the saints in my little bed;
I, who was born in sins,
And must for ever have been lost,
But now I live, and all is well with me;
Lord Christ, redeemed me with His blood."

Her death affected Luther greatly. Years later he said he could never forget her dying.

His declining months (1546)

We are now coming towards the last months of Luther's life. It was a time of affliction and sorrow. Some of his friends were removed by death, and unhappy differences sprung up between him and some of those who remained.

At one time he was so vexed at the conduct of the students at Wittenberg that he left the city, determined not to go back; but through the entreaties of the elector and his friends he changed his mind, and once more returned to his home.

Luther's last labours were works of love and peace. For several years the counts of Mansfeldt had been at variance among themselves and with their subjects concerning some furnaces. You will remember this was the mining town to which he moved at a young age. The counts had so much confidence in Luther's wisdom and uprightness, that they referred the matter to him.

Willing to help, in January 1546 he left Wittenberg for the third time to travel as far as Eisleben where he was to meet the counts of Mansfeldt. He was accompanied by his three sons, John, Martin, and Paul. At Halle, he remained three days with his friend Justus Jonas, on account of the flooding of the river Saale.

On the 28th January, Luther, with his three sons and Jonas, crossed

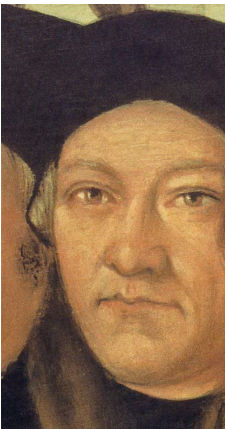
the river, and proceeded to Eisleben. When they had come to the borders of the territory owned by the counts of Mansfeldt, the counts met them with an escort of one hundred and thirteen horsemen. Before reaching Eisleben, Luther was taken very ill. The weather was severe. “A cold wind came through my Baret (doctor’s hat) and into my head, as if it would turn my brain to ice,” he wrote to Katherine. “It seems to me the devil laughs at us; but God laughs him to scorn. Pray for us.” However, he rallied a little, and was able to help in the disputes.

During his stay at Eisleben, he was exceedingly cheerful, his conversation at table being very lively and instructive. Every evening, at about eight o’clock, he retired from the company to his own room, and standing by the window, as was his custom, he would pray so earnestly, that sometimes he was heard by those in an adjoining room.

His wife, hearing of his illness, wrote to him expressing her concern. He replied to her: “You prefer to worry about me instead of letting God worry, as if He were not almighty and could not create ten Doctor Martins. I have a Caretaker who is better than you and all the angels. It is He who lay in the manger. He sits at the right hand of God, the Almighty Father. Therefore be at peace. Amen.”

More problems arose when there was a fire in his inn, “close by my chamber door.” The next day part of the ceiling fell in. “We were almost crushed as if in a mouse trap,” he wrote. “Lime and mortar crashed above us, as large as a pillow two hand-breadths wide.”

His last illness and death (1546)



Dr. Justus Jonas

On the Lord’s Day, 17th February, he was again quite unwell, and so the counts begged him not to leave his room. Still, in the evening he was able to come into the great hall to supper. At the table he spoke much of eternity.

After retiring to his own room, he suffered very much from severe chest pain. They tried rubbing him with hot cloths, and everything that could possibly relieve him was done. At about ten o’clock he woke from a short sleep. When Justus Jonas asked him how he felt, he replied: “ I am suffering intense pain. Ah, my dear Dr. Jonas, I think I shall die here at Eisleben, where I was born.”

A great many of his friends were now in the room, and did all in their power to help him, but without success. His two sons, Paul and Martin, thirteen and fourteen years of age, sat up with him. Luther commended his soul into the hands of God, praying fervently: “Heavenly Father! Take my poor soul up to Thee.” Then three times he said, “Father, into Thy hands do I commend my spirit.” Dr. Jonas said to him: “Reverend father, do you die trusting in Christ, and in the doctrine you have constantly preached?” Luther answered distinctly, “Yes” - the last word he spoke on earth.

He then turned onto his right side, and seemed to sleep for a quarter of an hour. When he awoke, he was deathly pale, and his hands and feet were cold. Gently, he sighed once more; then at about four o’clock on the morning of Monday, 18th February 1546, his spirit passed gently and quietly away into the hands of his God and Saviour.

The remains of Luther were laid on the bed while a lead coffin was prepared. As he lay there, two artists were employed to paint his likeness.

The counts of Mansfeldt were anxious that Luther should be buried at Eisleben, as that was his birthplace; but the elector was insistent that he should be buried in the Castle Church at Wittenberg.

The next day, the body was carried into St. Andrew’s church in Eisleben, where Dr. Justus Jonas preached a funeral sermon before a large congregation.

His body conveyed to Wittenberg (1546)

On the 20th February, the funeral procession left Eisleben, and reached Halle at five o’clock in the afternoon, having stopped at the villages through which it passed. At every place the church bells were tolled, and the people everywhere expressed great grief.

At Halle, the body was taken into St. Mary’s church, where, amid floods of tears, the people attempted to sing one of Luther’s own hymns, beginning “From deep distress to Thee I pray.” It was sung to a tune of his own composing, which he called Leipsic. The hymn ends:

“From wrath I flee to His dear Son,
Who bore for me its curses,
And He will be my Shepherd, too,
Will all my troubles guide me through,
To rest with Him in glory.”

His body remained all night in the church, and was watched over by a guard of citizens.

The funeral procession started the next day for Wittenberg, where it arrived on the 22nd, being met at the gate of the city by his widow, the whole university and city dignitaries. The body was conveyed through the streets, so crowded and yet so silent, to the Castle Church.



Inside the Castle Church

Her husband's death hit Katherine hard. In a letter she wrote: "Our dear Lord God has taken away this precious and beloved man, not just from me, but from the whole world. I am so profoundly distressed, that I cannot express my deep grief to anyone. I can neither eat nor drink or sleep." But she was given strength to follow the body of her husband on a "little, low wagon." After her came their children now between 12 and 20 years.

Here at the Castle Church a funeral sermon was preached in German by Pastor Dr. Bugenhagen, who had married him and Katherine those years before. Philip

Melanchthon delivered a touching tribute in Latin. At the time of Luther's death, Melanchthon said, "I have learned from him the Gospel." Afterwards a funeral hymn was sung, and then his body was lowered into the grave, very near to the pulpit in which, during his lifetime, Luther had preached so many a powerful sermon.

Some years after Luther's death, the gentle Philip Melanchthon, his dearest friend, found a resting place on the opposite side of the aisle close to his friend. He died at the age of 63. Also close by is buried the elector, Frederick the Wise. There the three bodies await the end of all

things, when the archangel's trump shall sound, and they "that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."

* * * * *



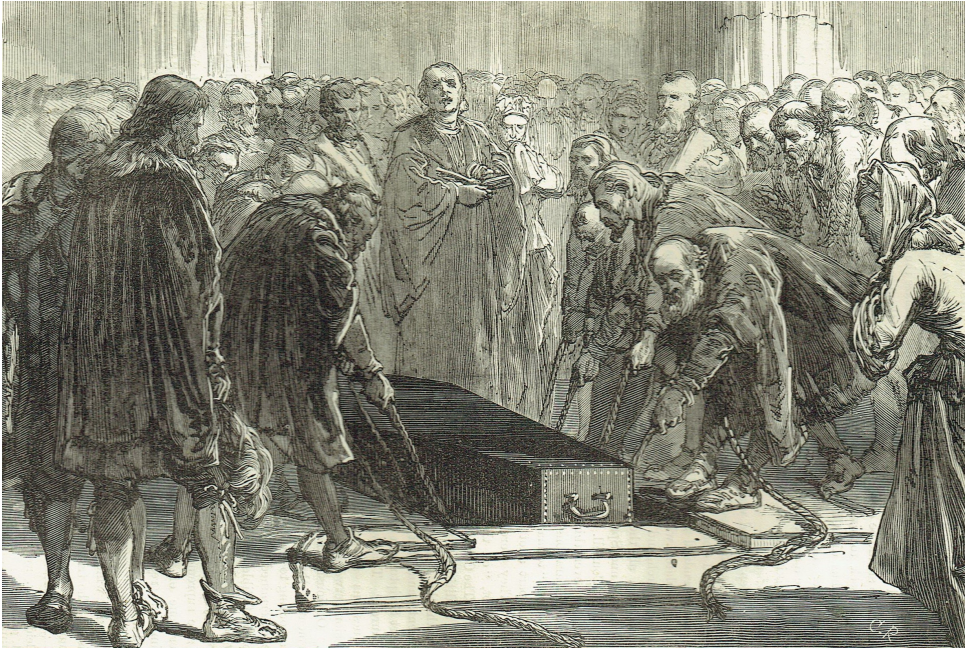
*Martin Luther by Lucas Cranach, 1541,
five years before he died*



*Luther's grave beneath the pulpit
of the Castle Church, Wittenberg*

A fine bronze statue of Luther has been erected in the town square of Wittenberg. He is standing with an open Bible in his left hand, while with the forefinger of the right hand he points to its pages. On the base of the monument are the words: "If it be God's work, it will endure; if man's, it will perish."

=====



The burial of Martin Luther in the Castle Church

The inscription in Latin on his gravestone reads:

HERE LIES INTERRED THE BODY OF MARTIN LUTHER,
DOCTOR OF DIVINITY, WHO DIED AT EISLEBEN, THE PLACE
OF HIS BIRTH, ON 18 FEBRUARY, IN THE YEAR OF CHRIST
1546: HAVING LIVED 63 YEARS, 3 MONTHS, AND 10 DAYS.

The funeral service was conducted by Dr. Johannes Bugenhagen (or Dr. Pomeranus as Luther called him), pastor of the nearby St. Marien Church, Wittenburg. He began his address with these words: “We do not want to hold back, dear brothers, concerning those who are asleep so that you may not be sorrowful as others that have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus has died and is risen, even so, through Jesus, God will bring those with Him who have fallen asleep.”

After the death of Martin Luther, *Dr. Pommer* as they affectionately called him, took great pastoral care of the widow and children. He survived Luther by twelve years, and is buried in the St. Marien Church.

MAP OF PLACES ASSOCIATED WITH MARTIN LUTHER



MARTIN LUTHER - HISTORICAL SETTING



← John Wycliffe 1320-1384

John Huss 1371-1415 →



← Elector Frederick III 1463-1525
(Known as Frederick the Wise)

Martin Luther 1483-1546 →



← King Henry VIII 1491-1547
(reigned 1509-1547)

William Tyndale 1494-1536 →



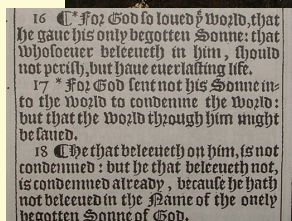
← John Calvin 1509-1564

Queen Mary I 1516-1558 →
(‘Bloody’ Mary, reigned 1553-1558)



← King Edward VI 1537-1553
(reigned 1547-1553)

Authorised Version 1611 →



PERCEPTION

A Quarterly Magazine for Young People



“Then shall the trees of the wood sing out
at the presence of the Lord”
1 Chronicles 16. 33.

WINTER 2017

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Cover picture: Winter walk, Anglesey Abbey, Cambridgeshire.

PERCEPTION

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EDITORIAL

“This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you” (Exodus 12. 2).

The Word of God makes numerous references to the end of the year and the beginning of the year. Of course, to us, the end of the year means 31st December, and the beginning of the year the 1st January, but this was not always the case. To Israel, the feast of the ingathering, sometimes known as the feast of tabernacles, which falls in October, marked the end of the year: “The feast of ingathering, which is in the end of the year” Exodus 23.16. It was at this time of the year that David’s son, the wicked Absalom, cut his luxuriant crop of hair: 2 Samuel 14. 26 tells us: “And when he polled his head, (for it was at every year’s end that he polled it).” A haircut once a year!

Our own country has numerous ‘new years’ as well. First we think of the *School Year* or *Academic Year* which begins with the autumn term in September. All stationers sell diaries for the academic year. Another new year is the *Financial Year* which begins on 6th April. We have always thought this a most ridiculous custom, causing problems for those in business who, say, make up their accounts to 31st March, and then have to make provision by apportionment for the extra five days of the financial year. In the days when there was a tax benefit for married couples, there was often a rush of weddings in March to take advantage of a full year’s allowance.

There was a time in England and Ireland when the New Year used to start on 25th March, also known as Lady Day. This was in commemoration of the angel Gabriel’s announcement to the virgin Mary that she would become the mother of a Son, whose name she was to call JESUS. Along with Midsummer on 24th June, Michaelmas on 29th September, and Christmas Day on 25th December, all accounts, debts and rents, had to be settled on these so-called “quarter days.” Lady Day being the first, it gradually became recognised as the start of the financial year. All was well until 1752 when this country adopted

the Gregorian calendar. To align themselves with the rest of Europe, it was necessary to drop 11 days from the calendar. The treasury was concerned there would be a loss of tax revenue, so decided the tax year should remain as 365 days, so the date was moved from 25th March to 5th April, later changed to 6th April, where it has remained ever since. It is well known that the loss of eleven days led to riots in the streets: "Give us back our eleven days," the people cried, fearing their lives had been shortened.

One other year of interest deserving a brief mention is the *Legal Year*. This dates back to the middle ages when judges met at Westminster Abbey to pray for guidance at the start of the legal term. Judges, whose courts were held in Westminster Hall, walked to the Abbey for the service. The service is still held today, but the judges now travel from Temple Bar by car. The service lasts for 45 minutes and is attended by about 700 people. Judges and QC's (Queen's Counsel) wear wigs and ceremonial dress.

The end of a year is, or should be, a solemn time for us each. We look back over our pathway, and for most of us there will have been times of joy and happiness, times of sadness, sometimes deep sorrow, changes in school, college or employment, "times of sickness and of health" as we sing. But have we profited from our experiences? What lessons have we learned? As Solomon reflected on his life, his conclusion was that "all is vanity and vexation of spirit." You may think this to be a very gloomy statement to make in the midst of so many mercies, and that we should not give way to such thoughts. But when we view everything here below, even our mercies, in the light of eternity, what is there of lasting value? Only one thing - the gospel. Whatever else we have, the most important is: "that I may know HIM."

Our mind goes to the parable of the prosperous farmer who had insufficient room to store his produce. He decided to build greater barns. But eternity was before him: "This night thy soul shall be required of thee." What profit now was found in all his achievements?

We are certainly not against working hard, endeavouring to make a success of whatever we are engaged in. That is right, and commended of God. We hope all our young people (and older ones too) will remember the words of Solomon: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." But if our achievements are the only things that

matter to us, then we shall fall short and be “found wanting.” The Lord Jesus expressed it plainly: “What shall it profit a man if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul.”

The end of a year marks another step towards eternity. With this in mind, it is a sad reflection that New Year’s Eve is frequently a time for much frivolity and foolishness. “Come and laugh with your family and friends,” was this year’s advert for one of our local restaurants. All over the country events will be held to ‘see in’ the new year. The largest and wildest New Year’s Eve party is held annually in Brazil on Copacabana Beach, when more than two million people cram onto a two-and-a-half mile stretch of sand for live music and dancing. May we be saved from all such worldliness and ungodliness. How glad we were to hear of one family that always liked to see in the new year. As midnight struck, the father of the family would pick up the family Bible, and read a portion from the Word of God committing each one of his family into the Lord’s care for the coming year.

How will your New Year’s Eve be spent? For some of us (and we know there are quite a number of older readers of *Perception*) it may be their last New Year’s Eve. The Young People’s Hymnal number 278 expresses it well:

“See, another year is gone;
Quickly have the seasons passed;
This we enter now upon
Will to many prove their last.”

As we come to the close of the year, and look at the state of our country, there is much to cause deep concern. The governments of Europe are obsessed with God-dishonouring agendas promoting unnatural and unbiblical moral positions on gender and other issues. Our national church sadly follows, rather than leads, the nation. All of us, and especially the young people, are surrounded by these things every day of our lives. Later in this magazine we touch on the God-given distinction from the time of creation between the man and the woman. May we be kept from those who seek to destroy what God has decreed, and look to Scripture alone as our guide.

Wishing all our readers a truly happy and blessed New Year.

The Editor.

WILL GOD DWELL ON THE EARTH ?

A Sermon preached on Christmas Day

This sermon was preached by Mr. John Green at Gower Street



Memorial Chapel, London, on Christmas Day, December 25th, 1972. Mr. Green was from a farming family, but as there were other sons in the family he moved away to Chatteris, a market town in the Fenland district of Cambridgeshire. Here he established a successful coal business, using a horse-drawn cart and delivering coal over a wide area. He was Pastor at Gower Street Memorial Chapel, London from 1956 - 1978. Mr. and Mrs. Green had no family of their own, but they were very

fond of children and young people. For this Magazine, the sermon has been slightly shortened.

Text: “But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee; how much less the house that I have builded?” (1 Kings 8. 27).

Good King Solomon had erected a magnificent temple; no place like it before, and no place built like it since. In this temple God had presenced Himself, and I believe He was sincerely worshipped there by the godly and gracious. But this good king looked far beyond all these material things, and I believe that he beheld the day of the Lord Jesus Christ, like Abraham did before him. Solomon knew that there was nothing saving in this magnificent temple, although it had been built according to the plan of God. Most wonderful, doubtless, it was! But eventually it all came to nothing, like all things here on earth must eventually come to nothing.

In our text Solomon asks a question: “But will God indeed dwell on the earth?” It seemed almost too wonderful; such wondrous condescension on the part of that great and holy God to dwell on the earth. And yet in our reading this morning (Luke 2) we were informed

of the wonderful way and manner in which God did indeed dwell on the earth, in the form of that Babe, in the Person of His dear Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, in that true and real humanity of His. It is sweetly humbling, when we can really believe that the dear Babe laid in the manger is true, almighty God. The hymnwriter puts it:

“No less almighty at His birth,
Than on His throne supreme;
His shoulders held up heaven and earth,
When Mary held up Him.”

With those graciously and spiritually exercised, if they could not believe that God was in Christ, they could believe nothing. They would have no hope. Religion would bring them no true peace, no true comfort. But He was that blessed Jesus, the Son of God Most High, the only-begotten of the Father. John says, “And we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” John and others believed in this wonderful Person, that it was God dwelling on earth. He came that God and men, poor lost sinful creatures, might be reconciled. And it is a wonderful blessing to receive that grace of reconciliation so that we are enabled to receive in our hearts this blessed Babe that was born in Bethlehem.

Many years ago, one Christmas morning the friends were singing hymn 39, and as they sang the third verse, it seemed so wonderful to me:

“The feeblest heart shall hell subdue,
Where Jesus Christ is born.”

And that is the secret of real, true religion, not only to believe that God did dwell on the earth in the Person of His Son, but to feel that the Lord Jesus dwells in our hearts. Every sweet movement of love and affection towards Him is a token that He dwells in our hearts. Some of you, as you look at yourselves, and feel that you are poor, lost, sinners, you ask, “Can ever God dwell here? Can He dwell in a heart like mine?”

Solomon, in our text, had a most wonderful revelation of the majesty and greatness of this great God. He said, “Behold, the heaven, and heaven of heavens, cannot contain Thee.” It is a good thing to have some such knowledge of this great and almighty God. And I was thinking that it is true what Solomon says here - the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain this great God, yet the Lord Jesus has told us

in His Word that not a sparrow falls to the ground “without your Father’s notice.”

Now, if this great God dwell in our hearts, we shall be made blessed overcomers. Some start out in religion, it seems, with much zeal; they continue for a time, but they outlive their religion. Why? Because God does not dwell in their hearts. We see how the Holy Spirit mercifully and graciously prepares the hearts of these sinners to receive the indwelling of the Lord of life and glory. When He came here on earth, the Lord Jesus did find some who were of a humble spirit. Many of them were exceedingly poor. They were amongst those not counted much here on earth, and yet God dwelt in their hearts. And if you and I today want to feel the indwelling of this great God, we need to pray for the grace of true humility.

The Lord Jesus was the sweetest pattern of humility that ever was. How can we describe His dwelling on earth, His humbling Himself? He who dwelt in the Father’s bosom from all eternity, yet humbled Himself and dwelt in the womb of a very humble virgin and derived from her true, real, proper humanity. Not born of a king; He did not come with earthly grandeur. That is why the Jews did not like Him. They expected that He would come as some wonderful king and would deliver them from the hands of the Romans. They were not really concerned about the salvation of their souls. The Lord Jesus was too humble for them. And we see right through His earthly life how very humble He was.

He kindly and graciously spoke to the poor and needy. He had compassion upon poor lepers. He showed mercy to those who were distressed on account of sin. He made known His kind errand - that He had come to seek and to save that which was lost. Lost sinners that are truly humbled and brought down to Jesus’ feet. And it is to this man God will look, and it is in this heart that God will dwell. What wondrous condescension!

Without humility, my dear friends, we are like those Jews of old who saw no beauty in this blessed Person, who did not feel their need of Him, who did not seek this sacred indwelling. But O, if the Lord has humbled us, He has made room in our hearts for Himself, and though at times we may feel cast down and tried, He renews feelingly that sweet sense of the indwelling of His Person, and then we are enabled to praise

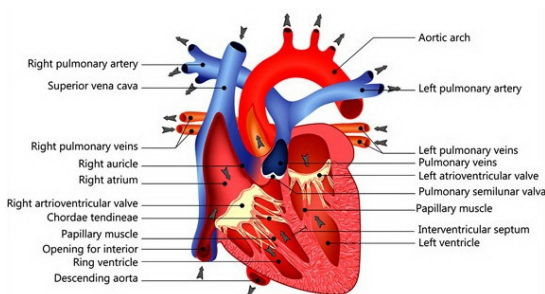
God for His unspeakable Gift.

Now, may the Lord so bless us, that this day, amidst our various scenes and cares, we may feel we have the answer to this wonderful question: “Will God indeed dwell on the earth?” We have read of His coming in the Person of His dear Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And some of you have the witness of the Spirit that He came to the earth to redeem you, and by His Spirit He has revealed to you His wonderful salvation. There have been those seasons, perhaps all too rare, when you have felt Him in your heart. That is wonderful! That will do, my dear friends, to die on, because you have Him dwelling in your heart who is the resurrection and the life.

And the Lord Jesus will not forsake us *when we come to the end*. He will *still* dwell in our hearts as we pass from time into eternity. Jesus said, “I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.” Amen.

GOD’S WORK EXCEEDS MAN’S WORK

Dr. Donald White-Cooper was a GP in Dartmouth in the 1940's. One day he examined a 100-year-old patient who was suffering from a hernia. While he was there, the doctor asked if he could listen to his



Human heart. Can anyone honestly believe an organ of such complexity simply evolved?

extraordinary and amazing to hear those two sounds in a heart which has been beating like this for more than one hundred years without rest. No man-made machine has been invented that would work so perfectly and so long without attention.” How much God’s work exceeds man’s.

heart. The old man was greatly intrigued by his stethoscope, and was more than happy for the doctor to take a listen. The doctor heard his old heart beating lub-dup, lub-dup, perfectly regularly. Recalling this the doctor wrote: “I thought to myself how

A FEW THOUGHTS ON THE SABBATH DAY

On a Tuesday morning in September, two Jehovah's Witnesses rang my front door bell. They carried their usual *Watchtower* magazine, on the front of which was a picture of people rushing through the street, most of them on their mobile phones, carrying heavily laden shopping bags, and generally looking harassed - possibly quite an accurate portrayal of people's lives today. They opened the conversation by asking me a question - "Did I think that life today was too busy?"

I replied that in many ways I thought it was, but I said that God, in His mercy, had given us one day in seven when we can lay aside the things that take our time and attention on weekdays - in other words, a Sabbath Day. They said, "Yes, but even that can be a very busy day."

We need to be careful here. Sabbath (or the Shabbat) is a Hebrew word meaning 'cessation,' or to 'stop doing.' It has nothing to do with busy-ness, or filling our time. For many, the Lord's day, can be a very busy day indeed! The children need to be made ready for the services, possibly there is quite a journey to the house of God, there may be a prayer meeting before the service, Sunday School in the afternoon, possibly three services are attended. Hopefully, there will be some time for reading and singing at home, and perhaps a busy mother (or father) may find time for some much-needed rest.

Recently, a survey of 2,000 people was conducted. They were asked to name the top twenty pleasures that made them happy. An astonishing 18% replied: "*To have a lazy Sunday.*" What a sad and solemn reflection this is on the state of our country.

When preparing this quarter's extract from the life of William Smith, we were struck with just how busy his Sunday's were:

"I was in a situation at this time where I had two horses to see to, a cow to milk, and some sheep and a garden to look after; so that when I went away to preach I had to pay a man to do my work. I was also superintendent of the Sabbath school. When I had to preach at home I could manage to do the work myself, by getting up early on Sunday morning. I had to clean the horses and feed them, milk the cow, go and see to the sheep, have my breakfast, clean myself, and walk half a-mile, to be at the school to open it at nine o'clock, and conduct it until half-past ten; then go into the pulpit at a quarter to eleven until a quarter past twelve; then I had to go down and feed the horses, have my dinner, be back at the school by two o'clock, conduct that and the prayer meeting

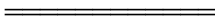
until four; then go and feed the horses, milk the cow, see to the sheep, have my tea, and be back at the chapel to preach at the evening service commencing at six o'clock. After service I had to see to the horses; sometimes my young master would go out with one, and when that was the case I had to wait until he came home, which made it later before I could get to bed; so that at times I have felt as though I should fall to the floor, feeling so faint, and I began to feel my bodily strength give way."

"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy." Sometimes, difficult or unexpected circumstances can arise. Some years ago, a family with a one-year-old little girl was on holiday at Swanage in Dorset. On the Lord's day morning they attended the service at Bournemouth chapel. After the service they walked back to the car - and were completely unable to find the car keys. By this time it was late. The little girl was very hungry. What should they do? No mobile phones in those days. Would it be wrong to buy some food from a nearby garage? It was not something they wished to do, but there was a necessity. The case of the hungry disciples plucking the ears of corn on the Sabbath day came to mind. The Pharisees immediately questioned their action: "Why do ye that which is not lawful to do on the sabbath days?"

This was the answer of the Lord Jesus: "Have ye not read so much as this, what David did, when himself was an hungred, and they which were with him; how he went into the house of God, and did take and eat the shewbread, and gave also to them that were with him; which it is not lawful to eat but for the priests alone? And he said unto them, That the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath." The parents felt that in these exceptional circumstances it would not be wrong to buy sufficient food for their needs.

Some years ago there was an excellent bricklayer. He and his men never worked on a Sunday. However, there came a time when he became extremely busy, and rather than turn down jobs, he began to work seven days a week. *Six weeks later he was dead.* Our Creator knew we need that 'cessation,' and He set us an example: on the seventh day He "rested from all His work which God created and made."

"This is the day the Lord hath made,
He calls the hours His own;
Let heaven rejoice, let earth be glad,
And praise surround the throne."



VOM HIMMEL HOCH, DA KOMM ICH HER

In the last *Perception* on the life of Martin Luther we mentioned his fondness for music. Singing with his family, accompanying them on his lute, was very much part of family life. He was an able composer and hymnwriter, with at least forty-two hymns attributed to him, covering all seasons of the year such as Easter, Pentecost, Advent, Christmas, and the Epiphany, as well as funeral hymns, hymns of confession, and arrangements of the Lord's prayer and the Psalms.

Apart from *Away in a manger*, his most well-known Christmas hymn is *Vom himmel hoch*, "*From heaven above*." The tune he wrote himself. Later, the great Johann Sebastian Bach harmonised it. We provide here a simplified version, as Bach's setting, although beautiful, is not the easiest to play. The hymn originally had fifteen verses - we have space for only eleven. It was first published in Leipzig in 1539.



FROM HEAVEN ABOVE TO EARTH I COME

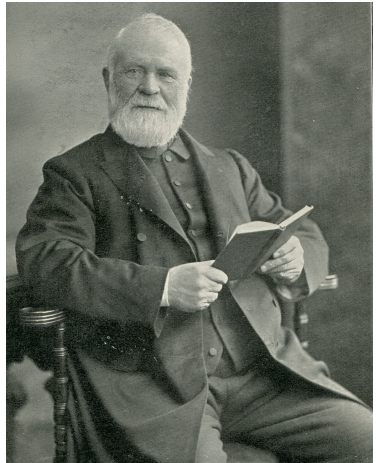
- 1 From heaven above to earth I come,
To bear good news to every home;
Glad tidings of great joy I bring,
Whereof I now will gladly sing:
- 2 To you this night is born a Child
Of Mary, chosen mother mild;
This little Child, of lowly birth,
Shall be the joy of all the earth.

- 3 This is the Christ, our God and Lord,
Who in all need shall aid afford;
He will Himself your Saviour be
From all your sins to set you free.
- 4 These are the tokens ye shall mark:
The swaddling-clothes and manger dark;
There ye shall find the Infant laid
By whom the heavens and earth were made.
- 5 Now let us all with gladsome cheer
Go with the shepherds and draw near
To see the precious gift of God,
Who hath His own dear Son bestowed.
- 6 Give heed, my heart, lift up thine eyes:
Who is it in yon manger lies?
Who is this Child, so young and fair?
The blessed Christ-child lieth there.
- 7 Ah, Lord, who hast created all,
How weak art Thou, how poor and small,
That Thou dost choose Thine infant bed
Where humble cattle lately fed!
- 8 Were earth a thousand times as fair,
Beset with gold and jewels rare,
It yet were far too poor to be
A narrow cradle, Lord, for Thee.
- 9 Ah, dearest Jesus, holy Child,
Make Thee a bed, soft, undefiled,
Within my heart, that it may be
A quiet chamber kept for Thee.
- 10 My heart for very joy doth leap,
My lips no more can silence keep;
I, too, must sing with joyful tongue
That sweetest ancient cradle-song:
- 11 Glory to God in highest heaven,
Who unto us His Son hath given!
While angels sing with holy mirth
A glad new year to all the earth.

WILLIAM SMITH - PART 7

This time, he is sent out to preach by the church at Bedworth. Begins to serve the churches as a supply. Feels obliged to leave his employment as invitations to preach come in. The Word proves to be a dividing Word. His work load and illnesses bring him low. We continue the life of this servant of the Lord.

(CONTINUED FROM SUMMER 2017 PAGE 30)



Others exercised that he is to preach

One day friend Hull said to me that he knew a place where the people would be pleased to hear me if I would go, but I told him I would not go with man's invitation; the Lord must send me if I went. I remember a lady coming with her two daughters to stay at Mr. Sinkinson's for a few weeks on a visit. One day I called in as usual to see Mr. Sinkinson, and while I was there she came into the room where we were. She said, "I have an impression Mr. Smith will have to stand up in a pulpit yet. I don't know whether he is exercised about the ministry." I was struck by the remark, but I made no reply, but bid them "goodnight," wondering why she should speak thus when I had never told my exercises to anyone. This circumstance made me more watchful and prayerful, for I wanted the Lord to make my path plain because of mine enemies.

At times the Word of the Lord was opened up to my understanding with such light and power, and my meditation was so sweet, that I used to say, "Lord, if Thou wilt help me like this I could preach." But when I felt my mind dark I tried to forget all about preaching, and sometimes I did, but the feeling returned again.

Preaches before the church and congregation

Thus I went on until Mr. Sinkinson went out again, and on the Sunday I was asked to conduct the services myself. I did so; and after we had sung the hymn I read and prayed. We sang again, and then I was led to take the following words for a text: "All my springs are in Thee" (Psalm 87. 7). The Lord helped me to speak a few words to the comfort of His dear people. I cannot remember what I spoke from in the

evening, but when Mr. Sinkinson came home the deacon told him how satisfactorily I had preached on the Sabbath while he was away, and how the word had been blessed to several of the Lord's people.

I knew nothing of this until the next ordinance, after the service, when Mr. Sinkinson said he wished the church to retire into the vestry, as he had something to say to them about myself. I began to tremble, and wondered what it could be. We retired; and then he told them what he had heard about my preaching and expounding while he was away from home. He also told them that it had been impressed upon his mind for a long time that the Lord would call me to preach. He then proposed that I should take the service on the next Tuesday evening that he might hear me, for the King's business, he said, required haste. After he had heard me, they would meet together the next Sunday afternoon to consider the matter. To this proposition all the church agreed. He said he wanted me to be raised a little higher than the desk.

We then went to our homes to have tea, after which we came to the evening service. After he had finished his sermon he told the congregation that I was to take the evening service on Tuesday, and he hoped they would all come and hear me, and I believe all that could come did, for there was a good congregation. I was very much exercised about what I was to speak from. At length these words entered my mind with light and sweetness: "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul." When the time came for me to speak I was very much helped, and the word was made a blessing to some, and others made light of it; and it is a bad sign when all speak well of a man.

The church sanctions him to preach

On the next Sabbath the church met in the afternoon according to appointment. Mr. Sinkinson told those who were present that he was satisfied with what he heard me say on Tuesday evening, and he believed I should be a very useful man in the Church of God. They all concurred in what he said. He then called upon those that thought I was called and qualified to go forth to preach the Gospel to show their mind by holding up their hands. This was done unanimously. I then got up in the vestry, and told them all exercises from beginning to end, and the account I gave was received by them as very satisfactory. This was the first time I had ever divulged it unto anyone.

Mr. Sinkinson then told me I was at liberty, with the sanction of the

church, and his also, to go and preach the Gospel wherever the Lord opened doors for me. The friends said they hoped I would supply for them at home whenever Mr. Sinkinson was away, which I promised to do when I was not engaged at another place; and I fulfilled my promise.

After this my exercises became very great. I felt myself such a poor, blind, and ignorant creature, that I thought I had done wrong by consenting to go out to preach or to supply at home. I remember one Sunday I was so exercised that I thought I should faint in the pulpit while they were singing the first hymn, and all that I could do or say was, "Lord, don't let me faint." Before they had done singing I felt a little better. I read and engaged in prayer, and was enabled to speak beyond what I expected. I had a funeral to attend to at 12.30, and I was enabled to attend to that and preach in the evening. After the services of the day I felt better, both in body and mind, than I did at the beginning. Thus out of weakness I was made strong.

Begins to serve the churches as a supply

I became very much exercised about going away from home to preach, and I went up into my bedroom and fell on my knees to ask the Lord never to let any letters of invitation come to ask me to preach contrary to His will. While I was thus engaged, the postman came and brought one with an invite to go and preach at Forest Hill. This filled my soul with fear and trembling. I pleaded with the Lord to give me some token that I was to go. I got nothing special, but I was made willing to go, casting myself upon God's free mercy, and I went on the day appointed. As I was riding along in the railway carriage my soul was sweetly drawn out unto the Lord; I had free access at the mercy seat, my petitions were large, and I had faith wrought in my heart to believe they would be granted.

I arrived there quite safely about three o'clock in the afternoon. I was received very cordially by Mr. and Mrs. Massey, and was treated kindly in every way. Sunday morning came, and they accompanied me to the chapel. I went into the pulpit, and found there were a goodly number of people present. When singing, reading, and prayer were over, I took my text, and was favoured with great liberty in speaking. After the service was over I went with Mr. and Mrs. Massey to dinner. Nothing was said during the interval of worship, and it was suggested to my mind, that the people got nothing, though I was comfortable, and this very much tried me.

I went again in the evening, and felt the same liberty in speaking. After the service, as I was walking along, Mrs. Massey told me she had felt very comfortable all day, and I heard that others had been blessed also. On Monday morning I returned home, with a Divine satisfaction in my breast that I had been in my right place.

More invitations to preach arrive

After this I had letters from several parts of the country inviting me to preach. This caused me great exercise of soul, as I was in a situation at this time, where I had two horses to see to, a cow to milk, and some sheep and a garden to look after; so that when I went away I had to pay a man to do my work. I was also superintendent of the Sabbath school.

When I had to preach at home I could manage to do the work myself, by getting up early on Sunday morning. I had to clean the horses and feed them, milk the cow, go and see to the sheep, have my breakfast, clean myself, and walk half-a-mile, to be at the school to open it at nine o'clock, and conduct it until half-past ten; then go into the pulpit at a quarter to eleven until a quarter past twelve; then I had to go down and feed the horses, have my dinner, be back at the school by two o'clock, conduct that and the prayer meeting until four; then go and feed the horses, milk the cow, see to the sheep, have my tea, and be back at the chapel to preach in the evening, service commencing at six o'clock. After service I had to see to the horses; sometimes my young master would go out with one, and when that was the case I had to wait until he came home, which made it later before I could get to bed; so that at times I have felt as though I should fall to the floor, feeling so faint, and I began to feel my bodily strength give way.

Leaves his employment

As I kept having more invitations, I thought it was right to tell my master that I should be out more, and should not be able to get back always on a Monday. I did so, and asked him if he would rather have another man in my place, who could be there regularly, or whether I should keep on as I had done. I gave him a week to consider the matter.

At the end of the week I asked him what he had decided to do. He said he thought it would be the best for him to have another man, then I should have my liberty; so I left, and proved it was of the Lord. I did several jobs for him when I was at home, and my wife still kept on winding silk for him until we came to live at Tunbridge Wells.

I now went about to various places to preach, and sometimes did

not return home until the middle of the week. I had much to exercise my mind. Some liked my preaching and others did not; but when I felt the Lord's presence in my soul I did not mind who was against me.

Loss of text the means of a young man's blessing

I had one good proof that the Lord was making His Word a blessing unto His people through my feeble instrumentality. It was as follows. I went to preach one Sabbath in 1873 at Forest Hill. In the evening of that day when in the pulpit I lost my text - it went from me altogether while they were singing the second hymn. I was thrown into the greatest confusion, and I trembled so violently that I felt quite ill, and I really thought I should not be able to say anything to the people; but instantly the following words fell upon my mind: "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what He hath done for my soul." I said, "Lord, that does not apply to me in this state." They came again the second time, and I had just found them when they had finished singing. I got up and told the people what had occurred, that my text had gone from me, and the words I was about to read came in their stead. I then read the above words (Psalm 66. 16). Light shone into my soul, and I spoke from them one hour with the greatest liberty. Just before I sat down I told the friends I should hear of something being done that evening.

I heard of nothing that evening, but when I came again the next time, after the evening service, as I was walking along the road with some friends, a young man came and touched me on the shoulder, and said he should like to speak to me. I stayed behind, and he addressed me in the following way, as near as I can remember: "I am the person that your discourse was made a great blessing to in the evening when you were here last." He then said he was in great trouble about his soul, and as he was coming to chapel he asked the Lord, if he was one of his people, to take away my text if I had one, and cause me to say it was gone, and that should be a token, and then give me one that He would make a blessing to his soul, and He gave him all his desire, so that he felt he could have stood up before all the congregation and told them what the Lord had done for His soul. I told him he was one of those who spoiled parsons. We shook hands and parted.

When I overtook my friends I told them what he had said to me, and they were very pleased to hear of it; and I hope I felt grateful unto the Lord for His mercy, which He manifested unto us both. This confirmed

me that the Lord had sent me to the work; but I had to prove that I was sent to wound as well as to heal, to be shunned as well as kindly received, and I believe the Lord works in one way to encourage His servants, and in the other to hide pride from their eyes; but I would rather be the receiver than the rejecter. I proved it in the following way.

The Word of God a dividing Word

I used at that time to supply at Wolverhampton, and I was received very courteously for a time. While this lasted I was invited to one of the deacons' houses to supper. I took him to be a very nice man, as I had never heard anything amiss as to his character; but the sequel will show he was not so good as I thought he was.

One Sunday evening I was led to speak about the dishonesty of some professors. I said I had seen men who held a responsible office take bribes, which I knew was wrong, and looking at him as he sat before me I exclaimed, "You will not bribe Death!" I did not know that he had ever done such a thing, but God knew, and he thought I knew.

When the service was over I went into the vestry as usual, but he was gone, and I had to put on my coat myself. I wondered why he had gone away so soon and left me; so I went to my lodgings, and the person where I stayed wondered that he did not stay and tell me if there was anything which caused him to hasten home. She said he would be sure to come before we went to bed, and let me know the cause of his leaving me to come alone to my lodgings. I had my supper. No deacon came.

Before I went to bed she came into my room and sat down, and began to tell me how he had deceived her by getting money from her by false pretences; and how he had built a new house which the people called "Bribe Cottage." She then told me that he was the head clerk at a large foundry, and he had the ordering of all the boat-loading. She said some of the men that worked for the firm, the boats they worked were their own. The others had to pay hire for theirs; and the rule was for each man to load in his turn. But those men who owned their own boats used to bribe him to load them first, when it was out of their turn, and by these means he saved money to build his house. She then asked me what I thought of him. I told her I did not think much of his religion. She then left the room.

I was pleased I did not know anything about his character before, and I saw at once the reason he did not ask me to supper as usual; but I was enabled to leave the matter with the Lord who judgeth righteous

judgment, and who will requite the wicked to his face.

Preaches at Peterborough

On another occasion I went to preach at Salem Chapel, Peterborough. I knew nothing of the affairs of the church there; but on Sunday morning I was led into such a line of things that I could not account for. Among other things, I said, there were unprincipled men even in churches, who had men to work for them, and they cheated them out of half their wages which were due unto them. I was told afterwards that there was a man sitting at my right hand, a member of their church, who had done so.

The friends thought someone had met me at the station on Saturday evening and told me all about the circumstance; so on Monday morning they sent a woman down to the station to meet me, and ask me who it was that met me on Saturday night. I told her, no one. She asked if I met anyone on the way to my lodgings. I told her, no, I had seen no one, neither had I any conversation with any person until after the morning service. She then said the thing was of the Lord. We shook hands, and then she left me and went home, and I came away by the train, wondering what she could mean. When I went again the friends explained all the circumstances to me; thus the Lord made His Word, through my instrumentality, a word of reproof to some as well as a word of comfort to others.

Ministers double-booked

On another occasion I went there to preach, and soon after I got there another minister came in on the same errand. This put the deacon in a fix, as it happened through a mistake of his; but it was all right, as the sequel will show. That night there came some friends into his shop from a village named Yaxley, about four miles from Peterborough, and he asked them if they had a supply for Sunday. They said, no. He told them he had two through a mistake; they said they should like one of us. He came and told us what these people said, and I said I would go. He thanked me, and told me he would drive me over the next morning. When Sunday morning came I asked the Lord to give me some token that I was right in going, and after we started I felt my heart drawn out unto the Lord very sweetly, which raised up faith in my heart to believe that I was in my right place; and so I proved I was, for the Lord blessed His Word, which I was enabled to speak unto the people, in a remarkable manner.

One poor old man came to me at the close of the evening service and said, before several of the friends, “My friend, you may make mistakes, but God never does;” and I don’t believe He does. I stayed there that night, and on Monday morning I had several presents given me. I returned to Peterborough, and stayed for a short time, and then went on home. Thus I was led to see how God over-rules the mistakes men make to accomplish His own purposes; and in this way He often confounds the wisdom of His people, and gets all the glory to Himself.

A weighty trial

In 1873 I received an invitation to preach at Stamford, and as I had the Sabbath they named open, I accepted the invite. I thought nothing about the engagement until the week I had to go. As I was walking across a field in the week I began to think where I had to go on Sunday. The thought darted suddenly into my mind that I was going to the place where Mr. Philpot had preached for 35 years. I stood quite still, like one confounded, and began to blame myself for ever making the engagement without considering where I was going. I became greatly distressed at the thought of going to attempt to speak to a people who had been favoured to sit under such a learned and well-taught man as he was. I thought they could never hear such an ignorant creature as I felt myself to be. I did not know what to do. I tried to ask the Lord what I was to do, but the heavens seemed like brass, and the earth like iron. I could get no access at a throne of grace, and as I had made the engagement I dare not say I could not come.

I was very much cast down all the week, and when Saturday came I left my home in the same state of mind. I arrived there in safety. One of the deacons met me at the station, and accompanied me to the house of Mr. Nickols in Peter Street. I felt very unhappy. I went to bed, but I had no sleep. I got up with the same feeling in the morning. After breakfast Mr. Nickols said to Mrs. Nickols, “Let us leave the room. Mr. Smith would rather be by himself.” And he was quite right. So they withdrew and left me.

As soon as they were gone I burst into a flood of tears at the thought of my ignorance, and having to stand before such a well-taught people as I believed them to be. I felt as though I should not be able to go to the chapel, for the thought of Mr. Philpot having preached there so long seemed so to confound me that I could neither pray nor think of anything to preach from. But while I sat with my head in my hands

upon the table, bathed in tears, the following words fell with sweetness and power into my soul: “He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.” I raised up my head and my hands, and looking up towards heaven, I exclaimed, “Lord, Thou knowest I do not want to sow anything but precious seed.” My bonds were now broken, and my fears were fled. I was now enabled to go forth in the strength of the Lord God of hosts, who can make a worm to thresh the mountains.

When we arrived at the chapel there was a good congregation of people assembled, but this did not move me. The service commenced, and I was greatly helped all through the services of the day; and the Word was made a great blessing unto many of the Lord’s people. Thus I was delivered out of that trouble, having proved the Lord to be better unto me than all my fears. I left on Monday morning, with the good wishes of the friends for my future prosperity in the ministry, which in some measure has been granted. I felt a sweet savour resting upon my spirit as I journeyed home. (TO BE CONTINUED)

“AND THE DOOR WAS SHUT”

The plane was full and ready to depart. An announcement was made: “Embarkation is complete.” Every passenger was seated - but still the aircraft did not move. Finally an air stewardess closed the door, and secured it by moving downwards a large lever with a satisfying clunk. This, however, was not the end of the process, and so still the aircraft did not move. A second member of the cabin staff was responsible for moving a second, smaller lever, which would not move if the first lever was not fully seated. Only then could the pilot be satisfied that it was safe to move towards the runway.

Watching this procedure reminded us of two portions of the word of God. First, when Noah, his family and the animals were safely aboard the Ark, we read: “And the Lord *shut him in*.” God Himself closed the door. The other passage was Matthew 25. 10, the parable of the wise and foolish virgins: “And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came: and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: *and the door was shut*.” Noah shut safely *in* the ark. The foolish virgins shut *out* of the marriage. Both very solemn passages to think about. Are *we* ready?

ONE THING NEEDFUL

While studying in Glasgow during 1907, Donald Macfarlane (later minister at Dingwall, Ross-shire) frequently called at the house of Angus Macphail who came from Jura and knew his father well. During one of these visits the conversation turned to the Gaelic language, and Mr. Macphail said to Donald: "If you were ever to become a minister you will need to learn Gaelic." Donald replied, "If I were to become a minister, I would need something more than Gaelic."

In the summer of 1909, while on holiday from university, Donald was employed for a short time as a teacher in Toren, at the north end of Raasay. It seems that it was during this period that he began to know that "something more than Gaelic." The gospel which he had been taught from his early childhood now came to him in a personal way.

As Donald became clearer about his own salvation, he became concerned for that of his sister Nellie. He wrote to her: "I am, it may be by fits and starts, learning that there is one thing that is needful - *absolutely needful*." He closed his letter with the appeal: "Don't skim over this letter, Nellie." (*From "I shall arise" edited by John Tallach.*)

DR. PAUL BRAND'S CHRISTMAS

Dr. Paul Brand's roots were in St. John's Wood, London. His mother, Evelyn, was a Strict Baptist. He became famed as a pioneer and leading surgeon in reconstructive hand surgery for leprosy sufferers. His life's work amongst India's poor was an extremely busy one. As the year drew to a close he felt guilty that he had perhaps neglected his family through the pressures of work. With Christmas coming he promised his children that they would have a wonderful time together.

When years before, out of the blue, he had received a letter telling him of an urgent need for a surgeon at Vellore, India, his reaction was, "It is impossible." "Why is it impossible?" asked his wife, Margaret. "Dozens of reasons," he replied. "It's out of the question. There is no possibility of its working out." "Unless God wants it so," returned his wife quietly.

He went.

* * * * *

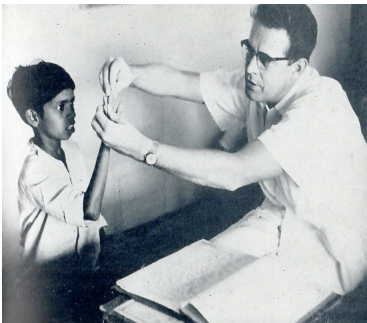
It was decided to spend Christmas with granny up in the mountains where the Kolaryan tribes lived. Granny, Paul's mother, cared for the

tribes where no other missionary had ever before ventured. She was now of the age when missionaries retired. But not Granny Evelyn. At fifty-five she looked the same as she had ten years earlier - wispy, bony, short grey hair tied in a ribbon, young eyes. Reluctantly the mission board acquiesced in her request to continue for a further period.

For the children, the journey to granny's would itself be an adventure. First, a 150 mile ride in the old Standard Vanguard car to Salem, then a further 20 mile trip in the Jeep because the Vanguard was not built to clear the rocks in the road, a 15 mile trip up the mountains, and finally the excitement of arriving at granny's little settlement.

In Madras, the capital city of the region, Dr. Brand had purchased a fine plump turkey. It had already been stuffed and roasted before they began their journey. It would need only a final heating. Most tenderly it was carried up the mountain. Granny agreed it was indeed a fine turkey. She was, however, insistent that it would not be eaten until the evening of Christmas Day. Instead, at noon, there would be rice and curry served out of doors to *all* the workers and their families. The children bore their disappointment and waited impatiently for the evening's major feature.

In the meantime Dr. Brand continued to have a busy Christmas Day.



Dr. Brand attending a patient

Granny had found him a number of leprosy patients to examine and treat. One, named Karuninasan, was wearing no shoes. His poor shrivelled feet were suffering greatly. Using material and implements at hand, a few bits of wood, his jackknife and a sickle Dr. Brand fashioned him a pair of functional shoes. These he strapped firmly on the poor stumps remaining of the sufferer's feet. Dr. Brand patiently instructed him on their

proper use. He must be especially careful when walking on uneven ground, nor must he let his foot turn, and he must *always* wear them. His next patient was a hillsman with an axe wound. Dr. Brand examined him, but found the wound was healing nicely.

As the evening came on, oil lamps were lighted and the turkey was heating in the oven. "Now," the children told each other, "it really will be Christmas." But first granny insisted there must be the usual evening

time of prayer with the teachers and their families. They crowded into the little house. The prayers went on and on, then came the time of singing of Christmas hymns, first in Tamil, then in English.

Suddenly the door was pushed open. Six rough village men in loincloths entered carrying a pole between them, a blanket knotted to the pole. Dropping it to the floor, they unknotted the blanket, and out rolled a woman, eyes staring, mouth open, lips dry and cracked.

“Back!” ordered granny in a strident voice, pushing the men aside.

Before Paul could reach the woman to find out if she was alive or dead, granny had located the feeble pulse and diagnosed the illness with uncanny accuracy.

“Typhoid. Dehydration. Water at once,” she shouted to one of her helpers. “No, no, not water, bring me some buttermilk. It’s more nourishing.”

A bowl of buttermilk was brought, with a spoon. Kneeling on the floor, granny cradled the woman’s head on her lap and, holding her face tenderly to one side, began spooning a few drops of fluid into her cheek, encouraging her with a constant flow of softly spoken Tamil to swallow it. Though the woman seemed completely unconscious, her throat did appear to move in little swallowing motions. If granny increased the dosage to a whole spoonful, the woman would choke, so she quietly sat there, dribbling the liquid between the lips drop by drop, talking softly, apparently oblivious to all else.

“She’ll keep at it all night,” thought Paul.

He looked around the circle of lamplit faces, and had a strange sense of unreality. Turning to the children, he knew they felt the same way. The strangeness of the scene was reflected in their wide staring eyes: the rough tribesmen with their black torsos and long bare legs, the squatting figures huddled against the dark, the woman who to all appearances was dead. He caught his wife’s worried glance and returned to reality. He touched granny on the shoulder.

“Mother,” he said very gently, “don’t you think perhaps since this is Christmas we could have some Christmas turkey with the children and let someone else give this woman her fluid?”

She turned on him with a look of absolute fury. “How dare you, Paul! How dare you talk about turkey when there’s a woman here dying! Can’t you see she’s dying?” And back she went to dribbling the buttermilk down the woman’s throat. Paul looked at Margaret,

Margaret looked at the children, and both nodded. Quietly she sidled out of the room with the children, took them into the little dining room, and there, by the light of a tiny, smoky hurricane lantern, and with almost no utensils, they dismembered the turkey. After the children had eaten their little Christmas dinner, they crept off to bed.

Eventually Paul was able to persuade granny to eat a few scraps of turkey, but then she went straight back to the woman. Paul also persuaded her that, with the children in the house, it would be better to take her typhoid patient elsewhere, so a fire was built on the floor of the new schoolhouse not yet in use. The woman was laid beside the fire with someone constantly to tend her. In the morning she was alive and much better. Paul, the doctor, would have thought in terms of chloramphenicol and other special drugs for typhoid, which could not possibly have been secured in time. But granny, with her tremendous concern and her instinct for the simple but right remedy, had saved a human life.

“Mummy, have we had Christmas?” one of the children asked the next day.

Looking back, they were to recognise it as a Christmas far more relevant than the usual tinsel and gift-wrapped variety. In a setting almost as simple and poor as the stable of Bethlehem they had actually seen “*Love come down at Christmas*”^{*} express itself in action.

It was an experience they would never forget.

^{*}This is a reference to Christina Rossetti’s poem, *Love came down at Christmas*, now widely re-arranged as a Christmas hymn. It contains the lines:

“Worship we the Godhead,
Love incarnate, Love divine.”

THE STARS

Scientists believe that the observable universe consists of *about* 100 billion galaxies. On average, each galaxy contains *about* one trillion stars. How wonderful that God knows the *exact* number, and knows the name of each one. “He telleth the number of the stars; He calleth them all by their names” Psalm 147. 4. (*Telleth* here with its old meaning of *counts*.)

THE HEAD-COVERING

Not long ago, we had some chapel visitors for supper after the Lord's Day evening service. When the time came 'to say grace' the lady visitor put on a headscarf which she carried in her bag. When grace had been said, she took it off and put it away.

Why did she do this? Well, she was putting into practice her understanding of 1 Corinthians 11. 5: "Every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head." We admired her for it.

God's distinction between men and women

When God created mankind, he did so with two, and only two, genders: male and female. In many areas of life the Bible draws a very clear distinction between the position of men and women. Although this article is about head-covering in worship, we will first of all think of some of the ways in which the God-given male and female genders are becoming blurred. Customs and conventions taken for granted in the past are being swept away at an alarming rate.

Recent changes - a few examples

- Our well-loved chain store, John Lewis, is no longer labelling clothes as boys' clothes and girls' clothes - they will simply be sold according to age, not sex.
- Mothercare has followed and is launching a gender-neutral range of clothing for babies and young children.
- A Sussex school has brought in a rule that girls cannot wear skirts - both boys and girls are to wear trousers (Priory School in Lewes, East Sussex).
- Another school has spent a large sum of money in providing new uni-sex toilets.
- Apple has produced gender-neutral emojis for the iPhone.

More serious than the above:

- Parents are beginning openly to bring up their children as gender-neutral.

- Fifty children a week are being referred to sex change clinics, including recently two four-year-olds, four children aged five, and seventeen six-year-olds. (How can children so young understand these things, let alone decide they wish to change their gender?)
- A Christian student has been dismissed from his social care course at Sheffield University after saying that same-sex marriage was a sin. His appeal to the High Court was lost, on the grounds that his remarks were “derogatory of gay men and bisexuals.”
- New gender-inclusive spellings have been introduced into the French language e.g. amis (friends) becomes ami-e-s to refer to both genders.
- A new gender neutral title ‘Mx’ is to join ‘Mr, Mrs, Miss and Ms’ on driving licences and other official documents. ‘Mx’ is to be used by individuals who do not identify with a particular gender.

All of these things are contrary to the plain declaration of the Word of God: “Male and female created he them” (Gen.1. 27 and 5. 2).

Women’s work?

The Word of God recognises that certain employments are better suited to a woman than a man. For example, Proverbs 31 lists among the virtues of the wife that of working wool with her hands (knitting we presume), preparation of food for her household, planting out the garden, ensuring the house is well lit with candles, spinning, clothing her family, tapestry, and so on.

Today, to refer to certain jobs as women’s work is certain to bring forth the wrath of someone. A recent advertisement for a take-away food service, “Give your wife a break from the kitchen,” caused such an uproar that it had to be withdrawn. How dare they suggest a wife is relegated to the kitchen? Really, this all seems very silly and childish, but sadly is typical of today, when ‘correctness,’ whether political or otherwise, is the order of the day.

Head-covering in worship

We turn now to the main part of this article on head-covering during worship.

It has always been the practice in our Strict Baptist chapels for women and girls to cover their heads during worship. This usually

extends to attendance at Sunday School as well. Until comparatively recent times this was normal throughout our country, and indeed throughout the whole of Christendom. Some women would not even *enter* a place of worship if they did not have with them a head-covering.

Gradually things have changed. It quite possible to attend a service, even in conservative evangelical churches, where not one woman covers her head. In the past, Roman Catholic women invariably covered their head when attending a service, often by wearing a headscarf, but we have noticed that frequently this is no longer the case.

Is it just a social change?

It could be argued that this leaving off a head-covering in worship is, partly at least, a social change. Years ago, few woman appeared in public without a hat. My own mother would put on a hat when she went shopping, and my grandchildren look in amazement at old photographs of Sunday School outings where the ladies sat on the beach wearing their hats. So, in one sense, there has been a social change, but this in no way changes what the Word of God says on the subject of head-covering in worship.

The main teaching on this subject is found in 1 Corinthians 11. On the face of it, it appears to be a very simple and clear concept. Verse 7 states, “A man indeed ought *not* to cover his head.” As this is a chapter contrasting the man’s position with the woman’s position, perhaps if nothing more at all had been written by the apostle, by inference we would have concluded that a woman indeed *ought* to cover her head. Nothing could be clearer, or more straight forward.

In what we might call controversial subjects, the fundamental, basic teaching, needs first to be understood and accepted. The explanations that follow are then more readily understood and interpreted. The paragraph above sets out the fundamental truth that in worship women cover their heads, men do not.

Is a woman’s long hair her covering?

The subject of head-covering is inextricably linked to the subject of length of hair. The purpose of this article is the head-covering rather than length of hair, but the fundamental teaching here is this:

- “If a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him.”
- “If a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her.”

It is at this point the controversy arises. There are many people who agree with the teaching that a woman should cover her head in worship, but argue that verse 15 shows us “her hair is given her for a covering.” God, they say, has already provided her with a natural covering, and to cover it again is quite unnecessary. Her hair suffices as a covering.

Although we can follow this line of thought, we believe it is fundamentally flawed, and that this cannot possibly have been Paul’s meaning. Verse 7 speaks of covering *the head*, not *the hair*. The man, whatever the state of his hair, is to remain uncovered, and the woman, whether blessed with much or little hair, is by contrast to cover her head. If the woman’s hair is all the covering she needs, then the man, who is not to cover his head, by following this line of argument would somehow have to remove his hair - which, of course, is absurd.

John Calvin puts it this way: “Women who had beautiful hair were accustomed to uncover their heads for the purpose of showing off their beauty. Should any object that her hair is enough, as being a natural covering, Paul says that it is not. It requires something else to cover it.” In other words, her glory is to be veiled in recognition of her submission.

Was it just a custom for the time?

Another argument often put forward is that Paul’s teaching on covering the head was a custom only for those times, and was not binding for all time. It has, people say, become a largely dated practice.

The apostle clearly knew that his teaching would be contentious, verse 16, and appears to have anticipated this very question. He makes it perfectly clear that it is not just custom, and clearly states that “the churches of God” had “no such custom.” Under the inspiration of the Spirit he was providing his teaching for the guidance of the churches in the new gospel age, not just for the time he was writing.

Was it not because ‘loose women’ in Corinth *uncovered* their heads?

Numerous commentators on the epistle point out that in Corinth the sign of a prostitute was the uncovered head: the Christian woman was therefore to ensure she covered her head. This is at best a speculative interpretation, and puts words into the mouth of Paul quite different to the reasons he himself gave.

Does the teaching apply only to married women?

No. Verse 5 says, “But *every* woman that prayeth or prophesieth

with her head uncovered.” Paul is setting out God’s order: first God, then the Man, then the Woman. In verse 9 he explains that the woman was created for the man. The teaching applies to every woman. The man, as the image and glory of God, leaves his head uncovered, but the woman covers her head and veils her natural glory in submission to the man. There is no mention of a husband in Paul’s teaching as it applies to every woman.

The woman wears her head-covering as an acknowledgement that she is under the man’s authority, and is to be in subjection to him. Verse 10 explains it: “For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head” - ‘power’ here meaning ‘authority.’ She has the symbol, or token, of man’s authority on her head. Note too, that if the woman is uncovered, “not only Christ, but all the angels too, will be witnesses of the outrage” (John Calvin).

Submission

Today, in western nations, it has become ‘politically incorrect’ even to suggest that women ought to submit to male authority. (Thankfully, many women in making their wedding vows still promise ‘to obey.’) The very idea that women should be required to wear head-coverings as a sign of their subordination to man is almost intolerable in the modern context. In any event, we are told, head-coverings no longer designate submission in our culture.

This may be true, but it does not alter the teaching of the Word of God. Modesty, submission and particularly marital submission, in the family and the church, lie at the heart of Paul’s epistle. Paul was writing to a church where there were contentions. He warned that their faith (and practices) should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. To the natural man, covering one’s head might appear “foolishness” (verse 14), but God’s order must stand. We must not be persuaded in any way that the head-covering no longer signifies anything today, or that this part of Paul’s epistle is no longer relevant.

Conclusion

It is solemn that today so many Christian worshippers believe the head-covering to be old-fashioned, out-of-date, and no longer of any significance. Some even say we are being legalistic. Towards the end of his epistle, Paul says “the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.” It was not just a teaching that Paul had devised for the times in which he was writing. To dismiss portions of

Scripture so lightly is a dangerous precedent.

We have one final thought, and that is that dear, sacred head, that once was covered with nothing but a crown of thorns. "And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon His head."

"O sacred head! Sore wounded,
With grief and shame bowed down,
How scornfully surrounded
With thorns, Thine only crown!"

Was ever there a head-covering like that covering?

WHO RANG THE BELL?

The dense Fenland mist came down suddenly. A wrong step will mean a watery end in the marshes and dykes. But a cry to the Lord for help does not go unanswered.

Exactly 300 years ago, in the year 1716, Matthew Wyldbore was born in Peterborough. When the city was threatened by 'Bonnie Prince Charlie,' Matthew became Captain of the local Peterborough Volunteer Corp which stood ready to fight.

Matthew served as the city's Member of Parliament. His responsibilities were great, and to get a little relief he found comfort in riding into the Fenland where he could enjoy the solitude of nature. On one occasion, just as he was about to return home at the end of the day, a mist descended. So dense was the mist he was quite unable to see his path and was in great danger. In dismay he dismounted his horse and prayed that God would save him from this unexpected danger. His prayer was this: "O Lord, once Thou gavest a star that guided the three wise men. Do now give me a sign to guide me home."

Scarcely had the words left his lips when the bells of Peterborough's church of St. John the Baptist tolled clearly through the swirling gloom. This cheered his heart and following the sound of the bell he was guided away from danger and safely returned to the city.

Who tolled the bell, and why, was never known. So thankful was he for his deliverance, in his will he left a bequest for the St. Johns' bellringers.

SPAIN, the third most-visited country in the world, receives over 75 million tourists each year! For the historian, the southern area of Spain known as Andalucia is brimful of interest. There is Granada with its Alhambra Palace (childhood home of our own Queen Catherine, first wife of Henry VIII); Seville with the largest Gothic cathedral in the world and burial place of Christopher Columbus; Cordoba, once the most important city in Europe with its architectural masterpiece of La Mezquita (Great Mosque), now a Christian site with a cathedral built right inside. We are grateful to Philip Skelton for this account of how Europe was preserved from Muslim domination after Muslim forces overran and conquered Spain.

THE BATTLE OF TOURS

by Philip Skelton

A few months ago, Charles Moore, the former editor and now thoughtful columnist for the Daily Telegraph, wrote as follows:

“As a beneficiary of Western civilisation, I feel deeply grateful that Charles Martel won the Battle of Tours against the invading Islamic army in 732.”

What was Mr. Moore, a practising Roman Catholic, referring to?

As the Roman Empire declined, during the 5th century AD Spain came to be governed by the Visigoths, a people of uncertain origin who had come from the North, and had become at least nominally Christian. Following the death of Muhammed in 632 AD and a lot of Muslim infighting, the Islamic world was governed for a long period by the Umayyad dynasty, whose base was in Syria, and under whom Islam was spread by military conquest until eventually more than a quarter of the world's population was under its rule, including much of North Africa.

In 711 AD Umayyad forces landed at Gibraltar, the Visigoths were

defeated at the Battle of Guadalete, and by 718 most of the Iberian Peninsula was ruled by the Muslim Caliphate which took Cordoba in southern Spain for its capital. It was only in the north-western corner where what might loosely be called 'Christian civilisation' survived.



*La Mezquita, the great
Mosque-Cathedral of Cordoba*

The Umayyads crossed the Pyrenees into southern France, and as they tried to push north were defeated by the Frankish forces under Charles Martel, the grandfather of Charlemagne the first Holy Roman Emperor, at the Battle of Tours (or Poitiers) in 732 AD. This marked the furthest advance of the Islamic forces, but it was to be more than seven centuries later, in 1492, that the final stronghold of the Moors (as the Islamic people were often known)

in Granada surrendered to the forces of Christendom of a newly united Spain, ruled by Ferdinand and Isabella (who, incidentally, were the parents of Catherine of Aragon, the first wife of Henry VIII).

So, as a consequence of that Battle of Tours, referred to in the newspaper article, in the mercy and providence of God, Europe was saved from Islamic domination, and the way left open for the glorious Reformation of the sixteenth century, many hundreds of years later.



Alhambra Palace, Granada - childhood home of Catherine of Aragon

The Moors have left many artefacts behind them in southern Spain, particularly architectural, such as the famous **Alhambra palace in Granada**, and the great **Mosque in Cordoba**, which has now for several hundred years been a Roman Catholic cathedral, with an extraordinary blend of Islamic and Renaissance styles.

Also in Cordoba is one of only three synagogues said to survive in Spain after the Jews were all expelled from the country in 1492, following centuries of often cruel oppression. It is a tiny but beautiful building, long disused, with many verses from the Psalms carved in Hebrew into the stonework. All that can be deciphered are helpfully translated into English on perspex panels on the walls.



In the picture above the lower line of carved Hebrew script (just above the arches on the wall) has the following texts:

Psalm 29:2 Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name.

Psalm 96:9 O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth.

Psalm 66:4 All the earth shall worship thee, and shall sing unto thee; they shall sing to thy name. Selah.

GRAVESTONE MEMORIAL

My time had come, I in a moment fell,
And had not time to bid my friends farewell;
God does not always us a warning give
So pray be careful how you live.

(Harpenden Graveyard; name unreadable)

THE BURIAL OF DR. ANDREW GIFFORD

Dr. Andrew Gifford died at the age of 83 after 60 years in the ministry. He administered the Lord's Supper just two weeks before his death. He was very weak, and the first sentence he uttered was, "With my soul have I desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer." He broke the bread, but was unable to pour out the wine.



He died on Saturday morning, June 19th, 1784, and was buried in Bunhill Fields the following Friday at 6 o'clock in the morning. This was according to his own request, for he had often expressed the wish that he might be buried at an early hour, in order to testify his faith in the resurrection of Jesus, who arose early on the first day of the week.

It was on this occasion that John Ryland delivered, in the presence of two hundred ministers and a vast number of onlookers, a most remarkable grave-side address. His closing remarks were:

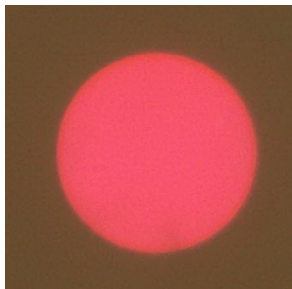
"Farewell, thou dear old man! We leave thee in the possession of Death until the Resurrection Day, but we bear witness against thee, O King of terrors, at the mouth of this dungeon - thou shalt not always have possession of this dead body. It shall be demanded of thee by the Great Conqueror. At that moment thou shalt resign thy prisoner.

O ye ministers of Christ, ye people of God, ye surrounding spectators, prepare, prepare to meet this old servant of Christ at that day, that hour when this whole place shall be nothing but life, and death shall be swallowed up in victory!"

A FEW CURRENT MATTERS

“And there was darkness over all the land”

The extraordinary phenomenon seen in many parts of Britain on Monday, 16th October was almost like an eclipse. Storm Ophelia swept sand from the Sahara desert, and smoke from wildfires raging over Spain and Portugal, high into the atmosphere. The particles filtered out blue and violet light, allowing only red and orange to shine through. In Hertfordshire it was more a reddish colour, looking the size of a full moon. With some awe the words came to us: “The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come” (Joel 2. 31).



*As seen at Harpenden
at 2.15 pm.*

BC and AD

A growing number of educational authorities are abandoning the use of the traditional calendar terms BC and AD in favour of the more neutral BCE and CE on the ground that the older terms might upset ‘non-Christians.’ BC stands for Before Christ and AD for Anno Domini - Latin for ‘Year of Our Lord.’ The new terms alter nothing. Guidelines for schools in East Sussex state that ‘BCE and CE are now used in order to show sensitivity to those who are not Christians.’ However, Muslim and Jewish leaders have said they are not offended by the old terms. We believe that this is all part of the politically-correct agenda to rid Britain of its Christian heritage.

Centenarians on the increase

Centenarians are the fastest-growing age group in Britain. The number of over-100's has doubled in the last 15 years. There were 14,910 centenarians alive in 2016. Many more women than men live to very old age, with five over-100 women to every one man. It is predicted that one in every three babies born today will live to see their 100th birthday. However, “My times are in Thy hand” (Psalm 31. 15).

Women allowed to drive

Women in Saudi Arabia are to be allowed to drive for the first time in 60 years. King Salman has issued an order removing the kingdom’s status as the only country where female motorists are not allowed.

Hymn books becoming obsolete

Churches are spending up to £50,000 installing audio-visual systems so that hymns can be projected on to a screen. Some churches say it is cheaper to subscribe to a licensing service than to buy hymn books. However, some churches have run into trouble. The church of St. Mary and St. Cuthbert, an 11th century church in Co Durham, has been refused permission to install four 50in screens on pillars in view of its Grade 1 listed status. We feel sure that true hymn-lovers will always prefer to have a hymnbook. What about those verses people mark because it has meant something to them? We remember hearing of one old man who, when he went on holiday, put his shaver in one pocket and his hymnbook in the other! He certainly had no use for a £50,000 AV system in order to sing the Lord's "praises with understanding" (Psalm 47. 7.)

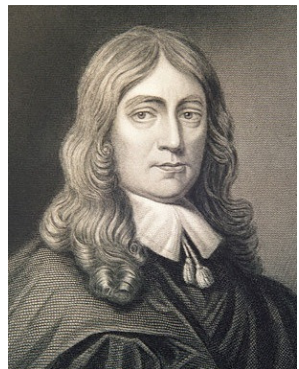
Not *everyone* believes in evolution

A survey has found that one in ten Britons do not believe in evolution. Around 10 per cent agreed with the statement, 'Humans and other living things were created by God and have always existed in their current form.' Dr. Fern Elsdon-Baker of Newman University in Birmingham, who carried out the research, said: "The survey does throw up some startling results when it comes to public views of the origin of humans and human consciousness."

John Milton, 350 years

No doubt many of our readers will have received letters through the post over the last month or so with the post mark, 'John Milton 350 years.'

This at first seemed rather strange as it did not seem to be the anniversary of his birth in 1608, or his death in 1674. It was, in fact, the anniversary of the publication of his epic poem, *Paradise Lost*, in 1667. The poem, with over 10,000 lines of verse, deals with the biblical story of the fall of man. It includes the story of Adam and Eve, the temptation of Eve by Satan, and their expulsion from the Garden of Eden. Milton stated that his purpose was to 'justify the ways of God to men.' Having gone totally blind in 1652 at the age of 44, he wrote *Paradise Lost* entirely by dictation. Perhaps we best remember him for his hymn,



John Milton

“Let us, with a gladsome mind, Praise the Lord, for He is kind,” which he wrote when he was only 15 years old (no. 11 in the Young People’s Hymnal). Milton once met Galileo Galilei, the astronomer (see *Perception* Spring 2017).

New antibiotic

The Chief Medical Officer for England (Dame Sally Davies) has warned that we are on the brink of a ‘post-antibiotic era’ in which people could die from infections caused by relatively minor injuries such as a scratch. Older antibiotics are increasingly failing to work due to their overuse. Only a handful of new antibiotics have been discovered in recent years. Closthioamide, which was discovered seven years ago, is being researched by scientists, and could be used to tackle antibiotic-resistant diseases. It works by blocking the action of certain enzymes that maintain DNA inside bacterial cells. The researchers warn that closthioamide is at least five years away from being available on prescription.

In the US scientists have re-engineered the drug vancomycin so that it fights bacteria in three different ways, making it harder for bacteria to develop resistance against it. Again, it could be five years before it is available.

Hymn singing - lining out

A question appeared recently in a national newspaper asking if any churches in Britain still practice ‘lining-out’ when singing hymns. In the 1600’s and 1700’s literacy rates were low, and so the leader would read or sing the line of a hymn (or psalm) and the congregation would follow. The answer in the newspaper said that some churches in the Western Isles still maintain the practice. The congregation at Stornaway, on the Isle of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides, still sing line by line. Quite a number of Strict Baptist chapels at one time read hymns verse by verse, and the Editor was used to that at Hope Chapel, Stotfold where he was brought up. The church decided to change this sometime in the 1950’s. A seven or eight verse hymn could take a long time to sing! If the minister kept on rather late, it would be announced, “We will sing it through, friends.”

Religion falling away

A British Social Attitudes survey has found that the number of people in Britain who belong to an organised religion has dropped below half for the first time. In the 1980’s more than two-thirds of the population

said they were members of a major religion. “For that day shall not come, except there be a **falling away** first” (2 Thess. 2. 3).

Most of the decline has come in the Church of England, who claim that more people now follow the Church on social media than bother to attend a service. Church leaders say they have 1.2 million followers who pray online through Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn. The Word of God speaks very clearly: “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is” (Hebrews 10. 25).

Hottest known planet

Using telescopes in South Africa, scientists have discovered the hottest planet in the known universe, with a surface temperature of around 7,820F. The planet, known as KELT-9b, is 650 light years away from Earth. It is so close to its host star that a year is just a day and a half long. Job once asked the question: “Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven?” In these days when knowledge is increased, all these discoveries show the mighty power of God who spake and it was done: “And God said, Let there be a firmament . . . and it was so.”

New plants discovered

Researchers at Kew Gardens have revealed the discovery of no less than 1,700 new plant species in the last year alone. Many of these plants have potential for food, medicine, and other uses. Among the trees discovered is Paubrasilia which is so flexible it is thought it would make excellent violin bows. Psalm 104. 14 speaks of God causing to grow “herb for the service of man.” As new plants are discovered God continues to show His mindfulness towards His own creation.

The modern funeral

Most adults believe that funeral services do not need to be sober affairs with mourners dressed in black. Funerals followed by a party are becoming more common, with funeral directors receiving many requests for unusual ceremonies. There are no legal restrictions on where a funeral can be held and no licences are needed. To the Christian a funeral service should be a solemn occasion. As we gaze on a coffin there is one word written over it: SIN. We often think of those words concerning Stephen: “And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.”

Teenagers shun smoking and drinking

A Department of Education report says that in 2005, 30 per cent of 14

and 15-year-olds admitted drinking - but this had fallen to 12 per cent by 2014. Smoking decreased from 17 per cent to 8 per cent. Cannabis use declined from 21 per cent to 10 per cent. We are pleased to hear of this decline in what the report calls 'risky behaviours.' On the other hand, we are shocked at the drinking and degrading behaviour of university students at their 'freshers' week,' which for many began on September 18th. May all our young readers be kept from these excesses, which many students go on to regret.

Native ladybirds in decline



Harlequin ladybird

Our familiar species of ladybirds are being killed off by an invasion of the larger, multi-coloured harlequin ladybirds. The harlequins, originally from Asia, were unknown in Britain until 2004. They eat the young of other ladybirds, and carry a fungal disease that can be lethal for our native species. They arrived on flowers, fruit and vegetables from the continent, although some simply flew across the channel. In the U.S. they are known as the Halloween ladybeetle, because they enter homes towards the end of October as winter approaches. Strangely enough, one entered the Editor's home exactly on Halloween, 31st October and settled on a curtain!

Many of our native species of butterflies are also on the decline, partly through cold and wet springs, and partly through loss of habitat and pollution. Caterpillars in urban areas become butterflies up to five days earlier because of heat from buildings and cars.

The evil of abortion

It was reported earlier in the year that abortion provider, Marie Stopes, has been signing off abortions for thousands of women following only a short conversation with a call centre worker. The doctors who sign them off have never met the women, contrary to guidance from both the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and the Department of Health. An undercover reporter said to staff: "I just don't want the baby." This was recorded on official records as: "The client is unable emotionally to continue with the pregnancy," which fits the legal requirement. It is said that one doctor signed off 26 consent forms in two minutes.

More recently, the CQC has uncovered evidence that the same provider has told staff to contact clients who have previously decided

not to have an abortion because it was ‘linked to their performance bonus.’ The clinic said this was ‘categorically untrue,’ but the CQC maintains that “Did not proceed” was measured as a Key Performance Indicator and linked to performance bonuses.

In contrast to the above, we have been glad to hear of the very public stand taken by Tory MP Jacob Rees-Mogg who said he was ‘completely opposed’ to abortion, and that all terminations were ‘morally indefensible.’ The North East Somerset MP was branded ‘out of touch’ by critics. ‘Life begins at conception,’ he said. Labour MP Yvette Cooper said his views were ‘shocking.’ Former MP Ann Widdecombe said: ‘I agree with Jacob - a child is a child.’

Abortion is legal in England up to 24 weeks under the Abortion Act 1967. Around 190,000 abortions are carried out each year in the UK. The Scripture says: “Thou shalt not kill” - including babies of any age.

Scientists plan to make human cells

Within the next ten years, scientists hope to make chemically accurate versions of the human DNA code. The completed DNA will then be implanted into a living cell which will start to divide, producing a complete human cell. Critics have warned that the technology could be a step towards creating entire ‘designer humans.’ Researchers say this will be impossible. The cost of the scheme could be in excess of £2billion. It is thought that a complete set of genetic material in our cells contains six billion pieces of information.

Time to accept same-sex marriage

The Education Secretary, Justine Greening, has said that the Church of England should drop its opposition to same-sex marriage, and ‘keep up’ with modern society. “I think that people want to see our major faiths keep up with modern attitudes in our country,” she said. Sadly, our Prime Minister has made similar remarks. Our guide must always continue to be the Word of God: “For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and cleave unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.”

“Mercy hitherto has spared,
But have mercies been improved?
Let us ask, Am I prepared,
Should I be this year removed?”

TREE BARK

What a cheering sight in winter is the wonderful pure white bark of the Himalayan Silver Birch trees found at Anglesey Abbey in Cambridgeshire. The meandering path through the Winter Garden reveals new surprises on every side.

The bark of a tree is similar in many ways to our own skin. It consists of several layers, the innermost of which transports sugars from the leaves to the rest of the tree. The outside layer is known as cork cambium, very tough, and usually all we see of the bark. This outer layer protects the tree from scorching sun and drying winds. It also helps to ward off fungi and many insects that would otherwise take easy advantage of the sugar-rich sap. The bark of the birch tree is high in oils, and is waterproof and resistant to decay. The bark of other trees, such as the Oak, is very high in tannins, which are poisonous and protect the tree from insects.

Although the bark does an excellent job of protecting the tree, many determined creatures are keen to get at the nutritious cambium. Voles often eat the bark at the base of young trees and kill the saplings, and deer also strip bark causing much damage. The picture shows woodpecker damage to an elm tree.



One tree that fascinates visitors to Anglesey Abbey is a specimen Tibetan Cherry right by the footpath. The bark appears to be highly polished. The reason for this is that visitors cannot forbear touching and stroking this bark. The oil from the hands of thousands of people has resulted in the appearance of a highly-polished piece of furniture.

We cannot but admire the great Creator who has provided us with such lovely sights in the depth of winter. Moreover, the air is full of the scent of the Christmas Box, Mahonia, Chimonanthus, and the very sweet perfume of the winter-flowering honeysuckle.