

# PERCEPTION

A Quarterly Magazine for Young People



“And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes,  
and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of  
man hath not where to lay his head” (Lk 9.58).

**SPRING 2020**

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## EDITORIAL

Dear young friends and all our readers:

On 6th May 1954 something happened that people said was impossible. Someone had run the distance of one mile in under four minutes. Roger Bannister achieved this at Oxford, watched by a crowd of 3,000 people. His timing was 3 minutes 59.4 seconds!

Men and women have always been fascinated by records – the fastest, the longest, the highest, the most expensive – the list is endless. No wonder that the Guinness Book of Records is the world's best selling copyrighted book ever, with sales of more than 100 million copies in 100 different countries and 37 languages.

Records set by men may be broken. They are not fixed. It was not long before Roger Bannister's record was broken (he broke it himself a few weeks later), and today the record for running the mile stands at 3 minutes 43.1 seconds.

The present day is obsessed with speed. How fast is our broadband service? How long does it take to get through on the phone to Customer Services? Does the new railway timetable cut any minutes off our journey time? Can I save time on the school run by going this way rather than that? We are pressing ahead with the new HS2 railway line between London and the West Midlands at an estimated cost of over £100 billion pounds, a massive investment, in order to secure a cut in the journey time from London to Birmingham of 29 minutes!

In earlier days to send a letter from London to Australia could take many weeks or months – if it arrived at all. Today, an email can be sent from London to Australia arriving 0.2 seconds after pressing the send key – an incredible 85,000 miles per second.

It does not seem so relevant today, but in former days when employing a secretary there were two questions always asked. What is your shorthand speed? What is your typing speed? If an applicant could write shorthand at 100wpm (words per minute) and type at 60wpm that was considered good enough for most jobs. However, the record for writing Pitman's shorthand is an incredible 350wpm achieved during a

two-minute test in 1922. In reality, most employers were more concerned about *accuracy* rather than *speed*.

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Although these facts and figures of human records may be of interest, much more important are those mentions in the Word of God of things that can never be broken. Human records can be broken, but God's word is fixed and eternal. We sing of it in John Newton's hymn:

“Glorious things of thee are spoken,  
Zion, city of our God!  
*He whose word can not be broken,*  
Formed thee for his own abode.”

God's word can never be broken – it is unchangeable: “For ever, O Lord, Thy word is settled in heaven” (Psalm 119. 89). It is *for ever*, it is *settled*. It will never be broken in spite of every effort of man to undermine it. For many years God's word has been questioned, explained away, even ridiculed, but it continues as it ever was – the Word of the Eternal God.

We have spoken of the current obsession with speed, but God's word speaks a number of times when haste is a good thing. Having heard the good tidings of great joy that a Saviour was born, we read that the shepherds “came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger.” They went into the town with as much speed as they could. All of us have heard the same good tidings, but are we *hasting* to find the Saviour? Or are we putting things off? Perhaps, to use Joseph Hart's phrase, we are tarrying till we're better. If so, we shall never come at all! Have we forgotten that “the king's business requires haste”? May the Lord cause us to flee without delay unto Him who is our only hope.

In Psalm 70 twice we find David beseeching the Lord to “make haste.” His prayer was, “Make haste, O God, to deliver me; make haste to help me, O Lord.” This was in the first verse of the Psalm, but at the end of his prayer he again asks the Lord to make haste: “But I am poor and needy: make haste unto me, O God.” There was an urgency in his prayer. He wanted the Lord to come to him – and he wanted Him to come *now*. I wonder if, in your feelings, you have ever come to the end. Things are just too much for you. You feel you cannot continue unless the Lord appears. Well, in your need, like David you can beg of the



Lord to “make haste.” He will not be displeased with such a prayer.

The apostle James tells us there is one thing that should be swift (speedy), but two things that should be slow: “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath” (James 1. 19). This is a very wise exhortation, but one that can take us years to learn. How many things have we said that we wish we hadn’t? The editor remembers a teacher, who, when asking a question, would always say: “Think twice before you answer.” No doubt that was not quite what James had in mind, but it is good advice nevertheless. Hasty answers are not usually good, and sometimes it is better not to speak at all! Solomon tells us that a wise man refrains his lips: “In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise” (Prov.10. 19). Recently I heard of someone who had a visitor staying with him for a night or two who was known as a rather controversial person. He generally had some ‘issue’ to bring up. The host said, “I let him talk, but I said nothing.” He wisely “refrained his lips.”

Another piece of advice is found in God’s word, this time in the book of Ecclesiastes chapter 5: “Be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools” – the sacrifice of fools meaning ‘much speaking.’ Professor William Robinson, for more than sixty years a minister in the Presbyterian Church in the United States, once had a student who was in the habit of firing off questions before Robinson had a chance to answer him. In the end, good-naturedly, he took him by both ears and said, “Dear brother,” (he always called his students Dear brother), “Dear brother, the good Lord gave you two ears but only one mouth – now hush and listen.” We all have a lot to learn, and should always be ready to listen before advancing our own viewpoint. Above all, we should listen to what the Lord says to us through His holy Word: “I will hear what God the Lord will speak,” said the Psalmist.

Finally, may we remember that everything we say, whether we say it hastily or slowly, is known by God. David said, “For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether.” How we need our tongue (James called it a “little member”) to be kept.

Wishing all our readers the Lord’s richest blessing.

The Editor.

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**JOHN Warburton**

Some of the Lord's wonderful dealings

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**Birth**

I was born at Stand, about five miles from Manchester, in October, 1776. My parents being poor, I had but little opportunity of acquiring human learning, though, by the tender mercy of God, I obtained a little reading and writing, a blessing for which I have often felt thankful.

My dear mother was, I believe, a vessel prepared unto glory before the mountains were brought forth. This God showed me when I was about eight years of age, in a manner that has often filled me with surprise. I had frequently been astonished to see my dear mother sighing, groaning and weeping when reading her Bible, but, upon one occasion, I distinctly recollect that a neighbouring woman called in and, observing my mother in tears, asked what was the matter with her that she was in so much trouble. My mother, as soon as she was able to speak, cried out that her poor soul was lost for ever and ever; at which the woman was astonished, and so was I. The woman endeavoured to comfort her by telling her that she had been a good wife, mother and neighbour, and, consequently, could have nothing to fear; for if such good people as she were lost, woe to thousands besides! "Moreover," she continued, "you ought not to indulge in such thoughts as these, for who can tell in what they will end?"

My poor mother, however, could not drink in such doctrine as this, but exclaimed, "Oh! I am the greatest sinner that ever was upon the earth, and lost I must be for ever! There is no salvation for me! O that I had never been born!" The woman bade her remember that there is mercy with God for every one that repenteth. "Yes," said my mother, "there is to His own people, but I am not one of them. I am a castaway, lost for ever and ever!"

**Natural convictions**

How astonishing did all this appear to my mind! How did I desire to know who God was, and who were His people! I remember that I cried and, retiring to a private place, said my prayers twice very devoutly, and was as firmly resolved as any Arminian in the world to be good; "for God," thought I, "will love me if I continue good, and I shall become one of His people; and what a happy people must they be who are God's, and how holy, too; for if my poor mother, who is so good, is



*John Warburton as a young man*

not one of them, how very good they must be.” I then vowed and promised how good I would be. I found upon examination that I had done many wrong things, such as frequently telling untruths, using bad words, and occasionally stealing a toy from the children with whom I was in the habit of playing. Then I prayed the Lord to forgive me, and vowed never to commit the like again.

From this period I went on with many natural convictions, until I arrived at the age of fifteen or sixteen years, when, getting acquainted with many loose

companions, I was given up to all manner of wickedness, and so continued until my arrival at that time and place which God had purposed – not to offer, but to call by grace:

“To change the heart, renew the will,  
And turn the feet to Zion’s hill.”

### **Visits Bolton**

I was at that time married, and hearing that a new church, containing a fine organ, was to be opened at Bolton (distant about six miles), I made up my mind to go, and to enjoy myself by spending a few shillings that I had at the various public houses on my way home. These houses had been my delight for years; but, blessed be the dear Lord, He had designed other things.

When the day came I went, and was greatly pleased with the appearance of the church. But when the minister entered the reading-desk, I was struck with astonishment at observing that he was the very man whom I had heard preach one sermon in our parish church many years before; a sermon which had alarmed me to that degree that I had made many vows to live a new life, and for several weeks afterwards durst scarcely look or speak for fear of sinning. I had soon, however, broken my vows, and become worse than ever in open wickedness, until

God now laid hold of me. When the minister began to read the prayers I thought I had never heard them read in like manner before. But when he got into the pulpit and read his text, it came from his mouth into my heart like a two-edged sword.

His text was, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." I verily believed that he pointed



*Rev. William Jones, pastor of Mawdsley Street Chapel, Bolton for 34 years. The newly-erected chapel seated 800 people. This searching minister, so used in John Warburton's case, died in 1842 at the age of 58. His last words, spoken with almost his final breath, were "My Father! My Father!"*

directly at me; for his eyes appeared to look right through me, and I thought I should have dropped into hell. All my sins and iniquities from a child stared me in the face, and I trembled like a leaf. He began to show what man was by nature, and how far natural men might go in vowing and breaking their vows, in sinning and repenting, until, if grace prevented not, hell proved their awful abode. He showed that for men to vow was merely to mock God and deceive their own souls. My very hair stood on end with the violence of my feelings, and I verily believed that he meant me and none else in the church. Nay, he so particularly described my ungodly life, my vowing and vow-breaking, and so entered into every transaction of it, as if he had been an eye-witness to everything I had

done or said, that I looked up to him, wondering whether he were a man or an angel. I thought that he fastened his eyes directly upon me, and pointed personally at me with his finger; and when he had thus cut me up, root and branch, he repeated his text again like thunder in my ears: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." O the power with which it entered my soul, like a dagger that cut me through and through. I now saw and felt (what I had never seen or felt before) that I had been mocking God and deceiving my soul all my life long. O how my poor soul heaved up with

grief and sorrow, “God be merciful to me, a sinner.” “Oh!” thought I, “He can never show mercy to such a wretch as I, for I have mocked God all these years; and what a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” And again the dear man repeated, “God is not mocked.”

As soon as he concluded, I crept out of the church as if I had stolen something. Ashamed to look anybody in the face, I hastened through



*Mawdsley Street Chapel, Bolton  
before demolition in 1963*

the town, and with difficulty refrained from roaring aloud, like a bear, as I passed through it. I thought that everybody gazed and pointed at me.

On my way home, the moment I got into the fields, where no human eye could see and no human ear could hear me, I fell upon my knees, and with all my power of body and soul cried, “God be merciful to me, a sinner.” How often I repeated the publican’s prayer I know not; but when I arose from my knees I went on wringing my hands, sobbing and exclaiming, “O fool that I have been!

How often would God have saved me, but I would not. Now it is all over for ever and ever! O the dreadfulness of appearing before that God that will not be mocked is past describing.”

When I passed a public-house I durst not even turn my eyes to look at it, much less enter it to enjoy the pleasure I had anticipated upon leaving home. All the dreadful things I had been guilty of in these wretched houses arose before my poor soul like an army in battle. “O,” cried I, “cursed places, cursed places; ye have ruined my soul for ever! O that I had but kept my vows! O what shall I do? whither can I flee? How can I stand to hear the awful sentence, Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels?”

### **Returns home**

Upon reaching home, my wife was surprised to see me returned so early. She wondered at my being so quiet, and asked what was the matter. I told her I was very unwell, and did all I could to hide the grief of my soul. But concealment for any length of time was impossible. So



great was my misery, and such fast hold had it of me, that at every opportunity I could get by myself I was upon my knees, crying, "God be merciful to me, a sinner!" sometimes repeating the cry until my very breath failed me. She soon, therefore, perceived that something had happened, and charged me with having turned Methodist. I told her that I knew not what I had turned; but this I did know, that I was one of the vilest sinners upon earth, and that if I did not mend my ways, repent, and find mercy, I was as sure of going to hell as that I had been born; and that I would turn anything if I could but thereby save my poor soul; for as yet I could think of no other way of my soul being saved but by mending my life, doing my duty and pleasing God.

### **A second visit to Bolton**

The next Lord's day morning I set off for Bolton to hear the same minister, whom I afterwards undersood to be a Mr. Jones. O with what earnestness did I pray and beg all the way that he might tell me what to do that I might be saved! But instead of this, he cut me up to all intents and purposes, and declared that all those who were working for life were under the law, and therefore under its curse. Thus during the whole day I could hear of no encouragement save to God's own people, and I returned as miserable as ever. O what a journey I had home! sometimes wringing my hands and crying with bitter lamentations, "O that I had never been born! O my poor soul, thou art lost for ever! O my place will be with devils and damned souls for ever and ever!" How I reached home the Lord only knows, but when I did my wife asked me how I was. "Oh," cried I, "worse than ever! it is all over with me! there is no hope but for God's people!"

She told me I should go no more to hear that man, for he would be sure to drive me mad, and I should be taken to the mad-house, which I, indeed, began to fear would really be the case. I therefore thought I would try to put away the thoughts I had of death and eternity, and tried to compose my mind as well as I could, consoling myself with the resolution to do the best in my power, and perhaps things would be better than my fears.

I went, therefore, to bed rather more comfortable; but I had not been in bed long before that text thundered in my heart and in my ears, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." "O," cried my soul, "that is I, that is I. I am the wicked wretch who has forgotten God, mocked God, abused God, despised God. O my poor,

ruined, lost soul, thou wilt be turned into hell with all the nations that forget God.”

O the dreadful feelings I experienced! I actually thought that the devil was then coming to fetch me, body and soul together. O how my inmost soul did cry to God that He would spare me but for that night. How often did I promise that I would do all that ever I could to please Him, and entreated with tears that He would not let the devil fetch me that night. And I thought the Lord heard me, for I felt more composed, and shortly dropped asleep.

Upon awaking in the morning, what thankfulness I felt to God that He had spared me and that I was not in hell. And who can tell, thought I, but God may yet have mercy on so vile a wretch, who has gone to such lengths in sin against Him and yet been spared to the present moment? For several days after this I went on pretty comfortable. O the fear I had of sinning! for I thought that, if I could but keep from sin God would, perhaps, pardon me what was past in His own time.

So determined was I to dishonour God no more, that I went into a secret place, where no eye but God’s could see me, and vowed with all my might to leave all the world and turn to the Lord and be His, and called upon Him to be witness of my sincerity.

### **Card playing**

But alas, alas! what is all our fleshly sincerity? The first blast from the devil blows it like chaff before the wind. I had been in the habit for many years of card-playing. What shall I do, thought I, when Saturday night comes? I am engaged to play a few games at the card-table, but I will not go, and they will not come for me.

On Saturday night, however, my partner at the card-table called for me and, saying it was near the appointed time, asked me if I was ready? “What shall I do?” thought I. “If I refuse they will call me a Methodist, and spread that report all over the parish. I will go just this once, and then tell them I intend to go no more.”

With this determination I went off. But oh, the misery that came upon me, as if I had been going to the gallows! But the fear of being called religious and a Methodist so overcame me that I entered the house and sat down with the rest at the table.

When we each had our cards dealt out, and I had just taken mine, O how my guilt stared me in the face. How did conscience thunder in my ears that I had broken the vows which I had called upon God to witness!

And the old text, too, came like a thunder-clap that shook both body and soul: “Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”

I was so confused and confounded that I knew not what I was doing, and could no more tell which card to throw down than if I had never seen one in my life. In short, I entirely lost the game, which so enraged my partner that he called me the greatest fool he had ever seen, and the others heartily laughed at me. Poor things! they little knew what I had to grapple with within.

I made the best I could of the matter; and, to prevent their knowing the real cause, I said that I was very poorly and must go home. Thus speaking, I took my hat without ceremony, and it being dark, went into the fields, where no human eye could see me. It was a very dark night, and Oh, the awful feelings of my heart! I thought of my vows and my breaking of them; of the dreadful majesty of that God whom I had mocked a thousand times; and of the horrible certainty of fast-approaching death. And then those dreadful words came to my mind, “Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out My hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all My counsel, and would none of My reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh” (Prov. 1. 24-26). They made my very hair to stand on my head, and my poor soul so to tremble that I feared I was dropping into hell every moment. My very joints were loosened, and what to do, or whither to go, I could not tell.

I fell upon my knees and attempted to pray, but that text stopped my mouth in an instant: “The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord” (Prov. 15. 8). “Then,” cried I, “it is all over for ever; for I am the vilest wretch either in hell or out of hell; and if God will not hear the prayers of a poor, wicked sinner, it is all over for ever and ever.”

### **“Seek, and ye shall find”**

And now all my sins from a child came upon me like an army, with such weight that they actually pressed both body and soul to the very earth, and there I lay for a time with no more strength to stir than a new-born infant, and I believed in my very soul that I was soon to be where hope never comes. But, O the amazing goodness of an abused God! He gave me a little drop of encouragement: “Seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” “What can that mean?” exclaimed I; “it can never mean that I am to seek and to find.”

I arose and looked around to see if anybody was near who might have spoken these words; but I could neither see nor hear anybody; yet the words were again repeated in my soul with more power, "Seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened." This so encouraged my poor soul that I cried again to God to have mercy upon me, and told Him that if He would but forgive my sins, I would tell all the world what He had done for me. I then went home, resolved that I would seek night and day for mercy and forgiveness of my sins until I found it.

I went to bed much encouraged, and rose very early in the morning, blessing the Lord with all my heart that He had spared me another night.

### **Third visit to Bolton**

After breakfast I set off for Bolton to hear Mr. Jones, beseeching the Lord with cries and tears that I might hear something to comfort my soul. Surely, I thought, this is the time that I shall find Him. As I had sought Him so earnestly, I quite expected to have had my sins forgiven, and to return home with joy. But oh! how was I disappointed! I thought that Mr. Jones preached to none but the elect, and such as had been born again! Then I again sank into despair and exclaimed with bitterness of soul, "O that I were one of the elect! O that I were one of those who have been born again! I have prayed and I have begged, I have sought and I have knocked; but I am not born again! I am not one of the elect! O poor soul, poor soul! thou art lost for ever! It is all over. O eternity, eternity! How can I dwell with everlasting burnings!"

O the miserable journey I had home; nothing but wretchedness and misery; and what added to it was, that my eyes were now open to see a little of the evil of my own heart. I now saw, as clearly as at noonday, His holiness and His justice in my damnation; and I told Him that when I came into hell, I would tell all the devils there that no injustice had been done me, that I could take all the blame upon myself and clear God of all wrong in executing His wrath upon one so vile, who had gone to such lengths in iniquity, who, having made so many vows, had broken them all, and plunged deeper and deeper into sin, and had been so great a mocker of God.

### **Hay-making**

Sometimes I fell into a fit of desperation and thought, "Oh, if I could but have a little comfort here to drown the misery of my present feelings, even if I had hell hereafter!"

The best method of fulfilling this resolution appeared to be by going hay-making, it being now the hay harvest. I accordingly went to a neighbouring farmer, and inquired if he had need of a hand. He said, "Yes," and bade me go into the fields. Upon joining the men, who all knew me and had heard that I had turned Methodist, some jeered me, others called out, "Warburton is turned Methodist," and all joined in laughing at me. I tried to put it off with a laugh, too, but it was with a heavy heart. Yes, thought I, these are going to hell as well as I, and see how comfortable they are! I resolved to be as comfortable as they; "for if I do go to hell," said I, "they will go too, and I shall not be alone."

In the afternoon of the same day there was what we call a wake, held at a place about four miles distant, and my fellow-workmen asked me to accompany them. To this I consented, and seven of us accordingly set out. But oh! what feelings I had at times upon the road. When we arrived there, the first thing was, of course, the public-house, and I felt determined to get drunk and drown my misery, and to enjoy myself as well as others.

I had not, however, been many minutes in the house before that text of Scripture sounded like thunder in my poor soul: "Because He hath appointed a day, in which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man, Jesus Christ, whom He hath ordained." And that other text followed upon it like flames of lightning: "It is appointed for men once to die, but after this the judgment." My poor knees smote together, my very hair began to move upon my head, and I got up and went out with all the horrors of damnation in my soul.

I hastened as soon as possible from the place, sometimes fearing the devil would seize me before I could reach home; at others, falling upon my knees and crying, "God be merciful to me, a sinner!" But my mouth was stopped by "the prayers of the wicked are an abomination unto the Lord." I was confident that a wretch so wicked as myself never before lived upon the earth; and O the torments, the wrath, the bondage, the misery which I passed through! What dreadful and rebellious thoughts arose in my mind against God for having made me a human being, that had a never-dying soul that must endure all the torments of His wrath in hell, where not a drop of water is allowed to cool the scorching tongues of the damned, who are continually crying to all eternity, "The wrath to come, the wrath to come!" How I envied the very beasts of the field. "These poor creatures," said I, "have no souls to be judged;" and O the anger and wrath that boiled up in my heart against God, because He had



not made me a dog, or anything without a soul to be judged at His righteous bar.

### **Tempted to end his life**

I had frequently before this time had many powerful temptations to put an end to my miserable life, but now I was fully determined to do it; for a thought struck my mind that the longer I lived in the world, the more sin I should commit; and the more sin I committed, the greater would be my damnation. So I concluded that the sooner I did the deed, the less sin I should have to answer for.

Several times I went into my bedroom with my razor, being fully determined to cut my throat; but instead of so doing, was always obliged to fall upon my knees and implore the Lord that, if it were possible, He would show mercy to one so vile as I.

I shall never forget the night before God delivered my poor soul. Fully resolved to destroy myself, I went on Saturday about midnight to a pool of water, making, as I proceeded thither, a solemn vow that nothing should prevent my fulfilling my purpose. When I got to the pool, O the dreadful view I had of the majesty, justice, and holiness of God in a righteous law! I saw, as clearly as the sun at noon-day, that the law was holy, just and good; that God had done me no injustice, and that the whole cause of my damnation was in myself.

After having been a short time exercised with these thoughts, I rose up to take a leap into the pool, when these words sounded in my ears, as loud, to my thinking, as if a man had called them out to me, “Who can tell?” I made a dead stand and said, “What can that be?” The words sounded again and again in my very soul, and something seemed to spring up in my heart and thus interpret them: “Who can tell but God may yet have mercy upon my poor soul? Who can tell but that that poor wretch, John Warburton, may find mercy yet?” This put a stop to drowning myself, and I felt my heart a little softer.

*TO BE CONTINUED*

**Unusual Bibles (1):** In 1560 the *Breeches Bible* was published in Geneva. It got its name because Genesis 3.7 read: “and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves breeches.” In the King James Version their clothes were ‘aprons.’

## HUMANISM

*“God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie.”*

### **What is humanism?**

We often read about humanism but possibly we have only a vague notion of what it actually means. How can we define it simply?

There is an increasing body of non-religious people who believe that this life is the only life we have, that the universe is a natural phenomenon with no supernatural side, and that good and fulfilling lives can be lived on the basis of reason and humanity.

People who share these beliefs and values are called *humanists* and this combination of attitudes is called *humanism*.

Humanists believe that death is the end of our personal existence and that we have only one life – and so make the most of it.

### **Does humanism matter to us?**

Yes, it certainly does. The CViE Newsletter Summer 2016, speaking of the many issues facing parents, referred to “the increasing prominence of humanistic and secular thinking in government and society. This has led to a grave decline in moral standards and values that have their foundation in the teaching of the Bible.” Humanism now shapes our country’s Government rather than Christian principles.

### **Reason, not revelation**

Humanists appeal to reason in contrast to revelation or religious authority as a means of determining the welfare of humanity. Humanists are by definition *atheists* (believing there is no God) or *agnostics* (unsure whether or not there is a God). In the absence of an afterlife and any discernible purpose to the universe, human beings can act to give their own lives meaning by seeking happiness in this life and helping others to do the same.

### **Mankind inherently good**

Humanists believe that mankind is inherently good, in opposition to the Biblical teaching that we are born in sin. This has been a recurring heresy within the church throughout the ages, in particular since a 5th-century British monk called Pelagius promoted the doctrine, now known as *Pelagianism*. Pelagius rejected the doctrine of original sin and preached that mankind can be saved by their own obedience, with no mention of redemption.

### **British Humanist Association**

The British Humanist Association (BHA) is receiving ever-increasing prominence in public life in their attempts to raise awareness of what humanism is. The non-religious people in this country are told that, far from being somehow deficient in their values, they have an outlook on life which is coherent and widely-shared.

The aim of the Association is to promote a secular state, with all mention of God and religion eliminated from education and public life. As a result of campaigning, humanist beliefs are becoming firmly entrenched in most Western educational and legal systems; for example, the laws of blasphemy have been abolished, and attempts to make abortion law more restrictive have been unsuccessful. We have seen the result of this recently as the Government begins to remove all reference to gender titles (Mr, Mrs, etc.) from official forms, and use of the word 'partner' instead of 'husband' or 'wife' thus concealing whether the couple are married or unmarried, same-sex, or male or female.

### **Humanism gaining ground**

Following a decline in the years between the two wars, humanism is stronger now than it has ever been. Movements such as the New Atheism movement, led by Richard Dawkins, author of *The God Delusion* and Patron of the British Humanist Association, is actively attacking religion, in particular Christianity, and propagating humanist beliefs.

In the UK today, while the churches empty, many people are very sceptical of religious claims to truth and hold values which are broadly humanist. There is a growing community of people who explicitly use the term 'humanist' of themselves.

### **Humanism replacing Christianity**

Dr. Gordon Wenham, tutor in Old Testament at Trinity College, Bristol, writes: "In the West, humanism is replacing Christianity as the foundation for society. It is changing our legal system and education. It likes to sound tolerant, but it tolerates everything except Christianity. Humanism has already penetrated the church and is eroding its witness." Some parts of the church are now taking an active role in promoting the humanist view.

### **The bus campaign**

Many will remember the 'Atheist Bus Campaign' in 2009. The

slogan, proposed by the BHA, offered the following message: “*There’s probably no God. Now stop worrying and enjoy your life.*” The idea spread to other countries too. Later a follow-up campaign was launched with the slogan “*Please Don’t Label Me*” drawing attention to the practice of ‘labelling’ children with a religion from birth.

## **Education**

Humanists believe that the role of religion should be removed entirely from the school curriculum. Around a third of all state-funded schools are ‘faith’ schools, as they are known in England and Wales. Humanists campaign against ‘faith’ schools and for an inclusive, secular schools system. They frequently challenge the admissions, employment and curriculum policies of faith schools.

Parents do have a specific right under the European Convention of Human Rights to bring up their children in the religion or belief of their choice without interference from the state. However, humanists do not believe that parents have a right to state funding for education in faith schools that are in line with their own beliefs.

They have grave concerns about the teaching of creationism and intelligent design as scientific theories. They consider that to teach abstinence from sex outside of marriage is homophobic, gender discriminatory and violates principles of human rights. Contraception and abortion are promoted instead.

## **Employment**

In employment, any claim that Christianity might be an occupational requirement for a particular job is viewed as a form of discrimination and has become almost impossible to uphold. In local authority and government service, Christian employees have recently been given the option of either carrying out a task against which they hold strong conscientious objection, or to face dismissal.

## **Marriage**

The British Humanist Association has long campaigned for a reform of marriage laws. From 13 January 2020, same-sex couples were able to marry in Northern Ireland, bringing the country into line with the rest of the UK where same-sex marriages have been legal since 2014.

Under intense pressure, the UK Government is currently considering whether to extend legal recognition to humanist marriages in England and Wales in the same way as Scotland. It goes without

saying that the LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) scene is not only recognised but is openly encouraged in the cause of equal treatment for everyone regardless.

### **Is humanism all bad?**

The humanist believes that man should show respect to man, irrespective of class, race or creed. To this he would add the principles of freedom, justice, tolerance and happiness. With these views we would whole-heartedly agree.

However, with mankind set up in place of God, there are no absolute rights or wrongs. Each person can choose their own morality, and soon truth becomes negotiable too. Human welfare and happiness are at the centre of their thinking. Human beings have the right and responsibility to give meaning and shape to their own lives.

### **Is humanism affecting the Church?**

There appears to be a growing movement amongst mainly younger Christians (using Christian in a general sense) for the rejection of traditional Christian beliefs and traditional worship. Their aim is to make the Gospel message relevant and acceptable to a humanist and unbelieving world. They see an increasing gap between the church and contemporary culture which must be bridged.

The so-called 'Emerging Church' desires (in their view) to imitate the life of Jesus. In doing so they wish to transform secular society. They have an emphasis on communal living and the welcoming of 'outsiders.' They understand the church as 'Worship, Mission and Community' rather than conservative evangelicalism, and reject formalized doctrinal statements and what they see as 'unhelpful jargon.' They say that what we need is 'community' and 'reality' and 'engagement' rather than a church which is 'authoritarian' and with (as they perceive it) 'a dinosaur mentality.'

They have therefore become disillusioned with the organized and institutional church. They prefer a 'church without walls' or a 'café church' which has involvement with the community and non-church people, and where 'original goodness' is as important as 'original sin.' Inherent goodness is, of course, a core belief of humanists. Rarely do we hear from the emerging church anything of personal sin and Christ's atoning work.

As long ago as 1994 a survey showed that 77 per cent of evangelical



Christians held the belief that humans are inherently good without realising it was heresy. Probably today, through the influence of humanism, the percentage would be even higher. The lack of understanding of original sin and the *total* depravity of man is the root cause of most error today.

### **Will humanism bring down the Christian church as we know it?**

Humanists like to tell us that the Christian church in the developed world is in collapse. They point out that three million fewer Americans are attending church each year, driving the religiously unaffiliated from eight percent to 23 percent in one generation. Of those born at the turn of this century, that number jumps to 35 percent, with twice as many who are religiously unaffiliated as their parents' generation, and three times as many as their grandparents' generation.

Most sad of all is that to those often referred to as 'Generation Z', that is, those currently in secondary education and younger, the concept of belonging to a traditional religion has virtually vanished, with by far the majority of young people in Europe now non-religious. We have read that in France two thirds of millennials are non-religious, in the UK three quarters, and in the Czech Republic 90 percent.

The true church of God will always be preserved – no humanist doctrine can ever destroy it: "Upon this Rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." In spite of the general "falling away," God's remnant will be safe to all eternity: "Neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand." May John Berridge's desire be ours: "One of this remnant I would be."

### **Conclusion**

We must not be surprised at what we have read in the previous paragraph. There is a divine certainty that the day is coming "when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance of them that know not God." However, the apostle Paul tells us that "that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first." This great falling away only goes to prove to us the infallible truths found in God's holy Word. God will "send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie." What is that lie? The lie is that in man is found some element of goodness – the humanist's fundamental doctrine. Only when God touches our heart can it ever be said of any man, woman or child, as it was said of Abijah, "In him is

found some good thing toward the Lord God of Israel.”

May our chief desire be to find in *our* heart that same good thing. Not the goodness the humanist thinks is in us, but rather a drawing towards the Saviour, a desire put there by the Holy Spirit alone.

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## BISHOP TAYLOR SMITH

John Taylor Smith, K.C.B., C.V.O., D.D. (Born 1860. Died 1938.)

Honorary Chaplain to Queen Victoria (1896-97)

Chaplain-General to H. M. Forces (1901-25).

(*Note: His surname is Taylor Smith, not Smith.*)

By all accounts, the Rt. Rev. John Taylor Smith was a most godly man, one given to much prayer throughout his life, who was made a great blessing to many a young man serving in the forces before, during, and after, the First World War – the Great War.

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As he concluded his last year at college, John Taylor Smith had two invitations to serve as curate. One was from a church in Leeds, the other from St. Paul’s, Upper Norwood, in southeast London.

This put him in a great perplexity. Which should he choose to accept? He wrote to both churches, saying he could not decide *anything* until the Master had made His mind clear to him. This is his own account of his leadings:

“I spent much time in prayer, and again the Lord gave me an answer. I was staying at a friend’s house, and coming down in the morning after a sleepless night, seeking for guidance, I took up a small book of texts lying on the table and read thus, ‘Give me a blessing, for thou hast given me a south land, give me also springs of water. And he gave me the upper springs and nether springs.’ I wrote immediately to Mr. Graham, and accepted his offer, and God gave me a blessing both in the upper springs (Upper Norwood) and nether springs (Lower Norwood). Some may say this was a fanciful interpretation, and so it might have been, but God’s blessing was on it, and His Spirit spoke through those words to my soul.”

Dear readers, how important it is always to seek the Lord’s guidance before taking any step in our life. Make this your prayer: “*Shew me Thy ways, O Lord; teach me Thy paths.*” This is the safest path.

## PEARL'S SECRET

With her arms round her mother's neck, little Pearl, a very loving six year old, said thoughtfully, "Do you think the Lord minds, Mother, if I love you more than I love Him?"

For a moment the Mother hesitated. "Well, you can *see* me, can't you?" was the wise reply.

"Yes, I can see you – that makes it so easy!"

The Bible was the book Pearl loved above all others. (Pearl was Mary's Chinese name.) Every evening her mother came up to read and pray with the three children before they went to sleep, a time much looked forward to by all three. Mother had always done this, and no one could tell Bible stories or make it all so real and beautiful as she could.

But one night, as her mother kissed her goodnight, Pearl seemed anxious, and asked: "Mother, how can we know that our names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life?"

Her sweet voice had sounded troubled, and half an hour later Victor came down to say that Pearl was crying. Pearl – always so bright and happy. What could be the matter?

"It's about the name, Mother," she sobbed. "It's about the name. I can't go to sleep unless I know."

She had been reading in Revelation. It said so distinctly: "There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, or he that maketh an abomination and a lie, but *only they which are written in the Lamb's Book of Life*" (Rev. 21. 27). She felt sure that Mother's name was written there, and Father's, and those of many whom she loved. But Pearl's name? She had never really thought about it before. How could she know, how could she be sure that her name was written there?

Wrapping her up warmly, Mother carried the troubled child to her own room and sat down to talk over the matter. It



*Pearl at six years old*

was not about anything Pearl could do, Mother said, but about what the Lord Jesus had done. When He bore the sins of the world on the dreadful cross, and cried aloud in the darkness, "It is finished," that meant that everything was finished that was needed for our salvation. He is "the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world."

That was just what Pearl wanted to hear. She felt she did love and trust Jesus, and she was so glad to understand.

"And now, darling," mother said when they had prayed together, "I want to give you a text to rest your heart on. Here it is – part of the first verse of Isaiah 43."

Mother read: "Fear not, for I have redeemed thee; I have called thee by thy name, thou art Mine."

Eagerly Pearl listened, and repeated the words again and again. How sweet, how wonderful they were! Jesus knew her name. He had redeemed her. Her name must be in the Book of Life, for He said, "thou art Mine."

Very happily, then, and peacefully she went to sleep in the little camp-bed Mother had made up beside her own. The precious words had so taken hold of her heart that she repeated them again and again after she was tucked up and mother had said, "Good-night."

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A day or two later Pearl was busy again for quite a long time. She had brought out one of her treasures, a small, red leather notebook. Bending over the notebook, she appeared to be writing something of great importance. Her mother glanced at her over the table, and they smiled. But she did not tell her mother what she was writing. It was a secret, she said. Near Christmas-time, secrets were in the air just then.

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Towards the end of the year, Christmas week 1918, Pearl did not seem quite as well as usual, and when the New Year arrived she was still poorly. Her father, the renowned missionary doctor, Dr. G. Whitfield Guinness, watched her anxiously, and when the pain became worse and her temperature went up he decided with the other doctors that there must be an operation. Acute appendicitis had set in. A young surgeon who had recently joined the mission would do the operation, a difficult one in those days, with help from the lady doctor. Pearl was not the

least bit afraid. As a little thing she had always been brave, and held her head up steadily through whatever came, and now she seemed to be

thinking more of others than herself. "I shall soon come back," she said, looking so sweet and bright as they wrapped her up to carry her over to the hospital.

As she crossed the garden in the frosty air and sunshine, she called back: "I like it, mother; I like it!"

When the chloroform had to be given she knew no fear. "It's all right, father," she said trustfully, as he explained what he was doing. And she breathed it in with perfect quietness, and went to sleep.

Skilfully the operation was performed and the little patient tended, and her father hoped against hope that his precious child would recover. Things were very serious – but surely, surely that life so full of promise could not be near its close.

But the Lord saw that it was best to take her to the Home above.



*Pearl aged seven*

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"Gone from us, gone to be with Him! Our precious little Mary – that radiant soul – how can I tell you what she was?" wrote her father.

It had come so suddenly that the mother was almost stricken down with grief. Pearl lay still and silent – the dancing feet and willing hands no longer busy, the shining eyes closed, the loving lips without a word. Oh, if only her darling could speak to her once more! Would no word come to her? Would no crumb of comfort be given?

And then she remembered – Pearl's secret. Rising from the bedside she went to find the red notebook on which, now, her hopes were centred. There it was, safely put away among other treasures, and opening it mother found, in childish writing, just the message her heart needed, written on December 14th, 1918, aged eight years, the day the

Lord opened her heart. Her little one was speaking to her from the borders of the heavenly land. Mother read and read again, with tears of thankfulness:

December 14<sup>th</sup> 1918

"Fear not, for I have redeemed thee. I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine."

Jesus, tender shepherd, hear me,  
Bless Thy little Lamb tonight;  
Through the darkness be thou near me,  
Keep me safe till morning light."

pearl gave her heart to the Lord  
Jesus on December 14<sup>th</sup> 1918 aged  
eight years.

Her mother wrote: "My heart is breaking for her. She was more to me than anyone knows." But the little red notebook had brought the mother a sense of comfort that would help her through the months of grief that followed the loss of such a precious daughter.

*(Information taken from the writings  
of Pearl's aunt, Mrs. Howard Taylor.)*

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## GODLY DISCERNMENT

Notes of an address given by Mr Rowland Wheatley  
at Cranbrook Young People's Meeting

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**Discernment** describes a wise way of judging between things, or a particularly perceptive way of seeing things. If you can understand something that is somewhat hidden or obscure you are using discernment.

To judge between a cake that was heavy and sunk in the middle and one light and nicely risen would not take much discernment. But to judge between two cakes that both looked lovely would take discernment, taking into account texture, taste and a lot of things that only a professional cook would be able to notice.

**Godly discernment** is the ability to decide between truth and error, right and wrong – making careful distinctions by having the ability to think biblically in all areas of life, conforming your life to the teaching of the Lord.

In Matthew 16. 1-3 the Lord reproved the Pharisees and the Sadducees because they could discern natural things but not spiritual, nor could they discern the signs of the times.

### **In the Scriptures, discernment is taught as a commandment:**

1 Thessalonians 5. 21-22 teaches us to be discerning. “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil.”

1 John 4. 1 also teaches us that discernment must be made. “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.”

The failure to distinguish between truth and error leaves the Christian open to all manner of false teaching. False teaching then leads to an unbiblical mindset, which then results in a life of compromise, disobedience and unfruitfulness. It is a sad truth that discernment is an area where many Christians stumble. They seem to lack ability to compare the things they are taught with the infallible standard of God's word. They are not armed to take a clear biblical stand against the unbiblical thinking and attitudes with which they are faced. Decisions are taken and a course pursued that is contrary to God's word. If you are

truly seeking the Lord and feel your ignorance in divine things, you will be aware of your own personal lack of discernment. It is then best to err on the side of safety and trust in the judgment of those you esteem godly to guide you in the way – see Malachi 3. 16-18.

### **Helps to a proper discernment:**

1. God has perfect discernment. He always knows the truth of a matter and can show us. We cannot deceive Him. “For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether” (Psalm 139. 1-4)
2. The Word of God is our standard – “a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Hebrews 4. 12). Also 1 Peter 1. 23-25 and John 8. 31-32.
3. God gives discernment in answer to prayer. Solomon asked God for discernment - “that I may understand between good and bad” (1 Kings 3. 5-13).
4. Discernment is strengthened by its use – “who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Hebrews 5. 14).
5. What is needed for a correct discernment of spiritual truth is the doctrine of Christ. (2 John 1. 6-11 and Ephesians 4. 21.)
6. The need of self-examination in discernment, in correcting another (Luke 6. 41-42), and in coming to the Lord’s table (1 Corinthians 11. 28-31).
7. A realisation that there will be many that deceive – even in the churches. 2 Peter 2. 1-3 (“false teachers”), Jude 3, 4, 16 (“certain men crept in unawares”, “having men’s persons in admiration because of advantage”).

### **Four examples of discernment:**

1. Nehemiah discerned that Shemaiah had not been sent by God. (Nehemiah 6. 10-12.)
2. The Lord gave Jeremiah discernment to see that the Jews had not spoken the truth when they asked him to seek the Lord’s will for them. (Jeremiah 42. 1-22 and 43. 1-3).
3. Peter discerning that Simon the sorcerer was not truly saved. (Acts 8. 18-23.)



4. Jesus discerned what the true motive of the Pharisees was. (Matthew 22. 17-21.)

#### **Four examples of a lack of discernment:**

1. Jacob deceiving his father shows what care and skill is needed in discernment. Rebekah and Isaac went to great lengths to deceive Jacob and succeeded. (Genesis 27. 6-23.)
2. Those who have made an idol of one part of a tree and burned the other. (Isaiah 44. 18-19.)
3. Believing every word – “The simple believeth every word” (Proverbs 14. 15).
4. Eli misjudged Hannah, but when she told him she had “poured out her heart before the Lord,” he was given grace to correct his lack of discernment. (1 Samuel 1. 12-17).

#### **Nine practical areas where you will need discernment:**

1. When confronted with new ideas and teaching – doctrine, practice, dress and attitudes.
2. When hearing the word preached or a read sermon.
3. What you read or see on the internet – any subtle distortion from the truth.
4. When people tell you of signs and tokens they have had so that you accept the way they are living, or have you follow them – “I have had a word from the Lord.” Do not be deceived if they lead away from the teaching of the Bible. (Deuteronomy 13. 1-4; Mark 13. 5-6; Matthew 24. 24).
5. When the thing being contended for is right but the spirit is wrong.
6. Discerning the Lord’s will for you in all aspects of life.
7. In choosing who to marry – you need discernment to know whether you are suited to each other and can be biblically married.
8. Discerning your own spiritual state.
9. Discerning how close you can walk with a person – both naturally and spiritually – not cutting off people unnecessarily that differ in non-essential points.

Finally, pray for godly discernment, seek help from the Lord to exercise and practice it and, as enabled, it will be a means of keeping you from every wrong way, and as the Lord is pleased, the bestowing of much blessing.

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## LADY JANE GREY



This noble young lady, “the Nine-day Queen,” was put to death at the early age of sixteen. When that godly young King, Edward VI, wrote his will, he nominated Jane as successor to the Crown. The King’s half-sister Mary was a Roman Catholic, while Jane was a committed Protestant. After Jane had been proclaimed Queen, the Privy Council of England changed their mind and proclaimed Mary as Queen instead. Jane was held in the Tower and was convicted of treason and sentenced to death – surely England’s most flawed and inhumane sentence ever. The night before she was beheaded, she sent a Greek Testament to her sister Catherine. At the end of it she wrote:



“I have here sent you, good sister Catherine, a book, which, although it be not outwardly trimmed with gold, yet, inwardly, it is of more worth than precious stones. It is the book, dear sister, of the law of the Lord. It is his testament and last will, which he bequeathed unto us wretches, which shall lead you to the path of eternal joy; and, if you with a good mind purpose to follow it, it shall bring you to an immortal and everlasting life. It shall teach you how to live, and how to die.” Her dying words were: “Into Thy hands I commit my soul.”

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## USE MADE OF A HYMN

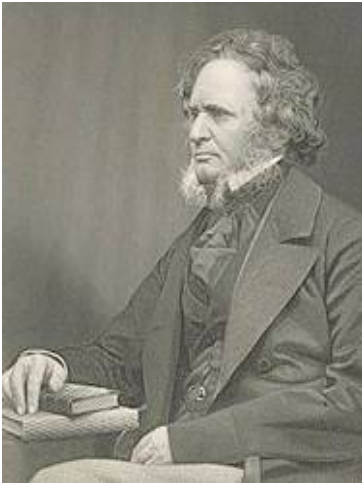
A poor blind woman in Liverpool was brought to a sense of sin and salvation at a service held in connection with the national fast upon the first outbreak of cholera in this country. We believe this was in 1831.

Her mind had been stirred by Isaac Watt's hymn, "I'll praise my Maker while I've breath." (This hymn is in the Young People's Hymnal, no. 368.)

The next morning she called on the church minister, Mr. R. McOwen, and asked if he could get for her the hymnbook which contained this hymn. She asked, did it also contain the lines:

"The Lord gives eyesight to the blind,  
The Lord supports the fainting mind."

which, of course, it did (verse 3). At every opportunity she asked for hymns to be read to her, and soon her memory was stored with many hymns which she delighted in repeating.



*Edward Smith-Stanley  
14th Earl of Derby*

The poor blind lady earned her living shampooing, at which she excelled. One of her customers was the Earl of Derby, who, as you can see, had an exceptionally good head of hair to keep her busy! One day while attending him, she repeated one of Charles Wesley's hymns to him. The old Earl liked it, and encouraged her to repeat more. She then repeated another hymn, (no. 161 in Gadsby's). When she came to the words:

"The Lord, in the day of His anger, did lay  
Our sins on the Lamb, and He bore them  
away,"

the old Earl cried out, "Stop, Mrs Brass, don't you think it should be –

"The Lord, in the day of His *mercy*, did lay?"

This showed to her that she was not repeating her verses to inattentive ears, and it appears later the blind woman was made a blessing to the dying nobleman.

## PASSION PLAYS

Every year in the Philippine village of San Pedro Cutud, fifty thousand visitors pour in to witness the annual re-enactment of the crucifixion of Christ on Good Friday.

Usually, at least twenty penitents, in batches of three, are actually nailed to the cross. Most will last barely three minutes before they signal in agony to be taken down.

One penitent said, “I feel cleansed afterwards. It washes the sins of the last twelve months away.”

Another man after his 17th crucifixion, said, “Eighteen years ago I was painting a building and fell down. I was three storeys up but suffered no injuries. It was like a miracle, so I vowed to be crucified twenty times to thank Jesus.”

The Roman Catholic Church in the Philippines tolerates the crucifixion event, but does not endorse it. The event has become more popular since Mel Gibson’s film, *The Passion Of The Christ*, was released in 2004. The film, which depicts the final twelve hours in the life of Jesus on the day of his crucifixion, brought in over 600 million dollars for its makers.

Another re-enactment of the crucifixion takes place in the town of Oberammergau, Bavaria, Germany, every ten years, i.e. in every year ending in zero. The last performance was in October 2010, and it is scheduled again for this year, 2020.

The origin of this event dates back to 1633 when the residents of Oberammergau vowed that if God spared them from the bubonic plague ravaging the region, they would produce a play every ten years depicting the life and death of Jesus. These days the production involves over 2,000 performers, musicians and stage technicians.

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True Christians will find all these attempts to portray the solemn and sacred death of the Lord Jesus Christ repugnant in the extreme. Nothing can ever begin to show how the Man of sorrows was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, the One who was smitten of God, who in His extremity cried out, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” We tremble to think of this being turned into entertainment for tourists and cinema goers. It is utterly, utterly abhorrent.



*Philip Melanchthon*

Philip Melanchthon, Martin Luther's greatest friend, tells us how God's righteous judgment was once poured out on three men attempting a similar exercise in his day, back in the 1500's.

"A company of profane wretches intended to act the death of Christ on the cross in a tragedy. He who was on the cross had hidden under his garments a bag full of blood. He who played the part of the soldier, instead of piercing the bag of blood, missed his mark and wounded the man to death. He, falling from the cross, killed him who was acting the part of a woman weeping beneath the cross. The brother of him who was first slain, slew the murderer, and for slaying him, was hanged by order of the justices. Thus did the vengeance of God speedily overtake them, and they were all hung in chains, for a warning to all that should dare to trifle with a great and jealous God."

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### SAVED BY HIS BIBLE

During the Second World War, many US soldiers were issued with removable steel covers, known as 'Heart Shields', to cover their Bibles when they went into battle. Staff Sergeant Louie Havard of the 4th Infantry Division went into battle with a copy of the Bible in his breast pocket but without a 'Heart Shield' when he landed on D-Day alongside his friend Sergeant Leo Jereb.



*Staff Sergeant  
Havard*

Later in the day an enemy bullet struck Sgt Havard's rifle, ricocheted off it and then struck the Bible, which, thanks to the Bible's 3.5cm thickness, saved his life. Sergeant Havard continued fighting and survived the war, and this remarkable Bible is now on display at the Musée du Débarquement de Utah Beach in Normandy after it was donated to the museum by Sergeant Jereb.



## **THIRTEEN EYES or “A Wonder of God”**

This is a true story from the time of the great Elector of Brandenburg, Friedrich Wilhelm. He was born in Berlin in 1620, and died at the age of 68 in 1688. The Elector was a staunch defender of the Calvinist faith, but at the same time pursued a policy of religious tolerance. In this story, God publicly brought to light in a most remarkable way the innocence of a young man, Henry Lichtenberg, who had falsely been accused of murder, and was saved from the penalty of death. In Job 22 verse 30 we read that God will deliver the innocent, and this was shown to be true in a most unexpected manner.

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During the reign of the great Elector Friedrich Wilhelm, (reigned 1640-1688), in the little town of Bernau just six miles north of Berlin, lived a widow by the name of Martha Lichtenberg with her son, Henry. Their home was humble but neat, and they lived a quiet and industrious life.

His father died when Henry was just three years old. Since that time his mother had worked hard and earned just enough to provide for the needs of herself and her son, whom she tried to bring up in the fear and the admonition of the Lord. Henry was deeply attached to his mother. It was his greatest joy to sit with her and listen to the wonderful stories she told him from the Bible, or sometimes things that had happened in her own life.

### **Becomes a soldier**

Henry grew up to be a strong young man, and was keen to become a soldier so that he could fight for the Elector and his beloved fatherland. His mother was fearful when Henry told her about his plans and tried very hard to discourage him, but eventually she gave her consent.

At that time the army was seeking new recruits, and a lieutenant came into Henry's vicinity looking for men to fill his regiment. The strong, well-built young man so satisfied the lieutenant that he accepted him as a soldier without further examination.

The parting of mother and son was painful, and the tears flowed in

abundance. Martha admonished her son, Henry, to keep God before him throughout his whole life and in no wise consent to sin, and with her motherly blessing she let him go.

### **Joins the Elector's bodyguard**

The young soldier distinguished himself valiantly in many battles. Henry was publicly praised by his superiors for his heroism. In time, the great Elector admitted Henry into his personal bodyguard. Only the biggest and bravest men were chosen for the bodyguard, and the appointment was regarded as a great honour.

One evening, Henry left the palace carrying his sword under his arm. He was taking the sword to one of the most famous armourers in the city of Berlin to repair a small defect on the blade. The business was known as Reinhart's, and for some time Henry had been friendly with Mr. Reinhart's daughter, Marie. The friendship blossomed into love and eventually Henry, with Mr Reinhart's full consent, made a proposal of marriage to Marie.

His mother, to whom the son had communicated his happiness, soon came to Berlin to meet the girl who would become her daughter-in-law. The widow and Marie soon became one in heart and soul. The great Elector, too, was highly pleased to learn of the engagement.

### **Jealousy**

Although many rejoiced with Henry, there was one person who secretly was very angry about Henry's success. It was another member of the electoral bodyguard, Rudolf, a courageous man, but one disliked by his companions.

Rudolf could not bear the cheerful and good-natured Henry, who shared greatly in the favour of the Elector, and was generally loved by his companions. His resentment grew worse and hatred filled his heart towards Henry.

Rudolf first tried very hard to turn Marie against Henry, but did not succeed. How, he wondered, could he destroy the happiness of these two he hated so much?

Henry and Marie were not at all suspicious of Rudolf, and could not see the dark clouds that were gathering. The day of their marriage approached. On a certain afternoon, the bridegroom and his bride had gone out to buy some things for their future home. Shortly before this, Henry had spent some time shooting crows near the city gate, which was

done quite frequently in those times by the guards of the Elector. He now walked his bride back to the home of her father, but as Henry had to call elsewhere, he took her only as far as the corner of the last street, and there he parted from her.

Dusk was now falling, but it was not yet so late that it would be difficult for Marie to walk the rest of the way home. The young people bid each other a very fond farewell, and they each went their own way.

### **A gunshot**

Suddenly, the sound of a gunshot pierced the air. Looking around and very much frightened, Henry saw that Marie had been struck and had fallen to the ground. He quickly ran up to her, but when he tried to raise her, he saw that she was already dead. The murderous bullet was aimed correctly and had pierced the heart of the poor girl.

Henry was numb with fright, shock, and sorrow when he held his beloved bride, pale and dead, in his arms, who only a few moments ago had bid him farewell, healthy and happy. At the call of "Murder! Murder!" the nearby residents of the town came running and soon surrounded the young man.

The crowd, alarmed at the rifle shot, did not doubt for a moment that Henry, who still had his gun with him, was the murderer of the young girl. Overwhelmed in his deep grief, the men marched him away from the place where the calamity had taken place. At the same time, shouts were heard from an adjacent street that they had caught the murderer over there and taken him into custody. It was Rudolf.

### **Taken prisoner**

Both prisoners were brought before the judges. The corpse also was brought to the courthouse. Before the judges, Rudolf stared at the dead body with a cold and sullen look, but Henry sank to the floor with heart-rending cries and covered his beloved bride with tears and kisses. After this, Henry and Rudolf were taken to the prison, and the examination commenced. Not one of them, however, would confess the horrible deed.

Henry told in truth exactly what had happened and his whole appearance, besides his conduct, made a deep impression upon his judges. Rudolf, on the other hand, came before the judges with a story which he had in the meantime cunningly devised. He told the judges that he had walked through the street in which the murder took place,



and that he had seen his companion in conversation with the girl. He had noticed that Henry was excited and angry, and as it seemed was heaping severe reproofs upon her. Because it was a case that did not concern him, he had quietly continued on his way, until he suddenly heard the shot. He claimed that no one else but Henry had committed this terrible deed. He was willing to confirm his declaration with an oath.

### **The judges perplexed**

Both prisoners persevered in their confession, notwithstanding all the challenging questions of their judges. The judges were in a state of confusion. One of the prisoners certainly had to be the criminal. Both men were seized very near the place where the murder had occurred. They both had a gun, and both, as the examination proved, had been fired shortly before. But both alike continued to declare their innocence.

Her father, Mr. Reinhard, called to testify before the judges, spoke as strongly as he could under the sad circumstances of his belief that Henry was innocent. But the judges felt that it was possible, as Rudolf asserted, that he might have quarreled with his bride, and, in anger, had committed the crime.



*Friedrich Wilhelm  
The Great Elector*

The judges, after making every possible enquiry, were not able to uncover the truth. For this reason the case was finally brought before the Elector. The Elector had the two accused prisoners examined once more in his presence, but was not able to come to a definite decision. He ordered that the case should be decided by an 'Ordeal of God.'

The Elector was one that feared God, and was persuaded that in dark cases such as this, God Himself, through a wonder, could bring the guilt or the innocence of the accused to light. The Elector decided that Henry and Rudolf would both throw two wooden

dices, on the sides of which would be marked small dots (or eyes) from numbers 1-6, just like a dice today. The highest throw would indicate the innocent, the lowest, the murderer.

### **The ‘Ordeal of God’**

The following Sabbath day was appointed for this solemn act. During morning worship, prayers would be offered to God for his divine intervention. Immediately following the service the prisoners were to cast the dice.

The evening before this important day Henry sat in his prison cell filled with sorrow. The happiness of his life had been totally wiped out with one stroke. But there was something that oppressed him almost more than that – his poor mother who was deeply and painfully shaken and alarmed. How willingly would he have quieted and comforted her!

While thinking of her, the door-locks of his prison cell creaked. The door was opened and his beloved mother entered weeping and lamenting. Henry fell into her arms and wept bitterly. Lady Lichtenberg, who knew her son too well to entertain the slightest doubt of his innocence, comforted him as much as possible. And at last Henry comforted her saying, “Mother, I look forward to tomorrow with much comfort and courage in my mind; *I know God will help me.*”

The morning of the decisive Sunday had arrived. The church bells rang and the two prisoners were taken out of their cells so that they could attend the service, at which the Elector would be present. The Court chaplain, Bartholomeus Slotsch, preached a solemn sermon as befitted the occasion. A humble, but solemn, calm prevailed in Henry’s heart, but he looked pale and bowed down. Many of Berlin’s citizens, who saw him that day, believed in his innocence and hoped that God would bring it to light.

The church service was ended. The great Elector left the church and

walked across the square to the Domkerk. His bodyguards followed him, and also led both the prisoners to a drum which was placed before the Elector. On the drum there lay two large dice. The court chaplain took his place near them. First, a hymn was sung. Then the preacher addressed the two prisoners with a short but very solemn sermon. Finally he uncovered his head, and said, “Now in the



*“On the drum there lay two large dice”*

name of God, the will of the Lord be done!”

Henry and Rudolf stood before the Elector. They bowed before him. The Elector ordered that Rudolf, who had accused his companion first, should make the first throw. The two dice were placed in a cup. Rudolf shook the cup with a firm hand. The crowd were breathlessly silent. Not a sound was heard on the large town square.

### **Rudolph and Henry cast the dice**

Rudolf cast the dice.

“Twelve,” called the herald in a loud voice, “Twelve eyes! The highest throw!”

A contemptuous laugh was heard from Rudolf. At a distance the scream of a woman was heard as she sank to the ground. It was poor Lady Lichtenberg, Henry’s mother. Many looked with sorrow and sympathy towards Henry, whom already they considered condemned.

Henry now stepped towards the drum upon which the dice laid. The Elector looked with deep emotion upon the young man whom he loved and in whose guilt he could hardly believe.

Henry kneeled upon the ground. Loudly he prayed: “Lord God! Almighty God, help me! Thou canst bring the truth to light, if it is Thy holy will. But if it is not possible that this cup shall pass from me, help me to drink it! Thy will be done. But be not silent, O Thou faithful God! Lord, my hope is upon Thee! Let me not be put to shame.”

Henry then took the cup, shook it, and threw the dice. “Thirteen,” called the herald in a loud voice, “Thirteen eyes.”

How could this be possible? Each of the dice could show only six eyes at the most. The people witnessing this event could not believe it. But those that stood the closest had already noticed what had happened. They began to shout, “A wonder of God! A wonder of God! God has brought innocence to the light!”

One of the dice had split in two. The face of both dice showed ‘six’, and the part that had broken off showed ‘one.’

“A wonder of God! A wonder of God!” shouted the crowd louder and louder.

### **The Elector passes judgment**

“It is indeed a wonder of God,” said the Elector. “Bring the prisoners before me.”

The Elector then spoke to the accused men. “Almighty God

Himself has given the verdict in this case,” he said to both the accused men. Turning to Henry he said, “You are innocent, my son.” Henry was deeply moved by the thought of a wonder-working God, Who had so graciously answered his prayer and saved him. “Thank the Lord, for He has brought your innocence to the light,” said the Elector.

Then the Elector turned to Rudolf and said, “You have committed the murder. Do not deny it any longer, lest your punishment be made the heavier, and you may at least escape yet the judgment of God before it is too late.”

The pride of the murderer was now broken. The hand of God had revealed itself so clearly. With a trembling voice he confessed, “Yes, God is just! I am the murderer, and I accept my punishment.”

At the say of the Elector, the criminal was returned to his prison cell. The guards who brought him back to the cell could hardly protect him against the fury of the embittered people.

When Rudolf had returned to his cell, he also made a full confession before his judges. He requested that a minister be sent to him, who could pray for him. Naturally they agreed to this request. The wretched young man showed much sorrow for his cruel deed.

### **Sentence of death**

The time had come to receive his just punishment upon this earth for the terrible murder. The scribe read the final confession, concluding with the condemnation: “....which, being against the laws of this land, my Lords have decreed and given sentence that he shall be condemned from life to death by the sword.” The judge then asked all twelve of his colleagues for their consent, to which each one in turn solemnly gave the reply, “That which is legal and just pleases me.”

When Rudolf had been taken away by the guards, Henry remained in the presence of the Elector. At the same moment, his dear mother triumphantly pressed through the multitude and cast herself with tears of joy in the arms of her son. Both could not speak a word, but wept in thankfulness of heart. The great Elector looked upon them with loving sympathy.

Henry now returned with his mother to the beloved and quiet home at Bernau, after they had visited Marie’s father, Mr. Reinhard, and comforted him. Henry also lingered long and sorrowfully at Marie’s grave, where his beloved bride-to-be slept the sleep of death.

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The Altes Museum (German for *Old Museum*) in Berlin houses a collection of antiques known as the *Antikensammlung*. We understand that the dice are held among the collection where they are known as “The Death Dice.” However, on enquiry, the museum curator was unable to locate them in this vast building, which is a UNESCO World Heritage site.

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## PRIME MINISTER DAVID LLOYD GEORGE ATTENDS A STRICT BAPTIST CHAPEL

Tadworth is a large village in Surrey in the region of the Epsom Downs. There was first a gathering of Strict Baptists in the village in 1822, when they met in a small borrowed chapel in the grounds of Tadworth Court, a mansion designed by Sir Christopher Wren. A new chapel with fine views over the downs was erected in the village in 1883, named ‘Bethel’.

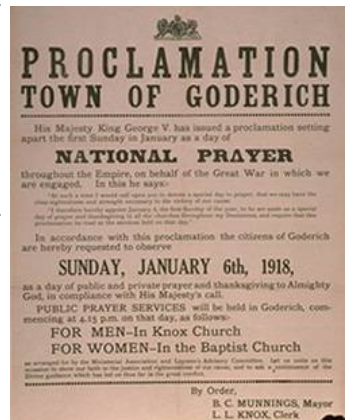


*Bethel Tadworth*

One wet and wild winter’s night on Sunday, January 6th, 1918 the people who had braved the elements had gathered together for the evening service. As the war dragged on, the King (George V, the Queen’s grandfather) had appointed that day as a national day of prayer. The preacher that night was a Mr. Adams. The King’s proclamation was duly read out, and the service proceeded in accordance with the wishes of the King.

When the service was almost half through, the door opened and two men walked in and made their way quietly to a seat. It was not immediately apparent that the two were the Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. David Lloyd George, and his secretary. They listened attentively to the sermon.

They had walked across that wind-swept common from the Prime Minister’s home, Pinfold Manor, at nearby Walton-on-the-Hill, braving



the drenching rain on that dark January night, to join in the simple worship of that country chapel in accordance with the King's proclamation.

It is reported that as he left, he turned to his secretary, and pointing back towards the chapel, he said, "And *that* is why we shall win the war."

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In August, the allies won massive advances on the Amiens front, taking over 7,000 German prisoners in one day. Lloyd George was able to tell the House of Commons "the tide of the war has turned." The enemy had been taken completely by surprise. The 800,000 American troops now in Europe had contributed to this turn in the course of the war. The armistice was signed later that year on 11th November, 1918.

***Prayer made in that little country chapel had been answered.***

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## CURRENT MATTERS

### **A new planet**

NASA claims to have found a new Earth-sized planet some 100 light years away. It was discovered by a satellite and confirmed by the orbiting Spitzer Space Telescope, an infra-red telescope that is due to be retired this year. It has an atmosphere that could be like ours and support life. It orbits its star in 37 days. Scientists think it could be 'habitable' as it has a temperature that would allow water on its surface. Isaiah in speaking of the Earth says: "He formed it to be inhabited." Nowhere in the Word of God do we find even a hint that any other part of His creation would be inhabited.

### **Bath Abbey, Somerset**

The beautiful Bath Abbey is best known as the place where the first King of All England was crowned – King Edgar in the year 973. Between 1569 and 1845 over 7,000 burials took place inside the Abbey, and the Abbey floor is made up of 891 grave stones. Over the years, the coffins and bodies have collapsed leaving gaps beneath the floor. This has caused the grave stones to break as they are not supported. Conservation work to fill the voids and reinforce the floor is well underway. Half of the nave is almost completed and work on the other half will commence in March 2020. Interestingly, at the same time a

new heating system is being installed harnessing the heat from the one million litres of hot water which flow daily through the adjacent Roman Baths. This will reduce the Abbey's carbon footprint by 50%. The well-known Thomas Ken, author of "*Praise God from whom all blessings flow,*" was appointed Bishop of Bath in 1685.

### **Rising temperatures**

The years 2016 and 2019 were the hottest years on record. The temperature in the UK reached 38.7C (101.6F) on July 25th – the highest ever recorded. An unconfirmed record for a December day – 18.7C (65.6F) – was set in the Scottish Highlands. The temperature of the world's oceans is also higher than at any time since records began. Researchers say that the rate of heating is accelerating. It is believed that the rise in temperature has killed 100million cod, which thrive in cold waters.

### **Civil partnerships**

The law was changed from New Year's Day to allow 'straight couples' to become civil partners instead of husband and wife. We were, however, pleased to read that the Bishops of the Church of England issued a statement saying: "The Church's teaching on sexual ethics remains unchanged. For Christians, marriage, that is the lifelong union between a man and a woman, contracted with the making of vows, remains the proper context for sexual activity." As was only to be expected, this statement has caused an outcry from the LGBT lobby. Sadly, one newspaper columnist who claims to be a church-going Christian, whilst agreeing that the Bishops' statement is what the Bible teaches, made the extraordinary statement, "This is hardly Christian."

### **Student midwife banned**

A student midwife was banned from a hospital placement because of her pro-life views. Julia, an undergraduate at the University of Nottingham, faced expulsion from her degree after lecturers raised concerns. Eventually, after a threat of legal action, university officials reversed their decision. Julia was the president of Nottingham Students for Life, a pro-life society originally rejected by the university societies council, a decision that was later overturned. Julia, 24, says, "Being pro-life is not incompatible with being a midwife." *Perception* feels how unjust it is that holding pro-life views could possibly become a fitness to practice issue and could raise concerns over professional behaviour.

## THE COOT'S NEST

The nest in our front cover picture may look very untidy, as though it had been hastily thrown together with very little thought. Nothing could be further from the truth as God has given the coot a wonderful instinct to construct a very special nest, providing safety and shelter for her forthcoming brood. With up to ten chicks in the nest it will need to be strong and dry.

It is difficult to see, but the nest is built above the water on a floating platform which is first built by the coot. The platform is anchored by upright reeds stuck into the bottom of the river. The materials used in the nest are mainly dead reeds or bulrushes, grasses, and sometimes pieces of paper or even plastic. The nest material is woven into a shallow basket only one inch deep, with a hollowed interior lined with finer material to hold the eggs. Both parents help to incubate the eggs and look after their brood.

The coot has a marvellous ability to reject eggs laid in her nest by other coots. The evolutionist says that this is an ability which has evolved over many years. However, the evolutionist's argument soon falls apart – why did not similar behaviour evolve in other birds who happily receive the egg laid there by the cuckoo?

When the coot eggs hatch, the baby chicks are well-covered in down. They are alert and lively, and will venture out of the nest within six hours of hatching – although they are glad quickly to return to their mother! Strangely, it is always the father who leads the little ones to the water.

What a blessing it is to have a home. With that thought, read again the text on our front cover.

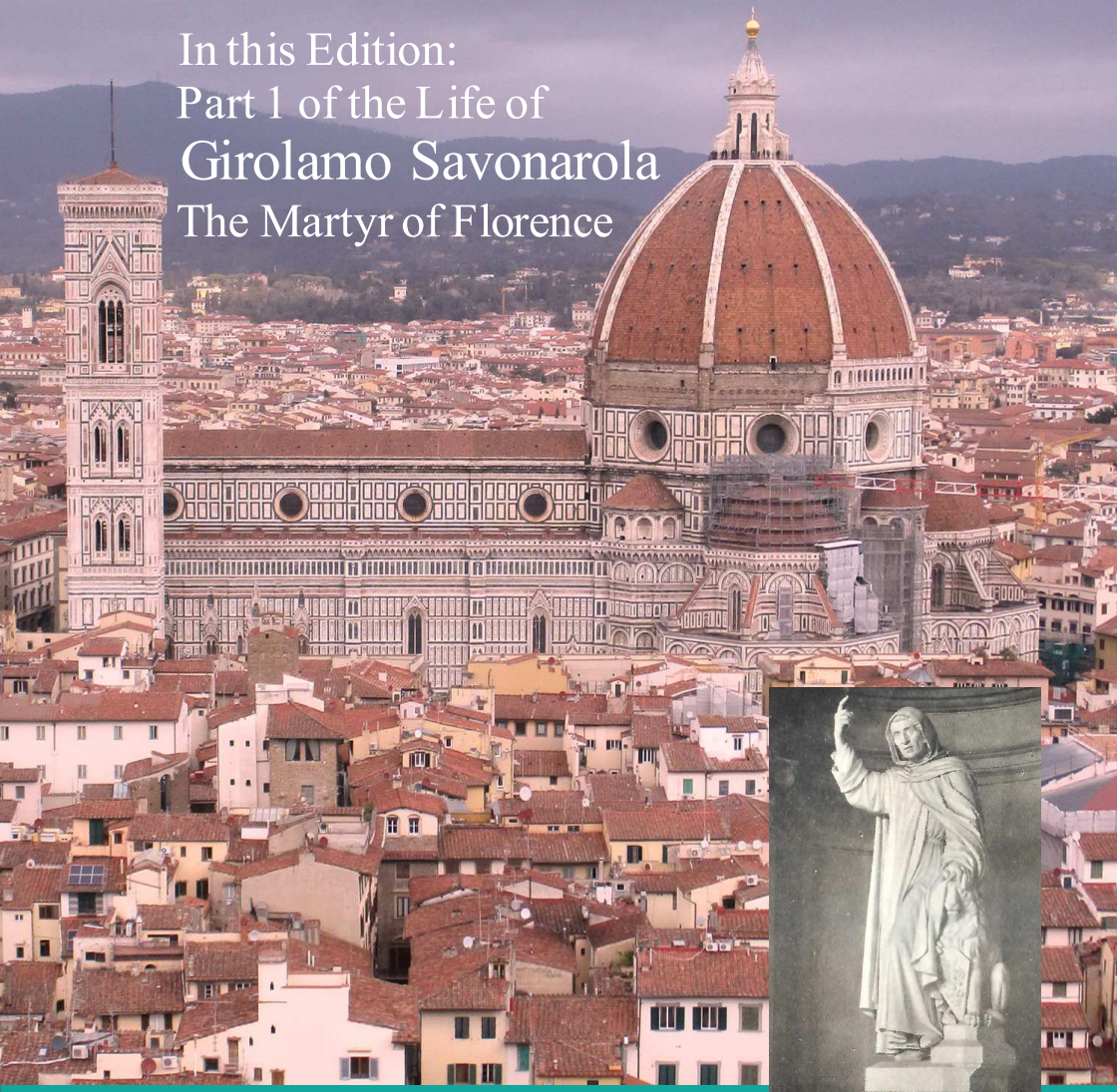




# PERCEPTION

A Quarterly Magazine for Young People

In this Edition:  
Part 1 of the Life of  
Girolamo Savonarola  
The Martyr of Florence



“For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake” (Philippians 1. 29).

**SUMMER 2020**

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**Cover picture:** Florence Cathedral, Northern Italy

*Inset:* Girolamo Savonarola

# PERCEPTION

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## EDITORIAL

*“Now they that died in the plague were fourteen thousand and seven hundred” (Numbers 16. 49).*

In the present circumstances, it has been difficult to decide quite how to write the usual editorial. Certainly, none of us has ever lived through a time like the last three months.

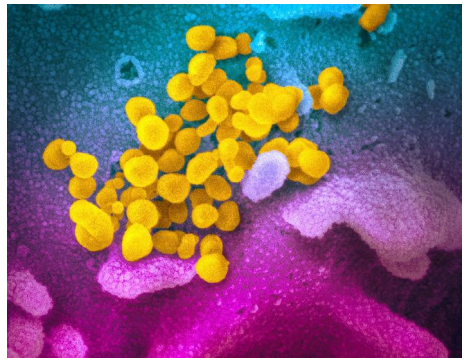
First, there is a sense of awe and wonderment that an organism so small, so tiny that it cannot be seen under even the most powerful optical microscope, has been able to turn the world upside down!

Second, there is, or we hope among the godly there is, a solemn realisation that God’s judgments are upon the earth.

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Viruses are thought to be the most abundant biological entities on the earth. Those of us who believe in an all-creating God, conclude that they are permitted by God to exist for purposes known only to Himself. My own Pastor, Mr. Ramsbottom, referring to the pandemic, pointed out at a service: “It couldn’t possibly have happened without divine purpose. The Lord could say, ‘Peace, be still,’ and it would cease.”

Under an electron microscope viruses are revealed as amazing structures. They are so tiny that they need to be measured in nanometres (nm), one thousand-millionth of a metre. We read somewhere that the polio virus, 30 nm across, is about 10,000 times smaller than a grain of salt. Viruses are much smaller than bacteria.



*Viral particles (yellow) emerge from the surface of a Covid-19 cell. A scanning electron microscope image.*

How does a virus do its deadly work? Viruses work by invading a

host cell and forcing it to make lots of copies of itself. This normally kills the cell in the process. Your immune response to a mild virus might protect you from a more serious infection: cowpox infection immunises you against smallpox, for example.

Human coronaviruses were first discovered in the late 1960s. They are a large family of viruses that cause illnesses ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases. On 30 January 2020, the Director-General of the World Health Organisation declared that a newly-discovered coronavirus, known as Covid-19, was a public health emergency of international concern.

The first case of someone suffering from Covid-19 can be traced back to 17 November 2019, when reports suggested that a new Sars-like virus was emerging in the city of Wuhan in China.

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In the February 2020 *Gospel Standard* magazine, before the deadliness of the virus was realised, the editor Mr. Rosier wrote: “Our readers of the *Gospel Standard* in these islands do not know how matters will unfold for us in the land. Neither do our readers in other lands know what will unfold for them.” How true this has proved to be.

Words in Deuteronomy chapter 28 seem to be so relevant: “And among these nations shalt thou find no ease: And thy life shall hang in doubt before thee.” We feel that what has been permitted to happen is the judgment of God upon an evil, godless, rebellious world.

The progress of the infection was relentless. On 20th March, all schools in England closed, and the country went into lockdown. On 25th March our Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, tested positive for the virus, a virus which is no respecter of persons. He was admitted to hospital, when, in his own words, “It could have gone either way.” Mercifully, his life was spared. On 9th April the global death toll reached 100,000 and by 18th April 200,000. At the time of writing the figure exceeds 370,000. There is much still to learn about the behaviour of the virus, and what will happen next we do not know.

These stark figures do nothing to tell us of the sorrow and grief behind the deaths. Many of those who lost their lives had devoted their lives to caring for others. Mothers were snatched away from their young families. A 53-year-old doctor, a consultant, struggled for fifteen days against the disease, but had to leave his wife and two children.

Thankfully, very few children have been badly affected, but some have died. *But we do not question God's ways or purposes.*

The important thing is, how has this left us personally? Are we just waiting for the time when things will get back to normal, and we can carry on as before? Or has it been a *Selah* time - *Pause and think*. For all of us, young or old, "Death is now upon the road." But for some the road will prove to be shorter than expected.

---

We have heard a number of people commenting that the months we have been living through have reminded them of the war years. There have been the shortages, the restrictions on our movement, separation from loved ones, anxiety and fear. On Friday, 8th May, celebrations took place to mark the 75th anniversary of VE Day (Victory in Europe) but with none of the large-scale events that had been planned. Rather than 'celebrations' we would prefer to use the word 'thanksgiving.'

Her Majesty the Queen addressed the nation at the same hour on the same day that her father, King George VI, had addressed the nation 75 years ago. The King had started his address with the words: "Today we give thanks to God for a great deliverance." He ended the address by saying: "In the hour of danger we humbly committed our cause into the hand of God, and He has been our strength and shield. Let us thank Him for our mercies, and in this hour of victory commit ourselves and our task to the guidance of the same strong hand."

That same God still reigns. Oh that we could see more signs in these times of the devastating virus of a committing our cause into the hands of God. We were thankful that on the 17th March the Archbishop of Canterbury (Justin Welby) and the Archbishop of York (John Sentamu) jointly called for a National Day of Prayer in response to the coronavirus pandemic. Whilst sincerely thanking Her Majesty for her encouragement, we were sad that there was no mention of the name of God by the Queen in either of her two recent addresses to the nation.

May the Lord be with all our readers at this time, and in His mercy preserve us each from danger "until these calamities be overpast."

Your sincere friend, the Editor.

---

## GIROLAMO SAVONAROLA

### A reformer before the Reformation

God's choice of those whom He chooses to accomplish some part of His work is not limited to time or place. One thing that strikes us is how many men God has used who never came wholly to the knowledge of the truth, whilst enlightened beyond others of their contemporaries. In Europe there was a gradual dawning of greater light.

Two years ago we wrote in *Perception* of Primož Trubar, a countryman from Slovenia, of whom few have even heard, whose preaching in the Cathedral of the capital Ljubljana leant more and more towards Protestantism until finally he was expelled by the authorities. Today we write of another reformer who is relatively unknown.

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#### Who was Girolamo Savonarola?

How many people today know his name? Very few. He was born on 21st September 1452 in Ferrara, northern Italy. His father's name was Niccolo Savonarola and his mother's name Elena. Very occasionally Girolamo is called Jerome (e.g. by historian D'Aubigne) – we suppose it is the same name.

He was the third of seven children. We know he had a brother called Alberto, and two sisters, Beatrice and Chiara. Of his sisters, he wrote to his mother: "Let them not waste their time in thoughts of marriage and of worldly happiness." Beatrice and Chiara did not see things in quite the same light as their brother!

A contemporary historian tells us he was "a man of average height, of dark complexion, and highly-strung. His eyes were dark grey but very bright, with thick black eyebrows. He had an aquiline nose (meaning shaped like an eagle's beak) and a large mouth. Although his countenance had no beauty of line, it expressed a nobility of character."





**Where does Savonarola fit into Reformation history?**

He was born 37 years after the death of John Huss (1371-1415), and 31 years before the birth of Martin Luther (1483-1546).

**Why should we remember him?**

He tried zealously to reform the Church until he was burned to death as a martyr in the fires of Florence in northern Italy.

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**Education**

He received his education from his paternal grandfather, Michele, a doctor of high reputation and physician to the Court. The doctor was a man of strong religious principles, and extremely kind and charitable towards the poor. During his education, not surprisingly, Savonarola's studies included the study of medicine.

**First religious concerns**

As a young man, Savonarola wrote in a letter to his father that he could not suffer "the blind wickedness of the peoples of Italy." It was the corruptions of the age that led him into the monastic life. Whenever he reflected on the miserable state of the church he was "roused to fury."

His life was a lonely one, and he spent much time in church prostrating himself before the altar. At home, he played sad tunes on his lute (later also to be Martin Luther's chosen instrument) to which accompaniment he sung verses he wrote himself.

Only once was his heart moved, when he met a young girl from Florence, the illegitimate daughter of an exiled citizen with the name of Strozzi. When his eyes met the gaze of the young Florentine maiden, he felt a stirring of his heart not known before. Upon making his feelings known, the father gave a haughty reply that no Strozzi would stoop to an alliance with a Savonarola. Not yet twenty years old, he was crushed by it.

**Prayer for guidance**

Religious feelings began to take complete possession of his mind. Daily his prayer became: "Lord, make known to me the path my soul must tread."

In the year 1474, he heard a sermon preached by an Augustinian friar which made so deep an impression on him that he formed an

irrevocable decision to devote himself to monastic life.

He realised that he had a hard struggle before him. It was necessary to hide his resolve from his parents, but his mother, with that discernment found so often in a mother, knew something was afoot.

One day, he took his lute in his hand, and sang such a sad air that his mother turned to him, and piteously exclaimed, “Oh, my son, this is a token of separation.” But he, making an effort, continued to play with trembling fingers, without raising his eyes to hers.

### **Enters the convent**

The following day, the 24th of April, 1475, was the great festival of St. George, and Savonarola’s parents went with all the rest of Ferrara to the celebrations. This was the moment he had fixed upon to fly from his home.

Directly he was alone he set out on his journey to Bologna, the largest city in northern Italy, thirty miles to the south. On arrival, he made his way to the Convent of St. Dominic. He announced his intention of taking the vows, and asked to be employed as the convent drudge, since he came, as he said, to do penance for his sins. He received instant admission.

Thus, at the age of 22, he entered the order of the Dominican Friars. The Dominicans are known as the ‘Blackfriars,’ and the remains of St. Dominic rest within this convent’s church in an exquisite tomb, with his skull enclosed in a glass case on the back side of the tomb.

When for the first time he put on his black cloak his prayer was: “Thou, O God, art good, and in Thy goodness teach me Thy righteousness.” His black cloak, 42 inches long, has been preserved, along with two hair shirts.

The next day, he wrote a most affectionate letter to his father. “He could,” he said, “no longer tolerate the gross corruption of the world.” His long letter concluded: “Dearest father, my sorrow is already so great, do not, I pray you, add to it by yours. Be strong, and seek to comfort my mother.”



*Dominican monks today*



### **Becomes acquainted with the Scriptures**

Here in the convent he began to study the Scriptures, which he found in the convent's library. What prompted him to investigate these writings we do not know. At this time, in his own words, he devoted himself "to continual prayers, fasting, and mortification."

While in the convent he led a silent life. He was so worn out with fasting and performing penance, he seemed more like a ghost than a living man. Even on days not appointed for abstinence he scarcely ate enough to support life. His bed was a grating with a sack of straw on it and one blanket. In modesty, humility, and obedience he surpassed all the rest of his brethren.

His one recreation was in teaching the novices, at which he excelled, and he instructed them with great zeal. He constantly exhorted his pupils to study the Scriptures. His young hearers listened reverently to his words.

Returning four years later to his birthplace, Ferrara, he began to teach Scripture in the Convento degli Angeli (Convent of the Angels). His term of office here was short, for in 1482 Savonarola was sent to Florence to take up the post of lecturer in the convent of San Marco (St. Mark), where he quickly gained a great reputation for his learning and for the austerity of his life. Here he remained for the rest of his life.



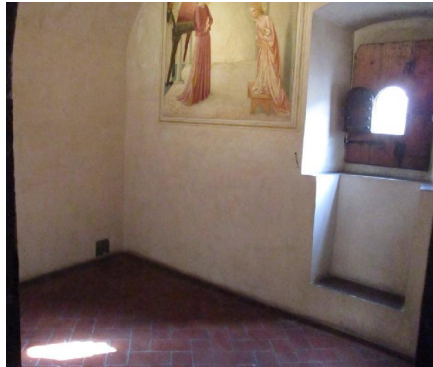
*St. Mark's Convent, Florence, where he lived until the end of his life*

### The convent repaired

The old convent of St. Mark had fallen into disrepair, but through the generosity of one of the de Medici family, Cosimo by name, had recently been restored. Through the generosity of Cosimo, the convent possessed a library, unique in its day, containing a collection of valuable manuscripts which he had got together at very great cost. Thus St. Mark's was equipped to be a centre of learning.



*The monks lived in identical cells along two corridors on the upper floor.*



*Savonarola's cell was at the far end of the second corridor. The small shuttered window, through which the sun shone for a period each day, overlooked the central courtyard. Each cell measured about 12 feet by 12 feet. The wall paintings were not there in his day.*

In his early days at Florence, a young renowned *cantatrice* (lady singer) suddenly died. He wrote: "She was the darling of the whole city by reason of the sweetness of

her voice. What delight do all her charms afford her now? Where are now the melodies in which she once rejoiced? The things of this world are fleeting like the wind. This life which we live here is but a brief passage either to the joys of heaven, or the pains of hell."

### Preaches at the Church of San Lorenzo (St. Lawrence)

Through the recommendation of his student novices, he was invited to preach the Lenten sermons in the enormous Basilica of St. Lorenzo.



*The huge Basilica Church of San Lorenzo, built in 1419. The front facade was never finished, and has been left rough to this day.*



*The interior of this vast church, where his congregation diminished to twenty-five hearers.*

But his preaching was of a different style to their usual preachers. His hearers preferred eloquence rather than doctrine, and the people of Florence turned away from him. His congregation went on diminishing until at last it was reduced from hundreds to a mere twenty-five persons including children. His appearance in the pulpit was pale and haggard. One hearer wrote: "His gestures and pronunciation please no-one."

After preaching for a while, he was inwardly persuaded that he must begin a new series of sermons. These he began in Lent 1485, and continued them into 1486. His message was bold: the church needed reforming. This time, his Lenten sermons were powerful, and at last made the name of Savonarola known throughout Italy, but he remained modest and humble.

The following year (1487) he left Florence for a one-year appointment as master of studies in the school of general studies at Bologna. After the year of his appointment was over, he was sent to preach in various cities, returning to Florence from time to time, where eventually he settled. His preaching was clear: "God," he exclaimed, "remits the sins of men, and justifies them by His mercy, for none are saved by their own works. If, in the presence of God, we could ask all these justified sinners, 'Have you been saved by your own strength?' all would reply as with one voice, 'Not unto us, O Lord! not unto us; but to Thy name be the glory.'"

### **Settles at Florence**

At this time Florence was ruled by the Medici family, an Italian

bourgeois banking family (bourgeois meaning middle-class). Through the influence of Lorenzo de Medici (sometimes called *Lorenzo the Magnificent*) Savonarola was brought back to Florence in 1490. Lorenzo had reigned in Florence for many years, and was then at the height of his power and fame. Under his rule, the city prospered.

In the summer of 1490 Savonarola began a course of readings and expositions from the book of Revelation which he held out of doors in the convent's garden "beneath the damask rose-tree." The little audience of Friars began to be increased by laymen from outside. He was pressed to preach in the church of the convent in order that a wider public might profit from his sermons. After the sermon he would say: "Now pray till next Sunday." He began to preach in the church from 1st August 1490 and continued for the rest of the year. He denounced the sins of Italy and the corruption of the Church, and prophesied that God would quickly send a great scourge upon the guilty land.



*"He preached in the convent's garden"*

### **Appointed Prior**

The following year (1491) he was appointed Prior to St. Mark's convent. After his appointment he began to preach in the Cathedral. By now, his preaching had become powerful, and his popularity increased. He continued to preach boldly against the tyrannical abuses of the government, and the need for the reformation of the church, attacking the humanism and paganism that he saw. His large congregations were often deeply moved, especially by a series of sermons on the book of Revelation.



*"He began to preach in the Cathedral"*



The church at St. Mark's was also thronged with people, some sitting, some standing – anywhere that they could hear and see the preacher. It was his practice always to take a text from the Bible around which he based his remarks – something unusual in those days.

### **Preaches at Venice and Bologna**

He preached away from Florence too. We find that in 1492 he visited Venice and preached in the Monastery of Santa Caterina, and then he journeyed on to Bologna. At the latter city, he was received rather coldly, and described as 'a simple man, and a preacher for women.' Nevertheless, great numbers flocked to hear him. Bologna was ruled by the Bentivoglio family, who were amongst his hearers.

Dame Bentivoglio always arrived at the service very late with a long train of ladies, cavaliers, and pages, and daily interrupted the sermon. The first day or so Savonarola paused in his discourse, but the annoyance continued. The Dame was greatly offended at the attention received, and came later and later, made more noise, and behaved in the most disrespectful manner. At last, one morning, in the height of his sermon, he could no longer restrain himself, and cried out: "Behold, here cometh the devil to interrupt God's word." The Dame was enraged, and ordered her servants to strike him dead in the pulpit. They, however, shrank from so great an atrocity.

### **Death of Lorenzo the Magnificent**

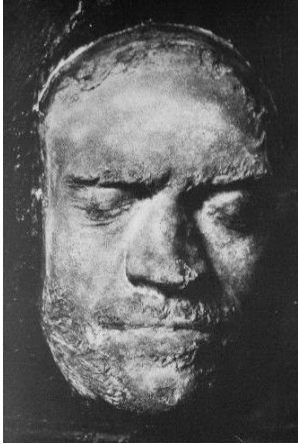


*Lorenzo the Magnificent*

Lorenzo de' Medici tried to stop the dangerous sermons with threats and flattery, but it was too late. Enthusiasm for Savonarola's preaching only increased. But Lorenzo's own life was drawing to a close.

As he lay dying, Savonarola was called to give his blessing to the dying man. "I know no honest friar save one," said Lorenzo. "I desire him to come to me." A messenger was instantly despatched to St. Mark's. Savonarola was astounded, but went as summoned. Lorenzo said there were three things on his conscience he wished to confess. As he became very agitated, Savonarola sought to comfort him by

speaking of the mercy of God, but he told Lorenzo there were three things needful. First, a great and living faith in God's mercy. Second, he must restore all his ill-gotten gains. Third, he must restore liberty to the people of Florence.



*Lorenzo's death mask*

No doubt Lorenzo expected, and wished for, the usual Roman Catholic pronouncement of absolution, when the priest, in the Sacrament of Penance, frees man from sin, the Sacrament ending with the statement, "I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen." It is thought doubtful that Savonarola would have given this expected blessing to the dying man.

Lorenzo breathed his last on April 8th, 1492 at the age of 43. The cause of death was an infection causing gangrene of the leg.

### **End of Medici rule**

Medici rule did not long survive Lorenzo and was overthrown by the invasion of Charles VIII, king of France, in 1494. Once the Medici had been driven out, Florence had no other master than Savonarola. He introduced a democratic government, the best the city ever had. He wanted the city of Florence, the heart of Italy, to be "a city of God." He felt it to be well-placed to initiate the reform of Italy and of the church. This was the object of all his actions.

One of his lasting achievements was to commission an extension to the town hall, the Vecchio Palace, known as the *Salone dei Cinquecento* (the Hall of the Five Hundred). Here the city's parliament could meet in three sittings of 500 people at a time. It is a most imposing room, with a length of 52 metres and a width of 23 metres. (170ft x 75ft). Savonarola always referred to it as 'The Hall of Christ.'



*Hall of the Five Hundred*

## Opposition

The rise of Savonarola's rule was so great and so sudden as to give rise to jealousy and suspicion. A party was formed in the city in opposition to him, *the Arrabbiati* (the Angry Ones). His enemies included the Duke of Milan and the Pope. Savonarola and his followers they called Snivellers, Wailers, Wrynecks, Toadies, and Prayer-mumblers as he disapproved of jokes and frivolity, of poetry and public inns, of sexual sins, of gambling, of fine clothes and jewellery, and luxury of every sort. He called for laws against vice and laxity. He put an end to the carnivals and festivals the Florentines traditionally enjoyed, substituting religious festivals instead.

## Communication from the Pope



*Pope Alexander VI*

In 1495 the Pope wrote to Savonarola praising him for his work and called him to Rome. However, the Pope was the corrupt Alexander VI, and the trap was all too obvious. Savonarola delayed his journey for a while. In early September, the Pope sent him a second letter in which the praises turned into bitter and abusive language, threatening excommunication. Savonarola replied to this document with respectful firmness, pointing out no fewer than eighteen mistakes in it. The Pope replaced the letter by another dated October 16th, in which he was forbidden to preach.

## Savonarola continues to preach

After a few months, as Lent 1496 drew near, the Pope appears to have had a change of heart, and verbally (but not formally) lifted the ban on preaching. Thus Savonarola was able to give a series of sermons on the book of Amos, said to be his finest and most forceful sermons. In them he attacked the Roman Court, and referred to the Pope's scandalous private life. The Pope was greatly offended, and the matter was referred to a college of theologians. The theologians found nothing to criticize in what *the friar* had said, so that after Lent he was able to begin, without hindrance from Rome, sermons on Ruth and Micah.

After Lent, Savonarola seemed broken down by fatigue. His old energy still flashed through his eyes, but he was emaciated, looked

thoroughly worn out, increasingly weakened by an intestinal complaint.

However, the aspect of the city was completely changed. The women threw aside their jewels and finery, and their behaviour was quiet and modest. Hymns took the place of Lorenzo's Carnival songs. Most remarkable of all, bankers and tradesmen restored ill-gotten gains amounting to many thousands of florins. Peasants and nobles from all the country round journeyed to Florence by night to be in time for the morning discourse, and often the vast Cathedral was too small to contain the throng.

### **A remarkable conversion**

While all of Florence flocked to Savonarola's sermons, a famous painter of miniatures called Bettuccio refused to follow the crowds. He was on the side of the *Arrabbiati*, and joined in their scoffs against the Snivellers. But one day, when in the house of a lady of nobility, she spoke to him of Savonarola's sermons in the warmest terms. He laughed at the time; but on another day he was induced by the lady's persuasions to accompany her to the Cathedral. He describes his deep confusion on entering the church and finding himself among so great a company of hearers, who stared at him with astonishment. At first he longed to escape, but somewhat reluctantly decided to remain.

As soon as Savonarola mounted the pulpit everything seemed to change. Having once fixed his eyes on the preacher he was unable to withdraw them. His attention and mind were powerfully impressed. "Then," said Bettuccio, "at last I knew myself to be as one dead rather than living." The sermon over, he wandered out "and for the first time I turned my mind to my inner self." After long meditation he went home, and became a changed man. He threw aside his songs and musical instruments, forsook his companions, and discarded his vain set of clothing.

From that day he became one of the most loyal of Savonarola's hearers. "I had a hard struggle with my companions who went about making mock of me," he said.



*"As he mounted the pulpit"*



Savonarola sent him out to minister to the sick and dying, and to bury the dead. Eventually he took the name of Friar Benedetto.

### **Offer to become a Cardinal**

The Pope tried hard to win him over, first by offering him a cardinal's hat. He replied: "A red hat? No. What I want is a hat of blood."

But by now Savonarola felt a presentiment of change, and he had visions of what should befall him at Florence. Before preaching in the Cathedral he tells us: "I prepared my sermon for the second Sunday, but I determined to leave it, and preach no more on such matters. God is my witness that all that Saturday, and all night, I could turn to nothing else, so that every step was closed to me, and all other teaching but that.

Early Sunday morning, towards the break of dawn, being much fatigued by lack of sleep, weary and dejected, I heard a voice say to me: 'Thou fool, dost thou not see that the will of God is that thou shouldest continue in the same path?' Accordingly that morning I preached a *sparentosa predicatione* (a mighty sermon)."



*A Cardinal's hat*

### **The famous bonfire**

During the carnival season of 1497, Savonarola set up on the Piazza della Signoria in front of the Vecchio Palace a huge bonfire which became known as the 'Bonfire of the Vanities.' Onto the bonfire went gambling tables, packs of cards, carnival masks, wigs of false hair, face paints, perfumes, mirrors, ornaments, nude statues, books of magic and superstition, indecent books and lewd pictures of every kind. It is reported that even the famous artist Botticelli threw some of his pictures onto the blazing bonfire.



*Piazza della Signoria and the Vecchio Palace*

During the carnival week the

children, known as the Blessed Bands, went through the city and collected three hundred ducats for the poor. They then made their way to the church of St. Martin, singing hymns as they went. “Sing as much as ye will,” Savonarola said to the boys and girls, “but sing hymns and sacred lauds instead of indecent songs.” It was estimated that there were six thousand children between the age of five and sixteen, although in a letter to the Duke of Milan, the number was given as ten thousand.

On the appointed day, after a solemn service in the Cathedral, a procession clothed in white marched first to St. Mark’s Convent, then back to the Cathedral, when the alms collected were distributed to the ‘modest poor.’

On the Piazza, close to the Cathedral, the great heap of Vanities was ready – and so were the waiting crowds. At the appointed signal a blast of trumpets sounded. The four Captains of the Quarters advanced with flaming torches and set fire to the heap.

### **Reaction**

Not surprisingly, Savonarola made many powerful enemies. Pope Alexander VI had good reason to feel uncomfortable with Savonarola’s denunciation of the laxity and luxury of the Church and its leaders. There was only one thing to be done – at last the Pope excommunicated the troublesome friar. A letter from Rome arrived on the 8th September 1496. “A certain Friar Girolamo,” read the letter, “is a seeker after novelty, and a disseminator of false doctrines. He seeketh to make people believe that he hath a mission from God and holdeth discourse with God.” Upon the 13th May 1497 a Papal Brief pronounced upon him the sentence of excommunication.

Absorbed in study and prayer, Savonarola was silent. Only once more did he venture to go again into the pulpit, on the 18th March 1498.

During the night, a group of men opposed to Savonarola known as the *Compagnacci*, secretly entered the Cathedral. There they defiled the pulpit by smearing it with grease, if not with more loathsome and disgusting material. From the pulpit they hung the putrid skin of an ass. Finally, they erected a structure to hold a heavy chest which was to fall while the service was in progress.

### **His last sermon**

Notwithstanding the efforts of his enemies to silence him, Savonarola preached one last sermon, taken from the book of the

Exodus. "I felt myself all burning, all inflamed with the Spirit of the Lord," he said. It marked his departure from the pulpit and from public life. His last words from the pulpit were: "*Non si puo fare altro. Questa e la conclusione.*" ("I can do no other. This is the conclusion.") Words, of course, which were to be echoed later by Martin Luther.

The crowd that flocked to hear this last sermon was immense. As



*"The floor of the Cathedral  
was too small . . . ."*

the floor of the Cathedral was too small, seventeen rows of seats were erected against the wall of the nave, rising to the level of the lower windows. Here were seated the children of Florence. On his way to the Cathedral, Savonarola was escorted by a large body of well-armed friends to protect him. The *Arrabbiati* were determined to kill him, and assassins had been hired to attack him.

His prayers at the service have come down to us: "O God, we seek Thy mercy, and we bring not unto Thee any righteousness of our own; but when by Thy grace Thou justifiest us, then Thy righteousness belongs unto us. O God, save us, we pray, by Thy righteousness, that is to say, in Thy Son, who alone among men

was found without sin!"

We can see that the grand doctrine of justification by faith gladdened Savonarola's heart. The leaders of the Church opposed him; but he knew that the oracles of God were far above the visible Church. "Fly," he cried, "fly far away from Babylon!"

The voice of the great preacher died away into silence.

*Savonarola's trial and martyrdom will be continued in our next edition.*

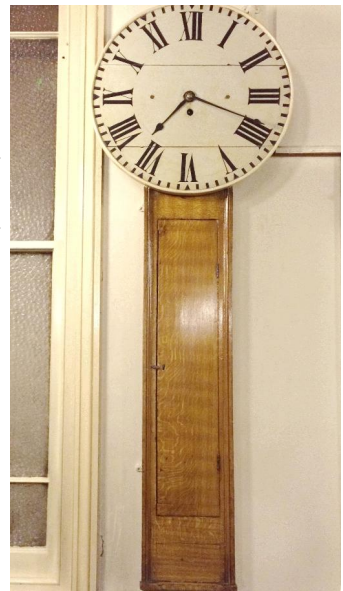
## CLOCKS, TIME, AND ETERNITY

How many times a day do we glance at a clock or our watch? The answer would probably surprise us. At least 50 times a day is the official answer – although the average user checks their phone around 110 times a day! We live our lives very much by the clock, as it is through clock time that we schedule our lives.

In 1797, prime minister William Pitt introduced a tax on clocks to raise desperately-needed money to fund the war against the French. Everyone who owned a clock had to pay duty of five shillings. It was a highly unpopular tax and nearly ruined the clock trade. After nine months the tax law was repealed. Many people disposed of their clocks, or hid them. However, clocks were hung in every tavern and inn throughout the British Isles. The innkeepers did not mind paying the five shillings, as many people called in to check the time, thus increasing their trade.

The type of clock generally hung in these public places became known as “an Act of Parliament clock.” The chapel clock in the schoolroom of Tamworth Road, Croydon is of this type, and is described as such on the back of *Addresses to Young People* (reviewed in *Perception* Winter 2016). It was made in 1729, has a pendulum, and is weight driven. It needs winding about once a week.

The clock’s first home appears to have been in Salem Chapel, opened in 1729 in the area of Croydon known as Pump Pail. The old chapel has long since disappeared. For the next part of the history of the clock we are indebted to Ralph F. Chambers. In his book *The Strict Baptist Chapels of England* he has this to say about the clock:



*Clock in Tamworth Road Chapel, Croydon*

There is, however, one relic of those bygone days hanging upon the wall of the schoolroom of Tamworth Road Chapel. It is the old chapel clock, bearing the date 1729. It marked the passage of time in the first Croydon Meeting House, and it is still going,

steady and true: and while many generations have passed away, pastors have come and gone, congregations have increased and decreased, and far-reaching changes have taken place in the town itself, the old clock ticks on, first the minutes, then the hours, till hours amount to days, and days to weeks, and weeks to years, and years to centuries. There is something inexorable about this old clock with its dull measured tick-tock, and its large unemotional white face. It seems to say:

“I watch a scene of unending change. The congregations of yesterday, upon which I gazed through many a sermon, are gone; and the congregations of today will soon follow in their steps. You who sit there, to listen and learn, with hopes and fears, seeking to know that only eternal good (while I mark your little span, your fleeting hours) will soon be gone, and the seat you now occupy will be empty or filled by another, but I shall still stare, white faced and unemotional, and swing my pendulum with that dull tick-tock for generations as yet unborn.”

In his 1996 annual letter to the congregation, the Pastor, Mr. C. A. Wood, referred to the clock in this way:

“This clock shows us how quickly time passes, and that there is no going back or stopping. We are hastening on to eternity, for ever and ever. ‘So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom’ (Psalm 90. 12). O to be found ready, that it may be well with us for time and eternity!”



The most famous clock in Britain is undoubtedly what is affectionately known as Big Ben in the Elizabeth Tower, Westminster, London. Strictly speaking Big Ben is the name of the ‘hour bell’, but nowadays describes the tower, the clock and the bell. Originally the tower was known simply as the Clock Tower but was renamed in 2012 to mark the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II. Sadly, at the moment the bell is silenced while

restoration work is carried out.

## JOHN Warburton (Part 2)

### A few of the Lord's providential dealings

Born near Manchester in 1776, convicted of his sin as a young man, and delivered by a “Who can tell” from a temptation to end his life by drowning, we continue with the life of the Lord's servant.

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#### Mosley Street Chapel, Manchester

I made up my mind that, as the next day was Sunday, I would go in the morning to Manchester and try once more to obtain a little consolation. I had been many times to Manchester and other places, far and near, in search of a little comfort for my soul, but all of no use. This was the last day I meant to try.

After breakfast I set out for Manchester, and O the exercises of my mind upon the road! I stood still and thought I would turn back, for I thought that it was impossible for God to show mercy upon me and be just. Then the words, “Who can tell?” came again into my mind, and hope seemed to rise up within me, with a “Maybe the Lord will be merciful to me, a poor lost sinner.” That text was, for a few moments, very sweet to me: “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief” (1 Tim. 1. 15). O how my very soul cried unto God that He would save me, the very chief, the very vilest of the vile! O how strengthened and encouraged was my poor soul, and I went on, hoping and praying that the Lord would meet me in mercy.



*Mosley Street Chapel,  
Manchester: Built 1789  
Demolished 1836*

In the morning I went to Mosley Street Chapel, and soon after I was seated a solemn old man ascended the pulpit. O how my soul trembled for fear lest he should bear a message from God to me of wrath and condemnation. What distress and horror I felt when, in reading the chapter, he came to these words, “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them.” I can never express the thousandth

part of all the misery and sense of guilt that I endured. I saw that my soul was doomed to certain destruction for ever and ever. What the old man preached about I could not tell; but this I knew, that damned I was, and sometimes thought that I should have dropped into hell whilst in the chapel.

### **Hears William Roby at Cannon Street Chapel**

The service being concluded, I wandered up and down from street to street, until I verily believed that my senses were entirely gone. I looked behind me and saw two men following me, who, I was afraid, were coming to take me to the mad-house.

The first place where I could sit down and vent my grief was St. George's Church; and seeing no person near, I sat down on the steps and wept until I had no more power to weep. After some time I got up, and thought I would go home and put an end to my miserable life. "Yes,"



*Rev. William Roby*

said I, "I will come to an end and know the worst at once." On my way home, as I thought, I got into Cannon Street, and observing a chapel there, into which people were crowding, I remembered that it was the chapel of Mr. Roby, to which I had once or twice been in company with my mother. I stopped and thought, "Shall I go in?" "No," thought I, "I will not. The minister will take that text, 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them.'"

I proceeded a short distance down the street and stopped again. "Who can tell?" came once more into my mind. "Well," said I, "I can but be damned;" and so I came to the resolution of going into the chapel, and "if I perish," said I, "I perish." If ever I entered a place of worship with the feeling cry that God would, if it were possible, show mercy to one in so desperate a case, I believe I did then.

When seated in the chapel all the horrors of hell seemed to come upon me. I trembled from head to foot, and wished that I had never come in. At the conclusion of the first hymn, Mr. Roby went to prayer, and towards the end of it he dropped a few words which I believed were for nobody but me. He begged God that, if there was any one present who had come to make a last trial of His mercy, He would show Himself



to such a one as his God. It was with hard work that I could keep from calling out, “Yes, here is poor lost John Warburton. Here I am, come to make the last trial.” O how my soul went out to God in prayer that He would appear for me.

The prayer being finished, another hymn was sung previous to the sermon. All my little hope seemed dashed to pieces when I saw the minister take his Bible from the cushion to find his text. “O,” thought I, “he is certainly looking for that awful text which has so torn my heart asunder all these months. What shall I do if he takes that text, ‘Cursed is every one,’ etc.? O what will become of me? I must drop into hell if he takes that.”

O the feelings I experienced! I could not imagine why he delayed so long to put the Bible upon the cushion. At last he did so, and I saw that it was opened about the middle. Blessed be God, my soul whispered, the text is not “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them.” O the expectation that sprang up within me! “Do, Lord, pardon my sins; do, Lord, have mercy upon my poor lost soul,” burst from my heart; and when Mr. Roby read his text, O the wonder and the glory that shone into my soul! The precious text was, “Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led captivity captive: Thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them” (Ps. 68. 18).

### **His sins taken away**

O the love, peace and joy that broke into my heart as the words came out of his mouth! They were truly sweeter to my soul than ten thousands of gold and silver. I wondered again with astonishment, and said in my soul, “What can this mean? Where are my sins? What can be the meaning of all this? Where is my burden and the wrath and terror I have had so many months?” And again the text flowed into my soul, “For the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them.” O I knew not where to hide my poor face! My soul kept whispering, “Surely it cannot mean me. Is it a dream? Is it a dream?”

I looked for my sins, for my burden, for the wrath and misery I had so long carried in my poor distracted soul, and could find neither guilt nor sins, wrath nor bondage; for the Saviour of my soul had taken them all away. Such a sight of His sufferings and death shined into my soul as broke my heart to pieces. O how I looked on Him and mourned! “What have I done?” cried I; “I have crucified the Lord. O my cursed



sins, that drove the nails into His hands and feet and thrust the spear into His side. O wretch, wretch that I am! And canst Thou, wilt Thou, save and pardon me, notwithstanding all my cursed sins?"

The poor things who sat in the same seat kept jogging me with their elbows to sit still; but it was impossible for me to sit still. O the love I felt to my dear Saviour for such unmerited kindness to one so vile, to the vilest wretch that ever was on the earth! I can never express a thousandth part of the hatred I felt against my cursed sins, which pierced the Lord of life and glory.

### **Praise and adoration**

When the service was over, I went down the street blessing, thanking, wondering, praising and adoring the God of my salvation; for text upon text flowed in upon my soul, one after another, with so much power, that sometimes I was obliged to hold my hand upon my mouth to prevent myself from shouting aloud in the street.

On my way home I got into the fields as soon as I could, and when out of the sight and hearing of every human being, I shouted, I leaped, I danced, I thanked and praised my dear Jesus with all my might, until my bodily strength was so gone that I fell upon the ground, and there lay, firmly believing that I was upon the point of going to heaven, to be with my dear Lord and Saviour. O what cause of holy wonder I saw in God's being a just God, and yet a Saviour. That holy law that had been my terror for months, which had cursed me for every thought, word and deed, I now saw completely honoured and righteously fulfilled in Christ.

My poor soul was so carried away with the transports of joy, that if anybody had seen me, they would have supposed that I had just escaped from Bedlam; for I shouted, danced and clapped my hands with sweet delight. It was, indeed, a heaven upon earth. Those precious words of David were the very feelings of my heart at that time: "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy Name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits; who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies" (Ps. 103. 1 - 4).

### **Reaches home**

My poor wife had been very uneasy on my account, for it was a very late hour when I reached home. But no wonder, for every tree of

the field, every bird of the air, every beast and insect, even to the crawling worm, furnished me with matter of songs, wonder and praise. In all of them I could see the hand of my Father and my God. I could not help telling my wife the comfort which I had received. God, I told her, had pardoned all my sins. I was sure of going to heaven, for Christ had suffered and died for me upon the cross. Poor thing! at that time she could not endure anything like religion, yet I could not conceal from her the blessing I had received.

### **Peace and liberty**

In this happy state of liberty, peace and praise I lived for months. In every chapter of the Bible that I read I could see something new, and exceedingly sweet and precious to my soul. I was preaching Jesus Christ and His preciousness to every one with whom I could get to talk; and ignorantly thought that all who went to chapel would be ready to rejoice with me. But, alas! I was wonderfully deceived; for when, at the first prayer-meeting which I went to, I told them what great things the Lord had done for my soul, how He had delivered me from the curse of the law, and been made a curse for me, having died in my room and stead; how He had finished my transgressions, and made a complete end of all my sins; when I told them these things, and how God had made them known to my soul, convincing me that there was now no condemnation for me, and that I was as sure of going to heaven as that Christ was there; poor things! they could not tell what to make of me. Some laughed, some pitied, some called it nothing but wild-fire, whilst others warned me not to be too secure.

### **Wrong after all?**

Having left the chapel and got into the fields, I began to think over what they had said, and to question myself whether they might not be in the right, and all they said very true. There are some of them, thought I, old Christians, and have been many years in the ways of God. "They must certainly," said I, "know better than such a young fool as I. Yet surely it cannot be all deception. Can I be deceived in losing my burden and feeling the pardon of all my sins? Lord, I am not deceived, am I?"

I fell upon my knees under the hedge and cried out to the Lord, "Am I deceived, Lord? Am I too secure? Is it wild-fire, Lord?" And the dear Lord broke in upon my soul with such Divine glory, and such a succession of promises, that the Bible appeared to me to be nothing but

promises from beginning to end, and all mine, all appearing to be made especially to me, and to none else. I had such a view, too, of the faithfulness and glory of God in His fulfilment of them from first to last to my poor soul, that I was completely overwhelmed with transports of heavenly joy, and, for a time, scarcely knew whether I was in the body or out of the body.

Upon arising from the ground, it struck me that it was the very place in which the devil had often tempted me to put an end to my life; and O how I did dance and sing, and banter the lying devil, and dare him to come out of his den! I challenged him to his face, and told him if he did not come out he durst not. I called him everything but a gentleman. I was so happy and comfortable that I felt as if I could walk through troops of devils, shouting, "In the Name of the Lord I will destroy them." O how I wondered at the goodness of the Lord to one so unworthy of the least of His mercies! "If this," cried I, "be wild-fire, let me have more of it. If this is being too secure, let me live and die in it. My God and my Saviour, Thou art my Portion, my Rock, my Hiding-place, my Friend, my dear Redeemer. O my dear, dear, dear Jesus, Thou art the chief of ten thousand, the Altogether Lovely."

How I got home I know not, for what with shouting, praising, thanking and blessing the Lord, it was morning before I arrived there.

### **Next prayer-meeting**

The next time I met the same people, I began, after the prayer-meeting, to tell them of my journey home the last meeting-night, and how I had knelt down in the field and asked the Lord whether I was too secure, whether I was deceived, and whether it was all wild-fire.

I told them how the Lord had answered my prayers, and had come into my soul with such glory, that He had showed me that all the promises of the Bible were mine, and that I was as sure and as confident of being a child of God, and of having had all my sins forgiven me, and that I should go to heaven, as I was that there was a God.

One of them, who professed to be my friend, told me that he was afraid I was turning Antinomian. "Antinomian," said I, "what sort of people are *they*? I have never heard the name before."

"They are those," replied he, "who deny the moral law to be the believer's rule of life, which is a most awful doctrine, and leads to all manner of sin."

"Moral law!" said I, "what is that?"

“It is that just and holy law of God,” replied he, “in which He commands us to love and obey Him.”

“What,” asked I, “do you mean that law which Paul meant when he said, ‘Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them’? Do you take that law to be your rule of life?” asked I.

“Surely I do,” said he, “and all those who do not are Antinomians.”

“Then,” said I, “I am one of those Antinomians. Blessed be God! He has delivered me from that law. Christ has obeyed it for me, and has been made a curse for me, and has gone to the end of it for my poor soul.”

I wondered that they who had been Christians so long did not see as I saw, and feel as I felt; yet whatever I could say to them of the way in which God had led me, the bondage from which He delivered me, and the love and delight I experienced in His ways, had no effect upon them, except that of making them rage and rave against me, and warn the people to have nothing to do with me.

### **A disturber of the peace**

At all their prayer meetings and preachings I was sure to be present, being quite impatient for the time to arrive to meet the children of God, and tell them again what great things God had done for my soul. But some of them could not bear to see me there, and one of them told me one night that he wished I would never come amongst them more, as I made nothing but confusion, and was a disturber of their peace; he therefore hoped I would come no more.

I answered him that I did not come amongst them intending to trouble them, or to throw them into confusion, but that my desire was to praise Jesus, and to tell what great things He had done for my soul by suffering in my stead. “And was it not wonderful,” said I, “that the dear and precious Jesus, bless His dear Name, should come to my poor soul, and pardon all my sins and obey the law for me?”

They told me that they feared I was deceived. “How can that be?” said I. “I have His pardon in my heart and very soul.” I assured them that I had tried to bring back my sins and to feel the guilt and burden of them again, but in vain; for, said I, such sweet words as these flowed in upon my soul, “Thy sins are all forgiven” (Luke 7. 48); “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isa. 1. 18). I assured them that I could

not now think of half the precious texts of Scripture that my dear and lovely Jesus was speaking to my soul nearly all the day long. “And how,” said I, “can I keep my tongue still? Were I to hold my peace, the very stones would cry out.”

However, the more I talked of the precious Jesus and the glorious things He had done for my soul, the more they hated and shunned me; nay, I verily believe that some of them hated me a thousand times worse than the devil. They told some of the ministers, whom I was in the habit of hearing with them, that I had turned Antinomian, and denied the moral law as my rule of life, which made all the professors with whom I was at that time acquainted look upon me for holding such a sentiment as a very dangerous man.

### **Taken to task by a minister**

I recollect there was one minister, a Mr. Ely, who preached at Bury, who was in the habit occasionally of coming to one of their houses at Radcliffe Bridge. One time, when he had been preaching there, he came to me to convince me of my error. He went on for a long time talking about things I knew nothing at all about. But I told him that I had been under the law for months, and had felt its curses and terror in my soul in such a manner that I expected nothing but damnation night and day, until I heard Mr. Roby read these words, “He hath led captivity captive,” etc. I told him the pardon, joy and peace that entered into my soul, and the numerous texts of Scripture that had come with power, and that since that time I was not under the law.

I asked how he felt when he was under the law, and how he had been delivered from it. I told him that, as he was a minister of Jesus Christ, he must have known these things. He turned very cross, and said I was got to be a teacher, one too wise to be instructed by my teachers. I answered that the dear Jesus was my Teacher, that He had told me that all my sins were forgiven, that He had died for me upon the cross, that He had shown me His hands and feet, and that I knew that He was my Lord and my God. “I have Him in my heart,” said I, “this moment, and He is precious to my soul.”

Upon this, Mr. Ely said that he pitied me, and that he was sorry for me, and would pray for me, for he feared that I was awfully deluded. After he was gone, I began to think for a few moments, “Am I wrong? All these good people who have been so long in the way, and even the pious ministers too, all believe that I am deceived. They are all

determined to have nothing to do with me. Surely I must be wrong!"

"O Lord," cried I, "am I indeed wrong? Am I indeed deceived? Was it from Thee? Am I a child of Thine? Art Thou my Lord and my God? Hast Thou suffered, and died, and obeyed the law for me, and in my room and stead?" And O how sweetly did the Lord appear again to my soul! Such a sight had I of His Person, His promises, sufferings and glory, that there was no room for doubts and fears.

TO BE CONTINUED

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**Unusual Bibles (2):** The Geneva Bible (referred to on Page 13 of last quarter's *Perception*) was first printed in 1560. In 1562 a second edition of the Geneva Bible was published where Matthew 5. 9 read: "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God." It should, of course, have been 'peacemakers.'

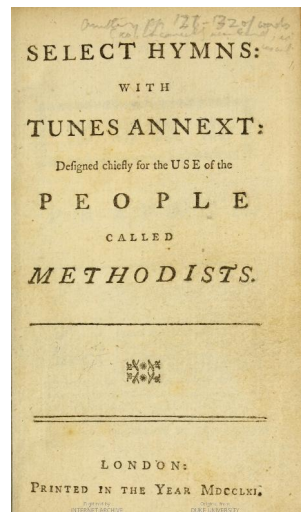
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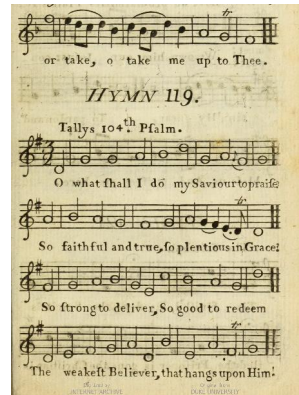
## DIRECTIONS FOR SINGING

In his *Select Hymns with Tunes Annext* (1761), John Wesley included a short guide to singing, titled 'Directions for singing.'

- 1 Learn these tunes before you learn any others; afterwards learn as many as you please.
- 2 Sing them exactly as printed here, without altering or mending them at all; and if you have learned to sing them otherwise, unlearn it as soon as you can.
- 3 Sing them all. See that you join with the congregation as frequently as you can. Let not a slight degree of weakness or weariness hinder you.
- 4 Sing lustily and with good courage. Beware of singing as if you were half-dead, or half-asleep; but lift up your voice with strength.



- 5 Sing modestly. Do not bawl, as to be heard above or distinct from the rest of the congregation, that you may not destroy the harmony, but strive to unite your voices together so as to make one melodious sound.
- 6 Sing in time. Whatever time is sung be sure to keep with it. Do not run before and do not stay behind it; but attend closely to the leading voices and move therewith as exactly as you can and take care not to sing too slow.
- 7 Above all sing spiritually. Have an eye to God in every word you sing. Aim at pleasing Him more than yourself, or any other creature.




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## ARTICLES OF FAITH

*“Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle” (2 Thessalonians 2. 15).*

Some of our younger readers may wonder, “What are Articles of Faith.” I remember hearing when only a boy the grownups at chapel talking about ‘The Articles’ and wondering what they meant. To me, as a schoolboy, an article was a particular item or object, or a piece of writing in a newspaper or magazine. Later on at school we learnt about the ‘definite article (the)’ and the ‘indefinite article (a)’ and when learning French it was important to know the gender of a noun to get the right article to go with it (*le* or *la*, *un* or *une*)!

But when we talk about an ‘Article of Faith’ the word has a very different meaning. An alternative word could be a ‘Statement’ or a ‘Confession’, meaning that what we are writing down is a statement of something in which we believe strongly. Many organisations have their Articles so that people know what they stand for. In our own country, when you form a business company, you need to have “Articles of Association” which are registered at Companies House in London, setting out the purpose, aims and objectives of the company.

Over the years there has been much criticism and misunderstanding of some of the *Gospel Standard Articles of Faith*. This can be very unsettling for our young people, especially when that criticism comes from those they know and respect.

Sadly, recently the criticism seems to have intensified, some writers going so far as to say that the Articles of Faith are being elevated to a position higher even than Scripture – which is, of course, a wild exaggeration of how those that adhere to the Articles truly view them.

### **Unwise preaching**

I would like to relate an experience I had as a teenager. A schoolfriend was very keen for me to visit his church, which was a General Baptist church. Towards the end of the sermon the minister asked us all to bow our heads, and then said words to this effect:

“You may never have another chance to come to Christ. If you do not come tonight you may have lost your opportunity. Are you going to let this chance pass? You have a decision to make – Christ or the world. Only you can make this decision. I want all of you who wish to give their life to Christ to come to the front of the church. I want you to come now. Remember, this may be your last chance.” Pause. “Do I see one coming? Yes, there is one from the back has made his decision. He is coming forward. There must be more. I feel sure there are more. Come. Come now. The Lord Jesus is waiting for you. He is knocking on the door of your heart. Are you going to reject his call?”

The minister continued in this strain for some time, and a few were moved to come to the front to make a profession of Christ.

We feel that this type of preaching is very unwise as it gives the impression that we have the power in our own strength to turn to Christ. Several of the Gospel Standard Articles of Faith emphasise the need for the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing people to Christ. They deal with the way that ministers should address, or rather, should *not* address, their hearers, and the need to avoid expressions that imply ‘creature power.’

If ever there has been a need for these Articles it is today. To help us understand why, here is something that appeared on the website of a respected conservative evangelical church with the title *How To Get To Heaven From The Internet*.



## HOW TO GET TO HEAVEN FROM THE INTERNET

### 1. Stop and get your bearings

*For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. Romans 3:23*

This is where the Bible says we are now. We are missing the holy standard of God because of sin.

### 2. See where you're presently headed

*The wages of sin is death. Romans 6:23*

This is spiritual death or eternal separation from God. You are now on the wrong road.

### 3. Get rid of excess baggage

*Repent ye therefore and be converted that your sins may be blotted out. Acts 3:19*

Your sins are separating you from God. In order to be with him you must turn from those things which separate you.

### 4. Change your direction

*Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved. Acts 4:12*

You have been going the wrong way; trying to save yourself through good deeds, baptism, prayers, church membership, etc., or simply not thinking about where you are going when you die. As the verse above shows salvation is a MUST, and it can only be obtained through Jesus Christ! Change your direction now!

**Turn Right:** To summarize, here is how to get to heaven from the Internet:

**Recognise** your helpless sinful condition.

**Realise** sin separates you from God.

**Repent** turn away from your sin and turn to Christ.

**Receive** Him into your heart and life NOW!

This is God's road map to Heaven.

If you try to get there some other way, you will be eternally and irrevocably lost!

Many well intentioned, but mistaken people will try to tell you there are "Many roads to Heaven." This is just not so. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." John 14:6

There is only ONE ROAD to Heaven and Him, and it is paved with the shed blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son. He gave his life's blood to pay the penalty for your sin. Will you accept that as sufficient payment?

There may be many ways onto the Internet... but there is only one way to Heaven. Will you take it now?

### **What is wrong?**

On reading this through, you may think, “Well, what is wrong with that? All that has been said is backed up by a Scriptural text. Surely we believe everything stated here!”

We agree that, on the face of it, there is much that sounds plausible – sin separating us from God, salvation only in Christ, and Jesus the way, the truth and the life. All these are truths to which we hold most strongly.

So what *is* wrong?

What is wrong is that there is no mention at all of the Holy Spirit’s work. Instead, we are told what *we* have to do. We are to *stop*, to *get rid of*, to *change*, to *turn*, to *release*, to *repent*, to *receive*.

Articles 33 and 34 of the GS Articles warn against calling on unconverted persons to repent, to believe, or to receive Christ, as though they had the power within themselves to perform these spiritual acts. To believe that we can do these things ourselves implies ‘creature power’ rather than dependence on the power of the Holy Ghost. Before the new birth, without regeneration, this is impossible. “Ye must be born again.”

### **Gospel to be preached to all**

Some of those who are critical of the Gospel Standard Articles of Faith say that we are forbidding the gospel to be preached to unbelievers. This is not so. We believe that the gospel is to be preached to everyone – to “every creature” as we are told in Mark 16. 15. However, to call upon unconverted persons “to savingly repent, believe, and receive Christ” is *not* preaching the gospel to them.

### **The need for discernment**

When we read something that troubles us, how we need to be given ‘discernment.’ This is a word that we often use, but what does it mean? Discernment is the ability to judge and weigh up things wisely, and with understanding. (Many definitions might be given.) We have been struck that five times in Psalm 119 (the longest chapter in the Bible) the Psalmist (almost certainly David) prayed for understanding: “give me understanding according to Thy word” (verse 169). After Daniel’s long prayer in chapter 9, God, in answer, sent to him the angel Gabriel to give him understanding. “O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding,” said the angel. So we can see that when something comes before us that we are not sure about, when people criticise things

we do not really feel to understand, the best thing is to pray about it. “Lord, give me understanding!”

Solomon, accounted to be such a great and wise king, felt he was just a child and knew nothing. How was he going to be able to judge the people?

Perhaps you feel like this when people bring out many arguments, and we really do not know what to think or how to answer them. What did Solomon do? He prayed this prayer: “Give therefore Thy servant an understanding heart to judge Thy people, that I may discern between good and bad.”

And God graciously answered his prayer: “Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and understanding heart.”

**“But I have been told that Articles 33 and 34 are not supported by Scripture references. Is this true?”**

Yes, this is true. Originally there were 31 Articles. Later, a further four Articles were added, making a total of 35. However, nine Scriptural references had been given to support Article 26, most of which are relevant also to these later Articles. Additional references have since been given by other writers.

**The vital necessity of the Holy Spirit’s work**

The Articles we have mentioned point to men’s utter inability to come to Christ *of themselves*.

The work of the Holy Spirit is to show to us all the things needful for salvation. “But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit” (1 Cor. 2. 10). We can know nothing savingly without the Holy Spirit’s work within us.

This is opened up in the Gospel according to John in chapter 16:

3 Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will shew you things to come.

15 All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that He shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you.

When this piece on the website was first drawn to our attention, we gave it to someone else to read. This person's reaction was: "If only I *could* do these things." John Newton felt the same in his hymn:

"O could I but believe,  
Then all would easy be;  
I *would*, but *cannot*; Lord, relieve!  
My help must come from thee."

May we be favoured, as Lydia was, to have our hearts opened and prepared. Only then are we able to receive the "things that are spoken."

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## MARTELLO TOWERS

*"But the Lord is my defence" (Psalm 94. 22).*

The Martello towers were built in 1809 as a defence of our coast at the time of the Napoleonic wars. The walls are 3m thick (10 feet) and about 750,000 bricks were used for each tower. The Jaywick Sands tower in our picture on the Essex coast (near Clacton) was known as Tower C.

Those who fear the Lord will frequently come into situations when they feel to need a defender. It may be a time of temptation, or some circumstance that can seem a danger or threat.



We think of our young people going away from home for the first time to university or to start employment. They may find themselves lodging with a group of other young people who have been brought up in a very different way to themselves. Pressure can be put on them to join in activities which they know would not have been approved of at home. It can be difficult to deal with such a situation without giving offence. It is tempting to go along with the crowd so as not to give the appearance of being "holier than thou." The only right action, though, is to say "No." It is then we need God as a Shield and Defender.

We sing of this in Hymn 388 in the Young People's Hymnal:

"We rest on Thee, our Shield and our Defender."

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## SAVED FROM THE OCEAN FLOOR



Facing almost certain death, Lieutenant Commander Rupert Lonsdale called the submarine's crew to prayer. In a remarkable way they were saved from a watery grave. Whether Lonsdale knew the hymn written by another sea-faring man, John Newton, we cannot be sure, but he knew the truth behind the hymn.

“Wrestling prayer can wonders do;  
Bring relief in deepest straits!  
Prayer can force a passage through  
Iron bars and brazen gates.”

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It was the 5th May 1940, and the 35th birthday of Lieutenant Commander Rupert Lonsdale. But it was not everyone's idea of a birthday, with his submarine, HMS *Seal*, stuck on the ocean floor, and refusing to budge.

Lonsdale had commanded the *Seal* for eighteen months. He had been told that “he was too much of a gentleman to be a good submarine captain.” However, he had gained the complete respect and confidence of his crew.

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Commander Lonsdale was born on 5th May 1905 in Dublin to Christian parents. His father was a civil servant who worked for most of his life in Nigeria. His education was at St. Cyprian's School, Eastbourne, a typical English prep school for boys. This was followed by naval training at the Royal Naval College, Osborne House Estate, on the Isle of Wight.

In 1935 he married Christina. After just two year's of marriage, she died in childbirth, as did their baby son, John. The grieving husband felt so alone. Later, he married Kathleen, but she died in 1961. Next he married Ursula who died of a brain tumour in 1986. Finally, he married, Ethné, who survived him.

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The *Seal* was a large submarine, far too large, it was thought, to complete the mission given to it – to lay a minefield in the dangerous Kattegat, the narrow straits connecting the Baltic Sea and the North Sea, separating Denmark and Sweden.



*H.M.S. Seal*

In spite of the unwieldy submarine, the mission of laying the fifty mines was successfully accomplished – eight tons of British mines. It was a difficult and dangerous operation, as German anti-submarine boats patrolled the area, searching for British submarines.

The mission accomplished, Lonsdale decided it was time to head for home – home meaning the neutral Swedish coast.

### **Spotted by the enemy**

As Lonsdale and his men tried to make their escape, enemy reconnaissance aircraft spotted *Seal*. To avoid them, she dived at two hours past midnight. The aircraft responded by calling in specially equipped German boats to attack her. These boats were fitted with underwater hydrophone listening equipment. *Seal* watched them from underwater using the periscope. Whenever they stopped to listen for the

noise of *Seal's* engines, Lonsdale would quickly order the engines to be switched off. But the hunters were coming a little closer all the time.

*Seal* had been underwater for sixteen hours. Lonsdale felt sure they had shaken off their pursuers. The crew relaxed, and a meal was enjoyed.

### **On the seabed**

At about 7 p.m. in the early evening of 4th May, a German mine exploded violently while they were under water. The mooring cable of a German mine had scraped along the hull, and the floating mine, which they had no way of seeing, had torn open the back end of the vessel. *Seal's* stern was severely damaged, and the rear two compartments began to fill with water. Now out of control, she slowly sank ninety feet (twenty-seven metres) to the seabed.

The two flooded rear compartments were immediately sealed off. What should they do now? The crew's trust was in Lonsdale, in whom they had great confidence.

The attempt to resurface was left until all daylight had gone. It was a tense wait of several hours. At 10.30 p.m. Lonsdale gave the order: "Stand by to surface," followed by the command, "Surface."

### **Unable to surface**

The submarine started to rise, but the weight of water inside the rear end of the boat caused the *Seal* slowly to sink back to the sea floor, pressing the damaged stern down hard into the mud. The bow was pointing upwards to the water's surface at an angle of twenty-five degrees.

Three attempts to surface were made. *Seal* would not budge. The submarine was equipped with a drop keel which could be detached in an emergency to give additional buoyancy. By releasing this portion of the keel, which in the case of *Seal* weighed 11 tons, the submerged submarine had a chance of returning to the surface. Lonsdale gave a further order: "Release the drop keel." Would the vessel now regain positive buoyancy? It did not help.

There was no ventilation, and the air quality deteriorated rapidly. The crew knew this was serious. Condensation dripped from every part of the metal hull. Most men developed throbbing headaches, thumping hearts and nausea. Everyone was gasping for air.

The crew members knew that they were facing a slow death from

carbon dioxide poisoning. They had heard of crews in other submarines who had suffered a similar fate. Now it was their turn. Soon the men accepted that death was inevitable. They were hopelessly entombed in their stricken boat deep at the bottom of the sea.

It was now ten minutes past 1 a.m. on 5th May 1940. Twenty-three hours had passed since *Seal* had dived. There was little power left in the batteries, and the lighting was now dim. Carbon dioxide poisoning affected everyone's judgment. It was impossible to operate the Davis individual escape system without the risk of flooding the whole submarine.

They had reached the end of all human resources, and the situation was desperate.

### **Call to prayer**

Lonsdale turned to those around him in the control room: "*Seal*, you know that we have tried everything we can think of to get to the surface, but without result. We can think of nothing else. I am about to call the crew together and we will have a time of prayer. Our object will be to ask God to help us." The words on Lonsdale's mind were these: "With God all things are possible" (Mark 10. 27).

Only two men out of the fifty-nine crew refused to join in the prayer meeting.

Lonsdale began: "*Seal*, we have been in dangerous situations before and we have been brought safely through. With God's help we shall do so again. First, I will ask God to help us."

"Dear God," he prayed, "we have tried everything in our power to save ourselves and we have failed. Yet we believe that with Thee, things are possible that are impossible to men. Please, O Lord, deliver us." He then started the Lord's Prayer and was reverently joined with many voices with great feeling. The prayer over, Lonsdale said, "And now, I think we should all quietly say our own prayers to God." He stood silent, with his head bowed, for one minute. The service was over.

The answer to their prayers came almost immediately.

### **A fresh idea**

Lonsdale had a sudden idea that had not previously occurred to him. Why had he not thought of it before? By now, the men were feeling half dead. Would they have the strength to carry out his orders?

First, he ordered a rope to be fastened along the entire length of the



sloping submarine. With difficulty the exhausted men managed the task. Next, every member of the crew, except the three needed to operate the engines for the very last attempt to surface, was told to move up the slope, holding on to the rope. They were to go as far forward as possible to the front of the vessel. What was the purpose? Lonsdale was to use his men as human ballast. Could the combined weight of just over fifty men at the front of the submarine provide enough leverage to loosen the stern, which was so firmly stuck in the mud?

Gasping, struggling, sweating, the men slowly dragged themselves up the rope. At last, the task was accomplished. By now the men were too weak to stand, and lay huddled together in a heap at the front of the submarine. To most of the crew, death was inevitable – and they accepted it.

It was now 1.43 a.m. Lonsdale gave the final orders: “Blow the remaining ballast tanks.” The last two tanks were blown. The Engineman and the Stoker turned on the two electric motors, not without fears that the remaining battery power may be insufficient. To their surprise, they were able to run the engine at maximum power. Devastatingly, the motors caught fire, but the fire went out for lack of oxygen. The batteries were nearly exhausted and the high pressure air exhausted. The Engineman realised there was one air pressure tank left with a tiny amount of air, which was some way up the companionway. He reached it and opened the valve.

### **Prayer answered**

The *Seal* shuddered, but did not move. Then suddenly, breaking free from the mud, she slowly moved upwards. SHE WAS FREE. “She’s up!” shouted a man. The crew took up the refrain: “She’s up! She’s up!”

Captain Lonsdale had just a moment to utter the briefest of prayers; “Thank you, Lord.”

Then his voice came over the intercom: “*Seal* has surfaced. Everyone stay exactly where he is until I instruct otherwise.”

Another danger now faced the crew. If Lonsdale had opened the hatch too quickly, the pressure that had built up over twenty-three hours could have catapulted him up into the air, clean out of the submarine. Taking every possible precaution, he slowly opened the hatch. A wave of fresh air blew into *Seal*.

At 2.10 a.m. Lonsdale sent a coded message from *Seal* to England:

*Most immediate. Confidential.  
Seal to Vice-Admiral Submarines.*

*Submarine filled with water from stern to 129 bulkhead, caused by mine or depth charge. FD7 in position. Secret books destroyed. Am making for Swedish coast. Will try for Gothenburg.*

### Under attack

Once surfaced, *Seal* was soon spotted by a German Arado 196 reconnaissance seaplane. The submarine was equipped with two Lewis

automatic machine guns, one of which soon jammed, and then the other seized up. In any event, the guns were ineffective against the intense fire from the seaplane, which was quickly backed up by a Heinkel bomber. The conning tower was quickly shot to pieces, with one shell cutting the vessel's voice-pipe in half



*A German Arado seaplane*

just as Lonsdale was shouting orders into it. *Seal* soon resembled 'a mortally wounded whale,' a description given by Lieutenant Karl Schmidt in the German seaplane.

Lonsdale quickly abandoned all thought of reaching neutral Swedish waters. Instead, all the vessel's secret equipment and confidential documents were now destroyed in accordance with standard naval procedures. To Lonsdale, the safety of his men



was paramount. *Seal* had been fitted with two explosive charges in her bilges that would automatically explode if they scuttled the boat and every man would have been blown to pieces. The only course available to him was surrender to the German aircraft. Accordingly, after sending a signal of his intentions to Vice-Admiral Sir Max Horton at Portsmouth, he ran up the white flag of surrender (later found to be the white tablecloth from the Officers' mess.)

### Prisoners of War

The seaplane landed a few yards from the stricken *Seal*, and demanded to know who was the captain of the submarine. Lonsdale was ordered to swim to the enemy aircraft. He dived into the cold water and was now a prisoner-of-war. No British vessel had surrendered to the enemy since 1812, but at a later Court Marshal, the Admiralty agreed with Lonsdale's decision.



*WWII German armed trawler*

An armed LJJ 128 German trawler arrived and took off *Seal's* crew at 6.30 a.m. Meanwhile, the Germans towed the damaged *Seal* back to port. To the Germans, the capture of a British submarine was a prize. The torpedoes were taken away for examination. Many German U-boat torpedoes were failing

to detonate, but here they found, and copied, a sturdy and reliable British detonator. These they fitted into their own torpedoes which subsequently so devastated the merchant shipping in the Atlantic.

Lonsdale and his men spent five years in various prison camps. During this time, the prisoners were supported by the people of the village of Seal near Sevenoaks, in Kent. After their release, the crew visited the village to give their thanks to the villagers in person.

The crew of *Seal* kept in contact in the years after the war. Lonsdale's men never forgot him, nor did he forget them. They remembered that together they had prayed to be rescued from death at the bottom of the sea – and God had heard and answered their desperate prayer.



Later, Lonsdale wrote:

“I believe in Christ as the Son of God. No man ever spoke or acted as He did. His power over evil, His wisdom and love show that He was above all other men. He was the true image of God. Yet He was a Man knowing weariness and suffering – tempted like us, yet without sin.

Nothing will ever shake me from my belief that God is love, despite the things I have seen happen to other people in the war, not to mention the things that have happened to me.”

Lonsdale spent the last 26 years of his life at Bournemouth, where in 1999 he died at the age of ninety-three.

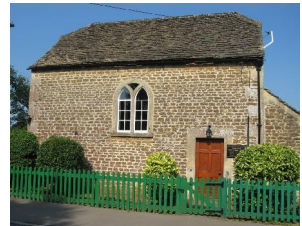
**Mr. William Fletcher** was Pastor at the little chapel at Studley in Wiltshire from 1932 to 1941. During the First World War he came to the west of England to buy timber for the Government, and this was when his long association with Studley chapel began.

On Tuesday evening, 30 December 1941, he presided at the prayer meeting, reading Psalm 90. This was the last service of the year, and he spoke very solemnly on time and eternity.

The next morning, the last day of the year, he drove in his car to a saw mill to purchase more timber. Propped up at the mill were several coffins, and coffin boards, as coffin-making was one of the business sidelines of the mill. Noticing the coffins, Mr. Fletcher said to the mill owner, “I shall soon need one of these.”

Leaving the mill, it appears he suffered a fatal heart attack, and his car was seen slowly to descend into the ditch. Thus he passed away at the age of seventy, to be for ever with the Lord.

*Told to the editor by Mr. A. G. Hillier while a resident in the Harpenden Bethesda Home.*



## CURRENT MATTERS

### Abortion

John Calvin said over 400 years ago: “The foetus, though enclosed in the womb of its mother, is already a human being.” We can only speculate as to his reaction if he could have known that in the year 2018 in Great Britain nearly one in four babies were aborted, with over nine million babies aborted since the 1967 Abortion Act. The Christian Institute comments: “Abortion is deceptively framed as a women’s rights issue. The rights of the child are not considered.”

Campaigners are challenging a law that allows abortion for Down’s syndrome babies at any time up until birth. Heidi Crowter, 24, a woman with Down’s, has written to Health Secretary Matt Hancock seeking a change to the law, saying the law was “deeply offensive.” The Government said any decision to terminate “must rest on the judgment of the woman and her doctors.”

### Relationships and Sex Education

Christian Values in Education (CviE) held a meeting in March 2020 at The King’s School, Harpenden to help parents understand what is required of schools when the Relationships and Sex Education regulations come into force in September 2020. Relationships education will be compulsory in primary schools, and Relationships and Sex education in secondary schools. Although government guidance wishes the subject to be treated with sensitivity and in consultation with parents, there is great concern at the inclusion and emphasis on unbiblical LGBT lifestyles, gender identity, and the portrayal of marriage as just one of numerous family alternatives. May the Lord preserve our children from the influence of all ungodly teaching on these matters.

### Bumblebees under threat

Baby bumblebees are harmed by the residues of the commonly used insecticide imidacloprid, which causes permanent brain damage in the insects. Bumblebees do not make honey but their pollination services are worth £1.8bn a year, the amount farmers would have to pay to pollinate their crops without them. Their wings beat 130 times a second. This vibrates flowers until the pollen is produced.



### Plague of Locusts

Areas of East Africa and Pakistan were devastated during the early months of the year by a plague of locusts. This comes at a time when the healthcare systems of these areas are already struggling with the Covid-19 pandemic. The people of the regions are facing famine after their crops, including vegetables, tomatoes, sugar cane, and rice, were totally devoured by the insects. Ideal breeding conditions threaten a second swarm in the summer months described by the United Nations as “extremely alarming” with warnings of the worst food crisis seen for seventy years. How we feel for these already poor and struggling communities.



### Black Holes

It was Albert Einstein who, in 1915, first produced calculations that predicted the existence of black holes. A black hole is a place in space where gravity is so strong that even light cannot escape. Until this year, they existed only in theory. Now scientists claim to have photographed a ‘supermassive’ black hole 55 million light years away, as wide as 3 million earths. The image has been produced after seven years’ work by 200 scientists at a cost of £400 million using eight banks of radio telescopes worldwide. Whether such things truly exist we cannot be sure, although Job, speaking of God’s mighty works, tells us that He “sealeth up the stars.” We have often wondered what this meant.



### Suffering Christians

As Covid-19 spread quickly round the earth, Christians in some parts of the world have struggled to obtain even the most basic necessities of life. For example, in Sri Lanka the government announced that food would be distributed through the ‘majority’ places of worship i.e. at Buddhist and Hindu temples. Although Christians are welcome at a Buddhist temple, many feel they cannot enter the building with a good conscience, and Christians are not usually allowed to visit a Hindu temple. As a consequence, the means of getting food has been denied them. We are grateful to the Barnabas Fund which has done so much to help them and other persecuted and suffering Christians. THE END

## AN EVENING HYMN FOR TIMES OF DISTRESS

*I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for Thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety (Psalm 4. 8).*

Tune: Thanet (604 in CTB)

- 1 Ere I sleep, for every favour  
This day showed  
By my God,  
I will bless my Saviour.
- 2 O my Lord, what shall I render  
To Thy name,  
Still the same,  
Merciful and tender?
- 3 Thou hast ordered all my goings  
In Thy way,  
Heard me pray,  
Sanctified my doings.
- 4 Leave me not, but ever love me;  
Let Thy peace  
Be my bliss,  
Till Thou hence remove me.
- 5 Thou my Rock, my Guard, my Tower,  
Safely keep,  
While I sleep,  
Me, with all Thy power.
- 6 So, whene'er in death I slumber,  
Let me rise  
With the wise,  
Counted in their number.

JOHN CENNICK  
(1718-55)



# PERCEPTION

A Quarterly Magazine for Young People



“But whosoever drinketh of the water that I  
shall give him shall never thirst” (John 4. 14).

AUTUMN 2020



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**Cover picture:** Glyderau, Snowdonia National Park, North Wales

# PERCEPTION

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## EDITORIAL

This year, a summer holiday my wife and I had planned was cancelled due to Covid-19. We intended to go to the Isle of Man, but the island's borders were completely closed to visitors. (The Isle of Man is not part of the UK, but is a British crown dependency.)

It was not easy at short notice to find something else that fitted in with our dates, but eventually we managed to find a suitable property in north Wales. The name of the property was Bwthyn Bach, which, translated from the Welsh means, *Little cottage*. Amongst the particulars sent by the letting agent was the following sentence: "The banister/balustrade height of this property is less than 1m and the gaps between the spindles are more than 10cm."

Why did they think we should know this? At a first reading, it doesn't sound very important at all. But it was a matter of SAFETY. I suppose a small child could possibly wriggle its head between the widely-spaced spindles, or someone with restricted mobility may need a higher banister. So although we may have thought this warning was not important, the stairs could potentially be a danger.

No doubt today's building regulations specify such matters. This is nothing new. In the book of Deuteronomy we find an early building regulation. "When thou buildest a new house, then thou shalt make a battlement for thy roof, that thou bring not blood upon thine house, if any man fall from thence" (Deut. 22. 8). In other words, for safety, a flat roof, where people may walk, needs protection by a low wall.

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Safety has been very much on everyone's mind as the lockdown imposed during the pandemic has been eased. How can we *safely* go back to work? How can the children return *safely* to school? How can we *safely* reopen our shop or factory? And, of course, our churches and chapels have had to give due consideration how they can *safely* restart their services.

The Bible contains many warnings for our safety. Closely linked to the safety of a city is the concept of a watchman. In Ezekiel chapter 33,

the prophet lays down the responsibilities of a watchman. He was appointed by the people to keep an eye open for approaching danger. As soon as any approaching danger was seen, the watchman was to blow a trumpet to warn the people (verse 3). If a citizen failed to heed the trumpet's warning, then "if the sword come, and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head." However, if the watchman failed to blow the trumpet, "his blood will I require at the watchman's hand."

If a country feared an invasion from a foreign power, then a man who lived near the border would be appointed the watchman. Early warning could be given, and the man would be providing a valuable service to the whole land.

For a watchman to fall asleep at his post has always been considered a great crime. During the first World War, under military law, a guard found asleep at his post while on active service would be liable to suffer death by firing squad. If there were mitigating circumstances the sentence may be commuted to ten years' hard labour.

Ezekiel was himself a watchman, although in a slightly different sense. "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel" (Ezekiel 3. 17). As God's watchman, he was to give the people "warning from Me" – warning the wicked of the consequences of their sin. For Ezekiel, this was no easy task, for they were "a rebellious people." But God gave him helps by the way. Twice he was favoured to see the glory of God, once by the River Chebar, and another time whilst walking in "the plain." He had God's promise that at the right time He would open his mouth, teaching him what he was to say.

Our thoughts are much on the warning God has given to our country, and indeed the whole world, by the coronavirus pandemic. Sadly, we fear it is the same today as it was in the time of Ezekiel. The prophet gave many warnings to the people. What was their response? They complained that God's way was not fair. "Yet the children of thy people say, The way of the Lord is not equal" (verse 17). Today, many say, "How could a God of love permit so many to die? If He is God, he could have prevented it. How could God allow children to be deprived of a loving mother? How could a nurse who had spent her entire working life caring for others be allowed to lose her life to the virus?" May we ever be kept from such a line of thought. God is sovereign in all His dealings with His creatures. "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" (Romans 9. 20).

The nations of the world are trusting that a vaccine will be found to

give protection from the deadly virus. We sincerely hope that a successful vaccine will be developed in due course, but this may never be the case, and we must not put our trust in that for safety.

Returning to our theme, in former days, a night watchman was a familiar figure in our towns and cities. Apart from keeping a general look out for danger or trouble, he would also make sure the population's doors were secure, and may well call out with the question, "Are your fires safe?" – fire being a constant and much-feared risk.

A reference to the night watchman is found in Isaiah 21. 11: "Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night." This question, asked twice, appears to have been put to the watchman by an inhabitant from Seir in Dumah, that is, Idumea, the country of the Edomites. This enquirer, not of the children of Israel, displayed more concern than the rest, who were careless in their supposed security. In his earnestness, he asked his question twice. What was the watchman's reply. "The morning cometh, and also the night." We trust and pray, that in the case of the present pandemic, the morning *will* come. However, for an unheeding nation, it may be followed by a night of even greater calamity, for we fear the Lord will visit our unrepentant nation again for our sins.

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It is clear from the word of God that we are now living in the last days. They are perilous days (see 2 Timothy chapter 3). We are living in times when evil laws are being passed in the name of freedom and liberty, laws directly in opposition to God's word. And they are days that lead up to the "day of the Lord." What day is that? It is the day of His coming – the day He shall come to judge the living and the dead. The day when the heavens shall be rolled up as a scroll. For many, things will be going along nicely. It will, for them at least, be a time of peace and safety – or so they think. But Paul issues a warning: "For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them."

In these perilous times, what are *we* trusting in for our safety? We, too, are called to be watchmen. "Let us watch and be sober." "Watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is." "And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch." May the Lord grant each of us that grace to be a watchman. Outside of Christ, there can be no safety.

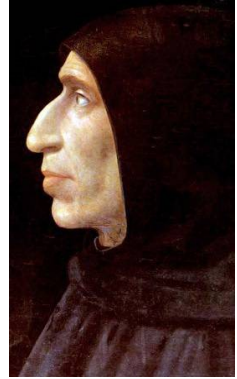
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## **GIROLAMO SAVONAROLA – Part 2**

**(1452 - 1498)**

### **A reformer before the Reformation**

Fleeing from home, he becomes acquainted with the Scriptures in the library of the Convent of St. Dominic, Bologna, Northern Italy. Under encouragement from his students, he preaches in the churches and Cathedral of Florence, and crowds flock to him. But with many enemies, and an excommunication from the Pope, the voice of the great preacher died away into silence.



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### **The city turns against him**

In spite of the immense crowd that flocked to hear him preach his last sermon, it seemed that quickly the whole city turned against him. The Pope's excommunication, the fury of the *Arrabbiati* (the Angry Ones), and the enmity of the powerful, had brought about a sudden change. The Papal Brief commanded all persons, clerical or lay, under pain of excommunication, to refrain from any association with the said Friar Girolamo.

### **St. Mark's convent under attack**

On Palm Sunday, 1498, St. Mark's Convent was attacked by a screaming mob. The morning passed quietly. Savonarola preached as usual in St. Mark's, but his sermon was short and sad; he offered his body as a sacrifice to God, and declared his readiness to face death. With much composure he took leave of his people, and in pronouncing the benediction his hearers felt he was addressing them for the last time.

Meanwhile, crowds stirred up by the *Arrabbiati* assembled on the Piazza. When their number had sufficiently increased, they moved in the direction of St. Mark's. On the way they encountered a certain man, named Pecori, who was quietly walking to church, singing Psalms as he

went. Recognizing him as one of Savonarola's followers, immediately some of them rushed after him, crying, "Does the hypocrite still dare to mumble?" Overtaking him on the steps of the Foundling Hospital (called the *Innocenti*), they slew him on the spot. Another poor man, a maker of spectacles, hearing the great noise in the street, came out with his slippers in his hand, and while trying to tell the people to be quiet, was killed by a sword thrust in his head.



*The mob poured into the square of St. Mark's*

With the taste of blood, the mob poured into the square of St. Mark's. Finding the church filled with worshippers attending Vespers, they hurled stones through the door. There was much screaming and the congregation took to flight. The doors of the church were locked and barred, and no one remained within except a few faithful monks who were bent on defending St. Mark's. Although

barely thirty in number, these comprised some of the most devoted of Savonarola's adherents. These were the men who escorted him to the pulpit, and were ever prepared to risk their lives in his service.

### **Prepared for battle**

For days past they had known the convent was in danger, and accordingly eight or ten men had always come to guard it by night. Secretly, a store of weapons was placed in a cell beneath the cloister, including twelve breastplates, twelve helmets, eighteen halberds, four harquebusses (matchlock guns mounted on a tripod), a barrel of gunpowder, and lead bullets. Savonarola was deeply grieved by this.

He was resolved to go out and confront the hostile crowd. His friars crowded round him imploring him not to put himself in risk of almost certain death. "No! do not leave us! you will be torn to pieces; and what would become of us without you?" Seeing his way barred by his most faithful friends, he turned and led them through the cloisters. "Prayer is the only weapon to be employed by ministers of religion," he said. At this all fell to their knees and sung together the chant: *Salvum fac populum tuum, Domino* (O Lord, save Thy people).

### The siege continues

It was now about two hours before sundown, and the throng on the Piazza was increasing. The siege of the convent was being carried on with desperate ferocity. Some attempted to set fire to the convent's gates, and some managed to scale the side wall, and broke open the door leading to the choir. The valiant friars defended themselves and the convent as best they could. Friar Enrico, a German, took his stand in the pulpit and fired his musket with fatal effect.



*"Friar Enrico took his stand in the pulpit"*

Savonarola was overwhelmed with grief by this waste of life. "Brethren," he cried, "throw down those weapons and take up thy cross: I never intended my brethren to shed blood."

But the monks were exhausted with hunger and fatigue. The invaders were by now masters of almost the whole convent. An order was received from the Signoria (the government of medieval Florence) that Friar Domenico, Friar Silvestro and Friar Savonarola were to present themselves at the Palace, promising that a safe conduct would be granted to them. The captain of the palace guard threatened to knock down the walls of the convent with guns if the order was not obeyed.

Savonarola addressed the friars around him for the last time. "My beloved children, in the presence of God, with our enemies already in the convent, I confirm the truth of my doctrines. All that I have said came to me from God, and He is my witness in heaven that I speak no lie. I had not foreseen that all the city would so quickly turn against me; nevertheless, may the Lord's will be done. My last exhortation is this: let faith, prayer and patience be your weapons. I give myself now into my enemies' hands."

### Arrested

The surging crowd bore Savonarola out into the Piazza of St. Mark's and there the macebearers arrested and bound him. He was placed in a small prison cell called the *Alberghettina* (meaning the little hostel) beneath the bell-tower of the Vecchio Palace. The next day, Friar Domenico and Friar Silvestro, his two most loyal followers, were also arrested, and thrust into separate cells.

The Signoria hastened to make known to Rome all that had happened. Its nine members, the Priori, chosen from the ranks of the guilds of the city, sent a highly coloured account of the facts. The Pope replied quickly, designating them true sons of the Holy Church, and gave them his full absolution for the violence afforded to the friars. Furthermore, he granted to them the authorisation required to examine and try the prisoners.

### The trial

The day following the tumult was Holy Monday (the week of Good Friday). The Signoria collected all the weapons found in St. Mark's, stacked them in a cart, carried them, still blood-stained, round the city, crying: "Behold the miracles of the Convent; behold the miracles of the Friar, and the tokens of his love for the people of Florence."

The Signoria assembled to discuss the best way of conducting the prisoners' examination. On the 11th of April they appointed a special commission of seventeen examiners to conduct the trial of the three friars, with full power to use torture or any other means for their purpose. From the outset numerous illegalities were committed.

Savonarola was taken from his cell in the Vecchio Palace to an



*The Bargello fortress, built 1255*

upper hall in the Bargello, an austere fortress and the headquarters of the *Capitano del Popolo* (the chief magistrate). The ten-minute walk led him past the Cathedral, the scene of his labours. Here at the Bargello, he was interrogated, threatened and insulted. In order to extract a confession he was roped to a pulley, hoisted some distance from the ground, then allowed to fall rapidly. It was a torture designed to overcome the strongest frame. Savonarola was of a delicate and sensitive nature, and years of austerity-living had left him ill and weak. As was only to be expected, he soon lost all coherence, and cried in a voice that

might have softened a heart of stone: *Tolle, tolle, Domine, animam meam* (Take away, take away, O God, my life).



So far his examiners had extorted no confession from him. On being taken down, he was again interrogated and requested to deny the truth of his doctrine. He replied, “Ye do tempt the Lord God.” Seeing that nothing could be extracted from him, they had him unbound and sent back to his prison cell. Once in his cell he knelt down and prayed for his examiners: “O Lord, they know not what they do.”

### **Fresh examination**

The proceedings had to be begun again. One of the city notaries, Ser Cecone, came up with a novel solution: “Where no real case exists, it is necessary to invent one – and I am not afraid to find a way to do it.”

This man Cecone had once been involved in a conspiracy, and had found protection and safety with the monks. Pretending to have been converted to religion, he daily attended the sermon. But now he threw off all pretence, and showed himself an enemy of the imprisoned Savonarola. He offered to draw up falsified documents of Savonarola’s ‘confession’, and was promised the considerable reward of four hundred ducats in the event of success.

For more than a month Savonarola continued to be put to prolonged and terrible torture. All he said was taken down, and falsified by Cecone to meet the desired end. An eye witness stated that in one day he saw him suffer the agonies of the rack fourteen times. When suspended from a rope, hot coals were applied to the soles of his feet. After interrogating him, his examiners wrote in their report that “he had confessed of his own accord, and under no physical restraint.”

While in prison in the Vecchio Palace, he wrote an exposition of the 31st and 51st Psalms, later translated from Italian into English by King Henry VIII’s last wife, Katherine Parr. He showed that not only is faith the gift and work of God, but also that faith alone justifies without the works of the law.

### **Sentence of death**

The Apostolic Commissioners met on 22nd of May to consult as to the fate of Savonarola. No discussion was required – his death was a forgone conclusion. Two of the Pope’s commissioners had come hurriedly from Rome. One of the commissioners remarked cheerfully on arrival, “We shall have a fine bonfire, for I have with me the sentence of condemnation.” The other commissioner said, “I have arrived with the verdict in my bosom.” These communications were full of such

obvious errors as to render them null and void. Even the Pope himself had to disown them.

The fate of his two close followers, Friar Domenico and Friar Silvestro, whose examinations and treatment had been much the same as Savonarola's, was also settled. The verdict of the Gonfalonier of Justice was: "Dead men make no trouble. Dead men do not come back. Let the Friars be executed without delay." "One dirty monk, more or less, what does it matter?" remarked another Commissioner called Romolina. "Burn all three of them. It will be a good riddance."

### **The sentence of death communicated**

When the Commissioners entered Savonarola's prison cell shortly after midnight to communicate the sentence, they found him kneeling in prayer. On hearing the fatal announcement he expressed neither grief nor joy, but continued in prayer. Shortly afterwards, food was offered to him, but he refused it, saying that his soul needed more strengthening than his body.

At the time there existed in the city an association formed for the purpose of comforting the last moments of the condemned. One of their



*They had permission to meet in the Great Hall*

members, Jacopo Niccolini, came to Savonarola's cell to ask if there was anything he specially desired. There was. Could he seek from the Signoria permission for a short interview with his two fellow sufferers, Friar Domenico and Friar Silvestro, to whom he longed to say a few words before death? His request was granted. They could meet

together for one hour in the Great Hall.

### **The last meeting of the three friars**

It was their first meeting after forty days of imprisonment and torture. The mere presence of Savonarola was enough to restore their courage. But he had a message for Domenico. "I know that you have asked to be cast alive into the fire; but it is not well, since it is not meet

for us to choose what death we would die. How shall we know whether we shall find strength to bear that to which we are condemned? This dependeth not on ourselves, but on the grace that shall be granted us of the Lord.”

To Silvestro he said: “I know you wish to protest your innocence in sight of the people. I command you to abandon this idea, and rather to follow the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, who refrained from declaring his innocence, even on the cross.”

All three were led away to their cells. The night was already far spent, and Savonarola, overcome by fatigue, fell into a light slumber for a short space of time. The rest of the night was spent in prayer and devotions.

At dawn, the turnkey awakened Savonarola. Early in the morning, the three friars met together to receive “The Most Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.” The light to see the blasphemy of the Mass does not appear to have been given to Savonarola. It was left to Martin Luther thirty years later to condemn as idolatry the idea that the mass is a sacrifice, asserting instead that the bread and wine is a gift, to be received with thanksgiving by the whole congregation. Permission had been granted for Savonarola to officiate. As he raised the consecrated bread he pronounced the following prayer: “O Lord, I acknowledge Thee to be the perfect, invisible Trinity, the Three in One, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; I acknowledge Thee to be the Eternal Word, who didst mount the cross to shed Thy blood for our sins. I pray that by Thy blood I may gain remission of my sins, and implore Thy forgiveness.” After that he took of the bread himself, and gave to both his companions.

At 9.30 a.m. the guards appeared and led them away to the Piazza.

### **The execution begins**

All three were burned to death on Monday, 23rd May 1498 in the main square of Florence, the Piazza della Signoria, the same square in which Savonarola had held his Bonfire of the Vanities, in front of the Vecchio Palace in which the three victims were imprisoned.

Early that morning, a crowd had begun to gather in the Piazza. The cavalry and the civic guard, armed with pikes and short swords, moved into the square at five o’clock in the morning. Even at that early hour it was with difficulty they made their way through the dense mass of spectators. An eyewitness account states: “The people fought ferociously to be as near the woodpile as possible.”

A long, raised scaffold and platform had been erected, a man's height from the ground. The platform terminated in a projecting half-circle, on which a stout beam some thirty feet high stood upright with another beam attached to the top of it. From the heavy beam dangled three halters to hang the friars, and three chains to support their bodies over the fire while they were subsequently burned to ashes. A ladder reached to the top for the victims to ascend. Wood for the burning, liberally sprinkled with gun powder, resin and oil, was heaped up below.



*“Others took their place in the Loggia”*

So that a privileged few could watch the proceedings in comfort, three sets of seating had been erected on the *Ringheira*, a raised dais attached to the Palazzo Vecchio, from which speakers traditionally addressed the crowd. The seating nearest to the Palace door was assigned to the Bishop; the second set, on the Bishop's right, to the

Apostolic Papal Commissioners; and the third set to the chief civic magistrates of the city. Other important persons took their place in the *Loggia dei Lanzi*, a platform with three wide arches, open to the Piazza.

Nothing was overlooked to increase the festive solemnity of the occasion. The different stands were draped with velvet cloth, black, gold and crimson in colour. The guilds and corporation displayed their banners as for a great state occasion.

The guards had great difficulty in keeping back the surging crowds who pressed round the scaffold. Some of the crowd screamed abuse at Savonarola and his two companions, but on the whole a sad and solemn silence prevailed. Many writers were present whose chronicles contain lasting records of that memorable day.

### **The friars unfrocked**

A Dominican priest of the church of Santa Maria Novella (which today has given its name to Florence's railway station) ordered the three friars to be stripped of their robes. Then a barber destroyed the tonsure on their heads by shaving off all the hair. They were then brought forth

covered only by their woollen tunics with bare feet and their hands tied. Perhaps we find it difficult to understand what this meant to the men. Savonarola, feeling deeply this unexpected demand, cried out: "O holy gown, how dearly did I long to wear thee! Thou wert granted me by God's grace, and I have ever kept thee unstained. Now I am bereft of thee."

Next, the Bishop of Vasona, Benedetto Paganotti, a former San Marco friar and one-time admirer of Savonarola, had the task of pronouncing the degradation of being unfrocked. So far, he had obeyed the Pope's mandate, but now appeared overwhelmed with confusion. He dared not raise his eyes to look at the serene countenance of the man he had once called master. He took Savonarola's arm, but was no longer able to contain his composure. In faltering tones he said, "I separate thee from the church militant and the church triumphant." Savonarola calmly set him right: "The church militant, yes. But the church triumphant, no. That rests not with you." These words were heard by many bystanders, and so pierced them through that they remembered them for ever. The Bishop was overcome by emotion and was unable to finish his task. He hid his face in his hands and broke into a violent fit of sobbing.

When the degrading and unfrocking was complete the three men were led before the Apostolic Commissioners to hear the sentence proclaiming them schismatics and heretics.

Last of all, they were led before the members of the Signoria, who, according to custom, put the sentence to the vote, and carried it unanimously. But one of the eight members, Francesco Cini, was absent, having refused to take part in so iniquitous a proceeding.

The sentence was then read to the prisoners, which was as follows:

The Signoria, having maturely considered the sworn evidence of the three friars, and the atrocious crimes committed by them, and having considered the sentence pronounced by the Commissioners of the Pope, who have now handed them over to the secular arm to be punished, hereby decree: that each of the three be hung from the gibbet, and then burnt, so that their souls be entirely parted from their bodies.

### **Death of the three friars**

The formalities had lasted from eight in the morning. It was now

three o'clock.

With firm steps the victims mounted the scaffold. All showed great courage to the end. As they were led to the gibbet, the dregs of the people assailed them with vile words. They bore this with serenity. One bystander, stirred with compassion, said a few comforting words to Savonarola, to which he replied: "At the last hour, God alone can give mortals comfort."



*The execution of the three friars*

A priest standing nearby, whose name was Nerotto, asked him what he felt about his approaching martyrdom. He answered, "**The Lord has suffered as much for me.**" These were his last recorded words, and his voice was heard no more.

The first to climb the ladder was Friar Silvestro. He almost ran up the ladder. At the top he called down to Savonarola: "Father Girolamo, see how a knight of Jesus Christ dies with joy in his heart." With the halter round his neck, he had just time to cry: "*In manus tuas, Domine, commendo animam meam.*" ("Into Thy hand, O God, I commend my

spirit.”) The executioner then thrust him off, and slowly and painfully he met his death. For a few moments his pitiful cries resounded through the Piazza: *Jesu, miserere! Christe, miserere!* “Jesus, have mercy” Christ, have mercy!

Next to die was Friar Domenico. As he was led to the gibbet, he sang aloud the *Te Deum Laudamus*:

“We praise Thee, O God: we acknowledge Thee to be the Lord.  
All the earth doth worship Thee: the Father everlasting.  
To Thee all angels cry aloud: the Heavens and all the Powers  
therein.  
To Thee Cherubim, and Seraphim: continually do cry,  
Holy, Holy, Holy: Lord God of Sabaoth;  
Heaven and earth are full of the Majesty of Thy glory.”

Whether he got as far as the line, “The noble army of Martyrs, praise Thee” we do not know. In a few minutes he would be among that noble army.

A priest walking by his side told him not to sing so loudly, but found himself joining in with him. Halfway up the ladder, Domenico turned to the crowd and called out: “I assure you that all of Friar Girolamo’s prophecies will be fulfilled. The Holy Spirit will send his heavenly fire.” The ladder mounted, the executioner then hung him from the other arm of the gibbet. A witness said that Friar Domenico looked so joyful, it was as though he had seen heaven opened. When he dropped from the ladder he died instantly.

Savonarola then walked slowly to the ladder. He asked the executioner to tie a rope round his shirt “for modesty’s sake.” The executioner refused. Not even this humiliation was to be spared him.

A poor old heartbroken woman pushed through the crowd and offered him a crust of bread. “Take and eat, Blessed Father Girolamo!” He said, “Thank you, my dear daughter, but I need no food now. I have but a little way to go. In a moment I will be in the mansions on high having sup with my Lord and Saviour.”

Another bystander, stirred with compassion, said a few comforting words to Savonarola, to which he replied: “At the last hour, God alone can give mortals comfort.”

A priest standing nearby, whose name was Nerotto, asked him what he felt about his approaching martyrdom. He answered, “**The Lord has**



**suffered as much for me.”** These were his last recorded words, and his voice was heard no more.

He now ascended the ladder to the place between the two dead friars. As he stood there, he glanced at the crowd below, hungering for the moment of his death. How different were the days when the same multitude had hung on his every word when preaching in the Cathedral.

At the foot of the gibbet he saw rough men with blazing torches eagerly waiting to fire the pile. At that moment not a sound was heard; there was a terrible silence. All the vast crowd assembled on the Piazza seemed impressed by the general horror.

The executioner, thinking to gratify the mob below, made cruel fun of him and tried to delay his demise so that the flames would reach him before he was quite dead, but failed. As the executioner played the buffoon with the still-quivering body, he lost his balance and nearly fell. This disgusting spectacle aroused general indignation, and the executioner was severely reprimanded by the authorities.

On Monday, the 23rd May 1498 Savonarola, at the age of forty-five, died of strangulation.



With the piles of wood below the scaffold set alight, the flames quickly engulfed the three dangling bodies. Some of the spectators burst into tears, but others sang and danced delightedly around the pyre and



threw stones at the half-consumed bodies. There was bitter grief on one side, and wild exultation on the other. Some of Savonarola's supporters, including women disguised as serving-maids, attempted to gather up some remains of the three victims. But the Signoria, fearing that these ashes might have miraculous powers, ordered that the remains be gathered up into carts and taken to the Old Bridge (the famous engineering masterpiece, *Ponte Vecchio*, built in 1345) and thrown into



*The 1345 Ponte Vecchio Bridge, from which the Martyrs' remains were thrown*

the River Arno. Even so, some relics were saved by his devoted followers, and reverently preserved in caskets.

The same day, after the execution, the Signoria wrote to Rome: "The friars have been put to death in the manner their pestiferous sedition deserved." A letter of approval and congratulations was quickly received back from Rome.

### **Afterwards**

The convent of St. Mark's was closed to all outsiders for two months. They were deprived of an adjoining building known as *La Sapienza* which had been occupied by the novices. The library collected by Cosimo de Medici, for which the convent had paid three thousand florins, was taken away. Most grotesque of all was the hostility shown towards the convent's bell. The Signoria issued a decree against it, that

it was to be banished from Florence. Bizarrely, before being sent away, the bell was brought out in a cart and publicly flogged by the executioner!

Many of Savonarola's followers were persecuted, and deprived of holding any official office. As an insult to his memory, on Christmas night the *Arrabbiati* let loose a donkey in the Cathedral, and then cudgelled it to death on the threshold.

An order came from Rome to the Convent of St. Mark, prohibiting all mention of him, or so much as the utterance of his name.

A few days after the execution some women were found at dawn in the Piazza kneeling in prayer on the stones where the three martyrs had been burnt.

After that, every year on the night of the 23rd May, flowers were strewn on the spot, a practice which continued for more than two hundred years.



Today, an inscription let into the paving marks the spot where he died. Thousands of tourists walk over it without glancing down, and if they do, have no knowledge of those tragic events.

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### UNUSUAL BIBLES (3)

The *Cider Bible*, in the medieval library of Hereford Cathedral, is a manuscript copy made in about 1400 of Wycliffe's Bible, but with one small change. The admonition of the angel to Zacharias in Luke 1. 15 that his son should "drink neither wine nor strong drink" was amended by the copyist to read: "He shall drink ne wine ne cider" – an apt alteration in an English county renowned for its cider.

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### **JOHN Warburton (Part 3)**

#### **A few of the Lord's providential dealings**

Born in 1776, convicted of his sin as a young man, delivered from a temptation to end his life by drowning, and Christ revealed to his soul under a sermon preached by William Roby at Cannon Street Chapel, Manchester. We continue with the life of the Lord's servant.

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One Lord's day, I was returning from Manchester after service. I felt very happy and comfortable in soul, but languid and faint in body and exceedingly hungry; and powerfully it came into my mind, "Yes, and you know you have nothing to eat when you get home, and not a farthing will you have to buy with until tomorrow when you take home your work."

This brought me for a moment to a standstill. What shall I do? thought I; but in came the Lord with some precious portions of His dear Word and dropped them into my soul like honey from the honeycomb; yea, sweeter were they than the honeycomb, and more beautiful a thousand times than apples of gold in pictures of silver! "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4. 4). "Bread shall be given him, and his waters shall be sure" (Isa. 33. 16). Yes, the cattle upon a thousand hills are His, and all the gold and silver.

It seemed as if the whole Bible were opened from beginning to end, that God was my God, and not one single blessing that I stood in need of, whether for body or soul, but that I had in promises, and should have in possession, too, as I needed them. Such an opening had I to my soul of His everlasting love, grace and kindness, that I had not power to stand on my feet, but was obliged to lie down upon the ground. How long I lay there I know not, but this I know, that the mercy, love, grace and glory of God shone so gloriously into my soul, that I earnestly begged the Lord to take me to Himself, or otherwise stay His hand, for I felt the glory too much for the body to stand under.

When the glory was a little withdrawn, I got up and went on my way home, singing, praising, adoring and blessing His precious Name

for such matchless, discriminating love to one so vile as I. O, thought I, what a place heaven must be! O, if these are but drops, what must be the fountain? “O time,” cried I, “fly away, stop not, but waft me quickly to that Jordan of death, where my soul shall be dislodged from this poor clay tabernacle, which is too weak to bear even the drops of my Saviour’s glory. O death, death! when wilt thou come? welcome be thy presence!” O the heavenly journey I had home.

Upon arriving there, I found that my wife had borrowed several little necessities, so that we had a cup of tea, and plenty left for breakfast the next day, which enabled me to rise early in the morning to get my piece out, finish my work and carry it home, all of which I had to do before we could have any dinner. “O bless the Lord,” cried my soul, “here is my bread and water, according to His promise.”

### **Comforts withdrawn**

Soon after this the Lord began to withdraw His comforts, little by little, and I began to find that I had not such meltings of heart, nor yet such free access to Him as formerly. The Word of God was not so precious to me, and darkness began to gather upon my mind. I read the sweet portions of God’s Word that had hitherto been so precious to my soul, but I could no longer feel them so sweet. What all this could mean I could not tell; and such evil thoughts began to work in my heart, that I was quite astonished. “O,” cried I, “what can be the matter? Surely my sins were all forgiven. Surely they were taken away by the death and sufferings of Christ. What means this?”

I ran to the Bible; again I read the old promises that had formerly been so sweet with all the earnestness and prayer that I could muster up; but, alas! not one drop of comfort could I get out of them all. What can be the cause? thought I. Surely I must have neglected my duty, or I never should be in this state. Then I determined to follow up prayer until I should again enjoy the same comforts as before; but, alas! this I could not do, for such terrible abominations arose in my heart as made me tremble. Fears also arose, whether I had not been deceived; whether I had not been too secure, and whether it had not been all wild-fire.

Here I was, day after day, and things appeared worse and worse. “O,” thought I, “those dear Christians told me that I was deceived, and that it would be shown what I was, and they warned the people to have nothing to do with me; and that dear minister, Mr. Ely, told me that I was in an awful error; and all they said and believed of me is now

coming to pass. O that I had never said a word about it to one soul! O if I had never opened my mouth about it, nobody would then have known anything about me, and all would have been quiet! But all the parish knows what I have said about my religion.”

I really believed there never was such a fool. I could not help telling any person that would talk to me that I was born again, what God had done for me, and that I was sure of going to heaven. Besides which, I used to talk about my afflictions and trials in providence; in short, one thing upon another, until I was almost at my wits’ end, and was hated by all around, professors and profane alike, worse than the devil. But my greatest grief was the loss of God’s smiles.

### **The Lord speaks again**

At last the Lord blessedly spoke again, and with such power and sweetness, in these words, “ Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee ” (Jer. 31. 3). Then all was right in a moment; joy and gladness entered my poor sorrowful heart, and I could then sing with cheerfulness. O, how my soul was led to see a little of His unchangeable love and faithfulness. I saw that whatever change I might experience, His love and faithfulness were the same.

### **Hard times**

At this time I had two small children, and my wife was near her confinement with the third. Trade was very bad and provisions dear, flour being fivepence or sixpence a pound, and other things in proportion. It was what we called “barley times,” for there was scarcely anything for the poor except barley; so that our table was very scantily provided. Indeed, at the very time my wife was taken in labour we were without a single sixpence, and had not in the house two shillings’ worth of provisions.

Off I was obliged to go for a doctor; but what to do for a little money, or where to go and borrow it, I could not tell. On my way to the doctor’s I did nothing but cry, “O Lord, what shall I do ? Where shall I go? Thou, O Lord, knowest how we are situated. Do, dear Lord, direct me what to do and whither to go.”

As soon as I had sent for the doctor, it suddenly struck my mind that I would go to the master for whom I worked and ask him to lend me half-a-guinea. He lived in Manchester, and for that place I accordingly

set out, praying all the way to the Lord that He would open the man's heart to lend it me, telling Him that the hearts of all men were at His disposal.

When I arrived at my master's house, and asked him to do me the favour, he fetched me the half-guinea without either a frown or a cross look, for I watched him closely, and saw that he did it pleasantly. Then I knew that the Lord had been before me, for he was not in the habit of lending money to his weavers. I saw that it was all the Lord's doing, and O what thankfulness I felt to Him for opening the man's heart!

As I was walking down the street from the warehouse on my way home, blessing and praising the Lord for His unmerited kindness to one so utterly unworthy of the least notice of either God or man, I suddenly met, as I was crossing the road, a man whom I knew by sight, from having often seen him at the chapel that I attended, which was in Mosley Street. I did not know the man's name, but in passing he blessed me in the Name of the Lord and held out his hand to shake hands with me. "God bless you," said he and ran off, leaving me in the middle of the street, utterly astonished to find that he had left half-a-guinea in my hand. There I stood for some time, admiring, praising and blessing God, and should have stayed longer had not a coachman, who was driving a coach up the street, called me a fool and told me to get out of the road. Upon looking round I perceived, for the first time, that there were a number of people collected together to gaze at me, in doubt, I dare say, whether I had not made my escape from the madhouse.

On my return home, I got out of town as quickly as possible, and O the blessed journey I had! The very trees appeared to clap their hands! "O," cried I, "can I ever cease blessing, praising, thanking, extolling, trusting, and loving my dear Saviour!" "O," cried I, "Thou hast done great things for me, whereof I am glad."

When I reached home I found that my wife had been safely delivered and was doing well. I had now plenty of money for present circumstances, and plenty of faith to trust God for more when we needed it; for I really did believe it impossible for me to distrust God again, seeing the very great things He had done for me, and the wonderful way in which He had done them.

### **Moved by his landlord into the cellar**

Soon, however, I had plenty of work for my stock of faith. My landlord insisted on my quitting the house and going into the ground-cellar,

where I then kept my loom and used to weave, as he wanted the apartments in which we lived for himself. As I owed some money for rent, I complied; but my wife, having been so lately confined, was so much affected by the dampness of the place – and, indeed, it was a sad place to sleep in – that she, for a time, nearly lost the use of her hands, for she was taken with the cramp in her hands and fingers, so that she could but seldom either dress or undress herself or the child.

### **Desperate shortages**

Work was now very bad, and provisions immensely dear. We had three small children, and had lost one about six months before.

One circumstance that occurred about this time I think I shall never forget. One week we had a very scanty allowance of food, not sufficient to last us through. In the hope of getting my piece of work out, if it were possible, by Saturday, I worked very hard; but this hard work, and the want of nourishment, our food being principally barley, so exhausted me, that I was obliged, through weakness, to leave off on Friday at the very time when we had not one morsel of food remaining.

Here was a gloomy scene, not a morsel of food for husband, wife, or child; the wife, too, with an infant at her breast. If ever I prayed in my life, I did that night, that the Lord would take away our appetite and send us to bed satisfied. And, I believe, the Lord heard my cry, for the poor children wanted to go to bed, and said not one word about anything to eat, for which I felt thankful.

But my trouble was about the morning, for I could not leave the morrow to take thought for the things of itself. I rose very early the following morning, and worked till I was obliged to leave the loom, and could scarcely walk or stand, I was so faint and weak. My poor wife, who was as weak and as sickly as I, burst into tears, and cried, “O what shall we do? I cannot live; I am sure we shall die of want!” and I was sunk so low both in body and mind, that I verily believed it would be the case. But what was the finishing stroke to my feelings was that my eldest child, who was about five years of age, looked up to me with tears running down its little cheeks, and cried, “Father, give me some bread; O my father, do give me some bread.” I thought my soul would have burst of grief. “O,” cried I, “are my children to die of want before my face, and I cannot help them?”

I ran into a little place under the cellar stairs, fell on my knees before God, and entreated the Lord with all my soul to take away my

life. “O Lord, do take away my life; let me die; how can I behold the death of wife and children?”

Whilst I was upon my knees entreating God to take away my life, these words came with great power and force into my mind, “And they did all eat, and were filled; and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full” (Matt. 14. 20). And it was repeated again, “and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full.” I did all I could to put it away. “What,” said I, “can it have to do with me in our situation? It has nothing to do with me.”

I kept crying for some time, but the whole connection came so powerfully to my mind how the Lord had fed five thousand in the wilderness with five loaves and two fishes, and they were all filled. Well, thought I, He is as able to feed us now with fish and bread as He was then. My soul was so refreshed, and my faith so strengthened, that I was as sure that we should have a supply as that there was a God.

### **Wants supplied**

I arose off my knees as strong as a giant in mind and body, and told my wife that the Lord would most certainly send us something to eat, and very soon. She wanted to know how and when. “It does not matter,” said I, “about the how nor the when; I know it will be the case, and my soul can bless God for it before it comes.”

Just upon the back of this, a man knocked at the door, and I went and opened it to him. It was a gentleman’s servant. “John,” said he, “my master has bought some herrings to give to his factory people. I had no orders to leave you any, but I thought as I came along that I would leave you twelve, if you like to accept them.” I was so overpowered that I could scarcely speak to the man. The goodness, mercy and kindness of my dear Lord shone so brightly that I was quite lost in wonder.

Whilst I was still wondering and admiring the goodness of God to a worthless worm, a neighbour sent two cakes of bread. I thought my very soul would have burst through my poor body, and taken its flight into glory unto my dear Jesus. I withdrew into the little palace under the cellar steps, the very place in which, a few hours before, I had begged God to take away my life. And O what a heavenly palace it was! After returning my God thanks, some of the fish were soon ready, and we sat down to the table all crying together. “Come, my dears,” said I, “we are now dining on the same food as Jesus and the five thousand dined on in



the wilderness,” and I do believe in my very soul that Jesus sat with us at the table.

### **Faith stronger than Satan**

When night came on, the devil tried to bring me into misery again by telling me that the fish and bread were nearly all gone, and what should I do for the morrow? But faith was too strong for him at that time, for I was enabled to tell him with joy and comfort that Jesus Christ was the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow, yea, and for ever. Yea, that Jesus, if He pleased, could send us plenty for the morrow, and that I believed He would do.

The next morning, being the Lord’s day, I was up very early, and with my soul sweetly melted with the goodness of God and with the blessed assurance that He would be with me and provide, I took a walk early in the fields.

Upon returning home, I found two or three persons there who frequently came to our house on a Sunday. This morning they had brought us a few necessities, some one thing and some another, so that we were comfortably supplied throughout that day. One brought some butter and sugar, another a loaf of bread, and another some potatoes and a little pork. O how my tongue was loosed to speak forth His praise! for we were provided for as richly as kings and princes. Surely, thought I, God is opening the windows of heaven, and raining down mercies upon me, so richly is He supplying all our need. O how my poor soul was carried away with praise and thankfulness to my God for His astonishing kindness to me, the most unworthy of all His saints, the very chiefest of all sinners!

How I wondered that the ministers whom I was then in the habit of hearing never talked of the glorious things of God’s wonderful deliverances, both in providence and grace, to His people! But I was soon brought to see the reason, because they were themselves utter strangers to these deliverances. And how could they enter into those things which their eyes had not seen, nor their hands handled, nor their ears heard, nor their souls feasted on?

As soon as I discovered that they knew nothing of these things in their own souls, I declared that I did not believe God had sent them to preach, and that I was sure they were blind guides, wolves in sheep’s clothing. This so exasperated them and their people against me, that they could neither bear the sight of me, nor endure to hear my name.

“Oh, shocking!” said some of them, “have you heard what John Warburton says of our dear minister? He says that God has never sent him to preach, and that nearly all the ministers who come to our place are blind and dead.” “Oh!” cried one of the pious ones, “I wish he was dead, for there is no peace where he is.” “Yes,” said another, “I wish he was out of the country.”

Sometimes, indeed, I did think that I would take no notice, but would try to be quiet like the rest; and if there were things I did not like, why, I would leave them, and pass my time away more peaceably. By this means I thought I should have more friends, which, as I was very poor, and much tried in circumstances, would be much better for me. But when I went again and heard the minister with his “ought to do,” his “should do,” his “might do,” and his “duty to do,” O how my very soul rose up against such doctrine!

No sooner was I out of the chapel than I was obliged to go right smack at it and pull it all to pieces. Thus I set all in a blaze, as it was thought an unpardonable thing that I should speak against the minister. I, who was so poor and lived in a cellar, I, who had not half a bellyful of victuals, and scarcely clothes to cover my nakedness!

How their pious minister did at times rave and rage against me in the pulpit, holding me up as the poor bigoted Antinomian, an enemy to holiness and good works. Shortly after, however, it was proved that this pious minister had made too free with a female, and he was discharged from the place, whilst the poor Antinomian stood the storm, and was brought through all, and was preserved from bringing a reproach upon the truth.

*TO BE CONTINUED*

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## **CITIES DESTROYED FOR THEIR WICKEDNESS**

In both the Old and New Testaments we find cities that have been denounced for their wickedness. Ruins of these cities can be found today which speak to the truth of the Bible accounts.

In the Old Testament we read much about Edom (sometimes called Idumea). The Edomites were the descendants of Esau, the brother of Jacob, and originally lived on Mount Seir, in the neighbourhood of the Moabites. They were governed by kings, and appear to have been a powerful people.

Bozrah was one of the chief cities of Edom, and is often referred to in the writings of the prophets who denounced its great wickedness. In particular, Jeremiah prophesied against it: “For I have sworn by myself, saith the Lord, that Bozrah shall become a desolation, a reproach, a waste, and a curse.” Today, its extensive ruins show the fulfilment of Jeremiah’s prophesy.

In the New Testament, the Lord Jesus Christ spoke of the wickedness of several cities, notably Capernaum, Chorazin, and Bethsaida. In their time they were places of importance, but are now nothing but a heap of stones! “Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee,

Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes” (Matthew 11. 21).

The ruins of Capernaum are better preserved, but little remains. For a while Jesus lived in this city: “And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum.”

Whilst there, many mighty works were done, and He taught in the synagogue, but the city did not repent of its wickedness. The Lord Jesus denounced the city, saying, “And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought

down to hell.” This great city, a centre of trade and commerce, was brought to destruction.

It makes us tremble for our own land, with wickedness abounding on every side. How long will God lengthen out His mercies?



*Ruins of Bethsaida*

Ruins of Capernaum



## APPROACHING DEATH

Lord Byron, the English poet, as he reflected on his worldly, wasted, and empty life, just before his death wrote the following words:

“My days are as the yellow leaf,  
The fruits and flowers of love are gone,  
The worm, the canker, and the grief,  
Are mine alone.”

But how differently the believer can speak:

“His oath, His covenant, and His blood,  
Support me in the whelming flood,  
When all around my soul gives way,  
He then is all my hope and stay.”



## CHANGES SINCE THE END OF WW1

During the last year or so there have been a number of occasions when we have remembered events of national importance in our history. These include one hundred years since the end of WW1, one hundred years since the founding of the Royal Air Force, and seventy-five years since the end of WW2.

In this article we think of the many changes in the last one hundred years, most of which have not been for the better. We can only mention a few.

### **Sunday observance**

Bishop J. C. Ryle once said, “Most English people who have any respect for appearance go to some church or chapel on Sunday. To attend no place of worship in this country is the exception, not the rule.” Although Bishop Ryle died in 1900, the statement he made continued to be true until the beginning of WW1. Of course, the exact opposite is true today.

### **Sunday trading**

After the end of WW2, some aspects of the law were gradually lifted to allow on the Lord's day the holding of sporting events, the opening of cinemas and theatres, and the operation of Sunday markets. However, the Shops Act 1950 still gave some protection against the general opening of shops.

There followed twenty-six attempts to relax the Sunday trading laws. Campaigners argued that the almost total secularisation of the Sabbath rendered the 1950 Act meaningless. In 1986, Margaret Thatcher's government attempted to do away with all restrictions, but the attempts were defeated. Finally, in 1994 Sunday trading was legalised. Thousands of shops throughout England and Wales opened legally for the first time, small shops being allowed to open normal hours and larger shops for six hours.

The following year, Sunday licensing laws were relaxed to allow all-day opening for pubs and other places selling alcohol.

### **The decline in the use of the Authorised Version of the Bible**

At the time of the war, and indeed until the 1960's, when people spoke of *The Bible*, they meant the Authorised Version. With the introduction of so many versions, most based on unreliable underlying texts, there has been a loss of weight and authority given to the Scriptures.

### **The decline in Sunday Schools**

In the 1920's 53 per cent of children attended a traditional Sunday School. At one time there was nearly 100 per cent working class attendance.

There has been a continuous decline during the century to the current level of less than 2 per cent. According to a survey by the Christian Research group in the year 2000, there were 700,000 children under the age of 15 attending Sunday schools, compared to 1.4 million in 1979. In the last 20 years the decline has continued rapidly.

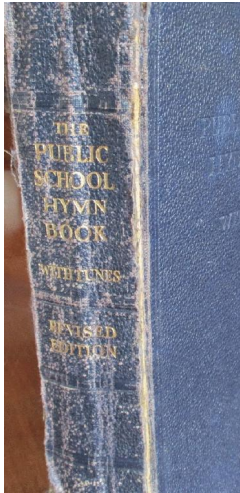
The author of the year 2000 survey, Dr. Peter Brierley, believed that the decline reflected wider social changes – such as the decline in church attendance generally and the shift towards Sunday as a day for shopping or for divorced and separated parents to see their children. He said, “It is the competition element which is a major issue. People may choose to take their children shopping or go out for the day. A lot of schools

have sports on a Sunday morning or music practices which parents want their children to be involved in.”

### **The decline in the singing of traditional hymns**

Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom remarked recently that when he was at school, every boy and girl in the land would know Isaac Watts’ hymn, “O God, our Help in ages past.” When the editor was at school, we sung from *The Public School Hymnal*. This was a hymnbook edited by a committee of the Headmasters’ Conference which was (and still is) a professional association of heads of the world’s leading independent schools. It was published in 1949 by Novello and Company.

Looking through the hymnbook, I find it amazing that a school hymnbook should include so many hymns found in our Gadsby’s hymnbook, many of a deeply spiritual nature. But sing them we did. Here are some of them, the numbers in brackets being the numbers in Gadsby’s:



Come, Holy Spirit, come – Joseph Hart (27)

Come, my soul, thy suit prepare – John Newton (379)

Dear Shepherd of Thy people, here – John Newton (398)

Father, whate’er of earthly bliss – Anne Steele (1010)

Give me the wings of faith to rise – Isaac Watts (477)

Hark, my soul! it is the Lord – William Cowper (968)

How sweet the name of Jesus sounds – John Newton (135)

Jesus, Lord, we look to thee – Charles Wesley (248)

Jesus where’er thy people meet – William Cowper (1023)

May the grace of Christ, our Saviour – John Newton (500)

O for a closer walk with God – William Cowper (958)

O love divine, how sweet thou art! – Charles Wesley (249)

Prayer is the soul’s sincere desire – James Montgomery (1002)

Shepherd divine, our wants relieve – Charles Wesley (1088)

There is a land of pure delight – Isaac Watts (1022)

Today, the majority of schools do not sing traditional hymns at all, or indeed Christian hymns of any kind.

### **Fewer people have a belief in God**

There has been a great falling away in the belief that there is a God. A recent poll of the public showed that only about 30 per cent of the population say that they believe in God.

### **Women at work**

After the two World Wars women began to debate whether to stay at home to take care of household work and children, or to join the workforce. In the 1950's only a few married woman held a regular job. It was during the 1970's when women felt more comfortable entering the world of work.

Only women who were householders over the age of 30 (6 million women) could vote in 1918; women over 21 did not get the vote until 1928. Yet in 1918 the 'Representation of the People Act' gave the vote to all men over the age of 21, and so the war did not bring equality to women.

One significant change in attitudes came in 2016 when women were first permitted to hold front-line combat positions in the army.

### **Decimalisation of our currency**

It was the Romans who first divided a pound of silver into 240 pence.



*Always a favourite*

In 1971 the Government decided it was time for a change from our centuries-old system of money. Our readers would need to be at least in their 40s to remember dealing in pounds, shillings and pence. Coins such as a florin (two shillings), half a crown (two shillings and sixpence), a tanner (six pence), a bob (one shilling or 12 pence) are remembered with affection. A favourite with schoolboys (and girls) was the threepenny bit (usually called a thruppenny bit) with its twelve sides – which could buy you enough sweets for a

whole day! So 2000 years of British history came to an end with the change to decimal currency. It is interesting that we read in the Bible that there were twenty gerahs in a shekel, in the same way that there were twenty shillings in a pound (Exodus 30. 13 and Ezekiel 45. 12).

The prophet Amos reproved those who made the shekel great by means of false balances. How strictly honest we should be in all our monetary dealings with men! The Lord knows when we are not.

### **Advances in science and technology**

We are all aware of the huge technological advances made in the last fifty years or so. The time of the Queen's coronation in 1952 marked the time when many households first acquired a television set. At that time there was only one channel, and a high moral tone prevailed – there was no bad language then. We well remember the year 1965 when the headlines were given over to the fact that a profane word had been used in a broadcast for the first time. Today, very solemnly, anything goes.

There were no calculators in the 1950's – at school a 'ready-reckoner' was used instead, a book of tables full of calculations including pre-calculated logarithms and other functions. That would give you about four digits of accuracy. If you learned how to use one, a slide-rule was quicker, but was really only accurate to two or three digits. And children learnt how to calculate square roots manually! The first solid state electronic calculator was not created until the early 1960's, and then they were prohibitively expensive.

Satellite navigation (or sat nav) has transformed many people's lives. The first satellite navigation system was known as Transit, a system developed in the 1960s. The Global Positioning System (GPS) uses thirty-two satellites in six different orbital planes. This system has been operational since 1978 and globally available since 1994. It is the world's most used satellite navigation system.

We hardly need mention the mobile telephone which has changed the world and its people. It is estimated that in 2020 there are 4.8 billion mobile phones in use globally, most of them smart phones. Motorola first mass-produced a handheld mobile telephone in 1972.



*An early mobile phone*



It is said that the average USB memory stick today is more powerful than the computers that helped to put the first man on the moon in 1969.

### Communications

During the period of lockdown through COVID-19, when places of worship were unable to hold services, many churches and chapels held some form of on-line service.

Just over 60 years ago, a much-loved deacon of one of our chapels died. His funeral service was to be held in the fairly small chapel where he had been the deacon for a long period of time. Many friends wanted to attend the funeral service, but thought, “There is no point going. We shall not be able to get into the chapel. There will be too many people.” There seemed to be no solution to the difficulty. In the congregation was an elderly man who was some kind of an electrical engineer – in the war it is thought he served in the Royal Corps of Signals. This old gentleman had in his garden shed, boxes and boxes of electrical equipment, amongst it a somewhat ancient amplifier. The solution to the problem was easy. He would set the amplifier up in the chapel with a microphone, and run a wire across the chapel graveyard into a farmer’s barn adjacent to the chapel.

In those days, this solution was thought to be quite revolutionary. What a long way we have come since then. Over recent months services have been broadcast over Zoom, Mixlr, Skype, and other providers with good results – solutions unthinkable just a few years ago. Truly, “Their line (*Wycliffe - sound*) is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world” (Psalm 19. 4).

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What developments the future holds we do not know. Although these inventions of man have many uses, frequently they have been exploited by Satan to bring harm, shame and sorrow to children, young people, and men and women. How we need to pray, “Lead us not into temptation” (the prayer the Pope wants to change). Remember that things have their uses, but *use* and *ab-use* are only two letters different.

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“Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out *many inventions*” (Ecclesiastes 7. 29).

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## SLIP

*From a Sunday School address*

In both Psalm 17 and Psalm 73 we can find a little word: SLIP. Now you all know what it is to slip. If we are walking on a shiny floor we have to be careful we do not slip. Or if it is icy or wet, again we have to be careful we do not slip.

These two Psalms were not written by the same person: Psalm 17 was written by David, and Psalm 73 by Asaph. David prayed that his footsteps might not slip (a good prayer), but Asaph tells us the reason why he almost did slip.

What did they mean by 'slip'? Well, think of it this way. We slip when we are walking. When we are standing still we don't slip.

However, David and Asaph were referring, not to an ordinary path, but to the pathway of life. They realised how easily they could be led astray, how easily they could slip from the right path.

There was once a family who set off for their holiday at the seaside. When they arrived the sea was right out. The first thing the children wanted to do was to run down to the water.

As they began to run, they saw a very large pipe running down the beach, which then disappeared into the water. What fun, they thought, to walk along the top of the pipe all the way to the sea!

So they climbed on. At first it was easy. There were limpets and barnacles, and dried seaweed, all giving them a good grip. As they got closer to the sea, the pipe began to get wet. It had not had time to dry out in the sun.

But still they kept going, and then it became really slippery – dangerously slippery. Suddenly there was a splash, and the youngest boy had fallen in. He could not swim, and nor could the other children.

They were very frightened. How they wished they had never climbed onto the pipe! But just as they thought the little boy must have drowned, one of the other boys saw an old piece of wood sticking out of the water. It was a piece of an old breakwater.

He managed to climb onto it, and all of a sudden a little hand appeared out of the water near where he was. Quickly he reached down and pulled his brother out of the water to safety.

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Our readers may think, Well, that's a story more suited to young

children – which it is. But there is a lesson in it for both young and old.

Activities that look so inviting can sometimes lead us into danger. How we need the Lord to take us by the hand, to keep us from temptation, to save us from slipping and sliding into sinful, harmful things. “Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe” is another good prayer.

So why did Asaph feel he had almost slipped? *He was envious of the wicked.* They didn’t appear to have the troubles that he had. They didn’t appear to have any concerns over death and eternity like he did.

There was once a young man who was travelling to chapel in his car alone on a Lord’s Day morning. He had many burdens at that time, and he felt downcast and fearful. It was a most beautiful early summer morning with not a cloud in the sky. Suddenly, a plane took off from the local airport and soared away into the sky. *And the man envied those holiday makers in the plane.* They did not have the troubles he had. They were excited at the prospect of their holiday – there was nothing to worry them. They weren’t bothered about going to chapel. Such a thing was furthest from their thoughts.

How easily, like Asaph, we can slip. Instead of accepting those burdens the Lord might have laid upon us, we would rather be rid of them. We would rather be as the foolish who, as Asaph said, “are not in trouble as other men.” It seems as if Asaph, just like the man we have referred to above, was also on his way to God’s house. When he got there, how his feelings changed: “Until I went into the sanctuary of God,” he says; “*then* understood I their end.” He was no longer envious of them now. No – he had a sweet hope, didn’t he, and he could say that afterward (at the end of his life) God would “receive him to glory” (verse 24).

Before we leave the subject, there is just one other slip to consider, that is, a ‘slip of the tongue.’ One wrong word that on reflection you wish you had never said! What a lot of damage one wrong word can do. A word spoken (or written) can never be recalled. The apostle James has a lot to say about the tongue – he calls it “a little member.” I expect many of us have had the feeling, “If only I hadn’t said that.” But it has gone forth, and we cannot recall it. David prayed, “Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips” (Psalm 141. 3).

That is the surest way to be preserved from slips.

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## TWO KINDS OF WORSHIPPERS



This is a short extract from a sermon preached by Mr. J. W. Tobitt at the Tabernacle, Hastings, on Lord's Day morning, 22nd August 1897. Before preaching the sermon, Mr. Tobitt said, "I was wrestling the greater part of yesterday, and I think the most part of this morning, that a blessing might come down, even though it be by way of reproof, rebuke, or conviction." May we be exercised as to how we come to God's house, remembering the Lord's words: "Take heed how ye hear."

Text: *"And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering: but unto Cain and to his offering He had not respect" (Genesis 4. 4-5).*

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We have before us this morning two professed worshippers of God. One was a shepherd and the other was a husbandman. Each of them brought their offering unto God.

Abel brought of the firstlings of the flock. Cain brought of the fruit of the ground. And I should suppose that any spectator naturally would have concluded that both of these worshippers would have been accepted – but they were not!

There was something wrong at heart in the case of one of them, so our text informs us. The Lord "had respect unto Abel and to his offering: but unto Cain and to his offering He had not respect." Man looks at the external appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.

Now you have all come to the Lord's house this morning professedly to worship Him, but we must ever remember the awful voice of Christ divides all assemblies into two parts; on which side do *you* stand? on which side do *I* stand? For "that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God;" and these words of the Lord may apply to many public worshippers in this day. "This people draweth nigh unto Me with their mouth, and honoureth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me" – they say nothing contrary to My word, they do not oppose My gospel – "But in vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."

It is not enough for us to come to God's house, it is not enough to hear God's Word read, it is not enough for us to have a sound creed, it is not enough for us to enjoy and sing God's praises; we may do all this sort of thing, and yet be lost.

Now I think you will all agree with me that to be accepted of the great God, in whose hands is our very breath, before whose throne we must stand and give an account of ourselves at the last day, with whom we must spend an eternity in bliss, without whom we must spend an eternity in misery – is it not greatly to be desired, to find favour in His eyes? Alas! the thought has occurred to me in this matter, how very few persons comparatively there are who think of these important realities. Perhaps some of you even here this day can get up in the morning and go through the whole day, lie down and sleep on your bed at night, and never have one thought concerning your acceptance before God; yea, how many persons there are who can spend their lives from January to December without any real anxiety concerning their soul! How terrible! “What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” The Lord never used superfluous language: there was no exaggeration there. The whole world, human applause, wealth, wisdom – and lose his own soul!

It is terrible to me to see persons living in a careless, unconcerned condition! Why, to those of us who desire to fear the Lord, who love the Saviour's Name, it is a grief that so much of our time is taken up with secondary matters; and we often have to cry out with David, “My soul cleaveth unto the dust: quicken Thou me according to Thy word.”

Now, let us analyse this a little: acceptance with God. How terrible that state is, to be rejected of God! Now Cain was rejected, just like the Pharisee, of whom we read in Luke 18. There were two worshippers there. The Lord had no respect to the Pharisee; but to the publican, who cried, “God be merciful to me a sinner!” the Master had respect, and to his prayer, and that poor wretch went down a justified sinner.

My dear hearers, have you ever seriously thought, if you are in a state of nature, all your good deeds are obnoxious in the eyes of God, and that you are consequently under the curse of God's law? “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.” “Oh! but sir, you should preach smooth things!” I have one Master in heaven who has said, “Son of Man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at My mouth, and give them warning from Me” (Ezek. 3. 17). I want to

be clear of the blood of your souls, and to tell my Master's message faithfully, whether men will hear or not. From the Scriptures I gather that every person in a state of nature, destitute of the grace of saving faith, is under the wrath of Almighty God. "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life: but the wrath of God abideth on him." I am not surprised that George Whitefield, that eminent minister of Christ, who was made such a great blessing, when he preached to large assemblies, was wont to say, with the tears streaming down his cheeks: "Oh, the wrath to come! the wrath to come!" How terrible to be under the curse, the wrath of Almighty God! and when one dies, to go to that place "where their worm (a guilty conscience) dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

Observe, moreover, that to be accepted of God is exceedingly desirable. Consider what a blessing it is to find grace in the eyes of the great Jehovah, to feel that our Maker is our Friend, to realise that all our sins are pardoned for Jesus' sake; to find that we stand eternally accepted in the Beloved; that we are sons and daughters and heirs of His glory. Can you tell me any earthly blessing, any providential favour, to be compared with this? To feel that things are all right for time and for eternity between a holy God and our immortal spirits? I know that is the greatest concern of my life, that it might be well with me when I die.

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May that also be the great concern of all our *Perception* readers, that it will be well with us when we come to die.

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## **AN EXPERIENCE AT SCHOOL**

From the writings of Miss Eunice Croft who died in  
the Harpenden Bethesda Home in 1998.

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When I was about twelve years of age I was greatly concerned to be right before God and at school there was daily a morning assembly for prayers which was reverently conducted; a hymn was sung, some verses of the Bible read, followed by the Lord's prayer repeated by all present, and other prayers read from the Prayer Book. These were often a help to me in my daily life at that time.

One day I had a childish quarrel with a school friend whom I had been fond of for some years; in fact, we had had a number of small tiffs but this one ended in parting with our heads in the air and never speaking to one another. I felt I had been the first to make amends often enough and I wasn't going to do it again. She can do it this time, I am not apologising if I am not in the wrong. It went on for weeks.

I was thoroughly miserable; I knew I was wrong to be in this frame of mind. At the morning assembly I could not truthfully say the words "forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us" and I would not repeat them. I felt utterly condemned but I could not forgive my friend. Then came a day when the morning reading at assembly was from Ephesians chapter 4, verses 17 - 32. The words "Be ye angry and sin not" and "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath" brought me into utter condemnation. Every word that followed was like a dart in my conscience but when the last verse was reached it did more than this – it broke my heart as the love of Christ on the cross was mentioned and I heard the words, "Even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you." At that moment I forgave my friend the wrong she had done and was able to join in brokenly with the words of the Lord's prayer. This I believe to have been the forgiveness of my sin. Later the Lord showed me how to become reconciled to my friend by a small action which put all right.

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## THE LITTLE SERVANT GIRL

*"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy" (Proverbs 28. 13).*

A young girl on leaving school began work as a maid to a lady who was very kind to her. The girl soon gained the respect of her mistress, and earned her praises for her dutiful behaviour.

All went well, until one day, while washing up a valuable tea-set, she accidentally broke some cups and saucers. What did the little servant girl do? She feared that her mistress would be angry with her, and instead of telling the truth she began to think what she could do to hide the broken china.

At last she thought of a plan, and she went out into the garden, and buried the broken cups and saucers out of sight; and thus took the first step in deception and dishonesty.

She went to bed, but she could not sleep, and the next day, while attending to her daily duties, she carried a guilty conscience and could not look her mistress in her face.

On the second evening she retired to rest and again a guilty conscience would not allow her to sleep, and at length she resolved to tell her mistress, and beg for her forgiveness. She arose from her bed, and went to the room of her mistress, knocked at her door, and confessed her act of deception in seeking to cover up her carelessness in washing up the tea-set.

Her mistress listened to her tale, and then said: "I would rather have all my costly china broken to pieces than have a servant who would deceive me, and be afraid to tell me the truth." But forgiveness was granted and the girl went back to her room and soon fell sound asleep.

It is so easy to tell a lie, and so difficult to tell the truth when we have done what is wrong. Who can tell where that lie will lead us and what trouble it will bring in its train? The writer of Psalm 119 (almost certainly David) tells us: "I hate and abhor lying" (Psalm 119. 163).

In our day, both with adults and the young, lying is regarded as one of the most insignificant sins, if regarded as a sin at all. The Lord Jesus, when teaching in the treasury of the temple, told the Jews that the Devil is the father of lies (John 8. 44). When Ananias and his wife Sapphira told those awful lies we read about in Acts chapter 5, Peter said, "Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost?" How solemn this is, to think that when we tell a lie, our lie is "to the Holy Ghost" – not just the person to whom we have spoken untruthfully.

May God help us always (to use a legal phrase) "to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."

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## MARTIN LUTHER'S DEFINITION OF A CHRISTIAN

A Christian is a new creature in a *new world*; he has a *new heart*, is under *new government*, serves a *new Master*, observes *new laws*, is moved by *new fears*, influenced by *new love*, animated by *new delights*, and is a partaker of *new joys*.

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## CURRENT MATTERS

### Animals and plants dying out

Scientists at Stanford University in California have reported an accelerating rate of disappearance of mammals, birds, fish, reptiles and amphibians throughout the world. Paul Ehrlich, professor of biology at the university, says that 515 critically endangered land vertebrates have fewer than 1,000 individuals left, placing them on the brink of extinction. Among vertebrates to have vanished in the past 100 years is the Thylacine, a marsupial last seen in Tasmania in 1933. Sometimes known as the Tasmanian Tiger, like most marsupials it carried its young in a pouch.

### Intelligent life could exist on other planets

Researchers from Nottingham University believe there could be thirty-six planets which are in the 'habitable zone' of their suns, neither too cold nor too hot to sustain life. This is a minute proportion considering there are about 250 billion stars in the Milky Way. Any habitable planets could be around 17,000 light years away. The scientists say: "There is no evidence to assert that the earth should be treated as a special case." This is directly contrary to Scripture. In Isaiah 45. 18 we read the God created the earth and that "He formed it to be inhabited." We do not read that about any other part of God's creation.

### Cost of Covid-19

The costs of the pandemic are spiralling. The Institute of Fiscal Studies has predicted that the cost of Covid-19 to Britain's economy is expected to be in excess of £300 billion i.e. £300,000,000,000. Although the death toll has been high, give a thought to these statistics:

DEATHS	GLOBALLY	UK
Covid-19 (to 3 September 2020) <i>Source: World Health Organisation</i>	858,629	41,504
Deaths by abortion (year 2019)	42,000,000	221,000

May "God in whose hand our breath is" (Daniel 5. 23), have mercy on a sinful world, and our own land so blessed with an open Bible.

# **WATER**

## **A WONDER OF CREATION**

Water is the most abundant substance on earth – 333,000,000 cubic miles of it according to one estimate. Only two and a half per cent of this is fresh water: the rest is salt water.

Water is a basic necessity of life. We could survive just three to four days without it. One month after the Beirut explosion on 4th August, rescuers thought they detected a heartbeat in the rubble. This, of course, proved to be a false hope as no-one could have survived that long without access to water. At least 200 people lost their lives.

The evolutionist and the ‘big-bang’ believers, tell us that water formed about 3.8 billion years ago when the earth had cooled to below 100 degrees Celsius. Other scientists believe that water came from an asteroid bombardment in the early days of the solar system.

The Bible tells us a very different story. The waters were there from the day the earth was created! “The spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.” True, the waters were not yet gathered together – this did not happen until the third day when the dry land appeared.

If you keep your old Perception magazines, in the Spring 2015 edition, page 15, you can read again some of the wonderful properties God has given to water.

# PERCEPTION

A Quarterly Magazine for Young People



*The Mayflower, 1620*

“And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed Him”  
(Luke 5. 11).

**WINTER 2020**

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**Cover picture:** The *Mayflower* leaves Bayard’s Cove, Dartmouth

# PERCEPTION

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## EDITORIAL

A new Christian Bookshop was due to be opened in the market town of Dunstable in Bedfordshire. Quite a crowd of friends and supporters gathered on a Saturday morning for the opening ceremony. After a short speech, and suitable prayers committing the venture to the Lord, a hymn was sung. A bystander asked one of the men in charge, “Why did you sing?” The reply was very simple: “Well,” said the man in charge, “Christians *always* sing.”

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One of the saddest things during the Covid crisis has been the Government’s guidance that congregational singing should not take place in places of worship. Reactions have been mixed, even amongst our own chapels, with some congregations having the hymns read out, others standing but remaining silent while the tunes are played on the organ, and others singing quietly (or not so quietly) behind their face masks. An observer at one service said: “It is completely unnatural. You look round, people are standing heads bowed, looking at their hymnbooks. Their masks cover their faces. It is a job to keep to where you are sometimes. You think ‘have we just *sung* that verse or not?’ You keep your finger on every verse in case you get it wrong. If it is a hymn of praise, it is so sad you can’t sing it out. You can’t help feeling that if people sang very quietly behind their masks, not much harm could be done. The trouble is . . . some people can’t sing quietly!!”

In October, newspapers carried the story of the funeral service of a 94-year-old grandmother where an official burst in towards the end of the service when the socially-distanced mourners began to recite together the Lord’s prayer, telling them to stop, claiming it was ‘chanting.’ Christian Concern commented, “This incident was cruel.” Two days later, after protests, the ban was lifted. Government officials have since confirmed that speaking in a low tone to pray would not be considered against the guidance.

Does singing spread Covid? Well, in Switzerland, a yodelling event

was blamed for their worst ever Covid breakout when, nine days after the event, a further 1,238 new cases were reported in the town. It is generally thought that singing can spread airborne droplets, but whether singing quietly behind a mask is a danger it is difficult to say.

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The ability to sing is one of God's gifts to mankind. Many of God's creatures also have the ability to sing, most notably the birds. Have you ever thought how some birds sing using the same tone patterns that we use in our own music? Take a cuckoo for example. Listening to a live recording we found it to be exactly F to C sharp, two whole tones, a pleasing interval even to a human musical ear. How many generations of children have enjoyed singing:

“Who taught the little birds to sing  
Their songs so glad and free?”

Well, we know the answer – and the hymn supplies it in the last verse:

“’Tis God, the heavenly Father good,  
Who made and cares for all.”

We remember observing a total eclipse of the sun. It was summer time in 1999. As soon as darkness began to fall mid-morning on this August day, the birds stopped singing. There was an eerie, unnatural silence. Not until the moon had completed its course in front of the sun, and daylight returned, did the birds resume their songs.

How much this resembles today. It is a dark day for our country, it is a dark day for the world, and it is a dark day for the churches. Our chapels have once more been closed for public worship, and singing the praises of God has had to cease. How we need to bow before the judgments of God.

The Lord's people in captivity to the Babylonians were once sad. It was not so much that they were not allowed to sing but rather that they had no heart to sing – a very different matter. “For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion” (Psalm 137. 3). The people had, we read, hung up their harps on the willow

trees by the riverside. How could they sing the Lord's song in a strange land? They longed to be able to sing their sacred songs back in the sanctuary – but not for the entertainment of the mocking Babylonians. It was a time of weeping. The memories invoked were too painful. *But they still had their harps.* They were hung up, true, but one day they would be able to play them again to accompany their songs of Zion.

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Many years ago we remember an elderly lady saying, "I can't understand people who don't like singing. There'll be singing in heaven, you know." As a youngster this made quite an impression. *Singing in heaven.* What a thought that is. Perhaps the old lady remembered Joseph Hart's hymn on heaven (850) when he says:

"Where ransomed sinners sound God's praise  
The angelic host among;  
Sing the rich wonders of His grace,  
And Jesus leads the song."

On that solemn night in which He was betrayed, the last thing Jesus and His disciples did before they went out, was to sing together: "And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives." What a sacred time that must have been prior to the death of their Lord and Master! How well the disciples sang we do not know. No doubt, like in most congregations, there were some who helped it along, whilst others, who entered into the song with as much heart-feeling as the rest, may have contributed little. Perhaps some of us wish we had better voices, but your heart can be touched just as much as the finest singer's.

So although we may be sad now, there is a prospect before the Lord's people that there will be a time of singing. The "winter" will be over and past, as in heaven there will be a new song to sing. We are told the words of the song in Revelation 5. 9 (look it up and read it). We are also told that none but the redeemed will ever be able to learn and sing that song. May we be found among those blessed people! If we are favoured to learn that song, then we will be able to "Join in the everlasting song, and crown HIM Lord of all" – everlasting because it will take all eternity to praise Him for His mercies.

Wishing all our readers the Lord's richest blessing in the coming year.

The Editor

# FROM HEAVEN ABOVE TO EARTH I COME

*Vom Himmel Hoch – Translated from Luther's German by Catherine Winkworth*

Hymn composed by Martin Luther.

Tune also probably composed by Luther.



- 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 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.
- 4 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.

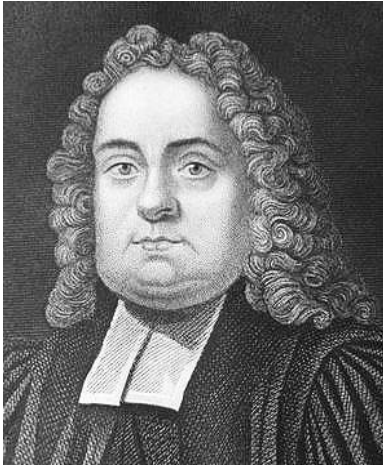


- 5 Give heed, my heart, lift up thine eyes:  
Who is it in yon manger lies?  
Who is this Child, so young and fair?  
The blessed Christ-Child lieth there.
- 6 Glory to God in highest heaven,  
Who unto us His Son hath given!  
While angels sing with holy mirth  
A glad new year to all the earth.
- 

Martin Luther (1483-1546) is rightly thought of as a theologian and the great Reformer. However, one major encyclopaedia lists him first as a musician and composer. To us, his musicianship is a secondary matter, but nonetheless one we should not ignore. Different versions of this hymn appear: in the Young People's Hymnal, for example, verse 5 is the first verse. Altogether, fifteen verses have been identified. The hymn first appeared in *Joseph Klug's Gesangsbuch*, 1535. It is thought the tune was also composed by Luther and first appeared in the *Geistliche Lieder, Leipzig*, 1539. The tune was famously harmonised by Johann Sebastian Bach. Luther said, "I would that all arts, especially music, were used in the service of Him who has given and created them." We have always liked German painter Gustav Spangenberg's picture of Luther singing with his family, with Melanchthon in the background.



## MATTHEW HENRY'S COMMENTARY



Matthew Henry's *Commentary on the Whole Bible* runs for thousands of pages. Here are the first few paragraphs of his monumental work setting out the supremacy of the Word of God. We invite you to compare his reverent approach to the sanctity of the Scriptures to that displayed in the article later in this magazine entitled MODERNISM. For an account of the life of Matthew Henry see *Perception Summer 2019*.

### AN EXPOSITION WITH PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS OF THE FIRST BOOK OF MOSES, CALLED GENESIS

We have now before us the holy Bible, or *book*, for so *bible* signifies.

We call it the book, by way of eminency; for it is incomparably the best book that ever was written, the book of books, other valuable and useful books, like the moon and stars, borrowing their light from it.

We call it the *holy* book, because it was written by *holy* men, and indited by the Holy Ghost; it is perfectly pure from all falsehood and corrupt intention; and the manifest tendency of it is to promote holiness among men.

The great things of God's law and gospel are here written to us, that they might be reduced to a greater certainty, might spread further, remain longer, and be transmitted to distant places and ages more pure and entire than possibly they could be by report and tradition: and we shall have a great deal to answer for if these things which belong to our peace, being thus committed to us in black and white, be neglected by us as a "strange thing" (Hos. 8. 12).

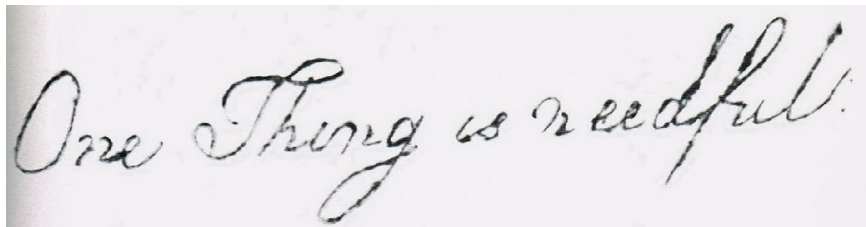
This is the light that shines in a dark place (II Pet. 1. 19), and a dark place indeed the world would be without the Bible.

We have before us that part of the Bible which we call the Old Testament, containing the acts and monuments of the church from the creation almost to the coming of Christ in the flesh, which was about four thousand years – the truths then revealed, the laws then enacted, the devotions then paid, the prophecies then given, and the events which concerned them, so far as God saw fit to preserve to us the knowledge of them.

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## GEORGE WHITEFIELD'S INSCRIPTION

In 1765, the great evangelist George Whitefield, whilst visiting America, stayed at the home of one Mr. Thomas Fanning in Southold, New England. Mr. Fanning was 'possessed of an abundance of the good things of this life' but according to Whitefield was destitute of the 'one thing needful.' In the morning, Mr. Whitefield arose, and before he left the room in which he had slept, wrote with a diamond on the window pane these important words:



Although many panes of glass were broken during the existence of the house, this one remained unbroken for many years.

Whitefield is not the only person to have inscribed something on a window. In 1981 our own Queen Elizabeth II stayed in Anglesey Abbey, a wonderful Jacobean-style house built in 1600 (now owned by the National Trust) about 10 miles from Cambridge. Before she left she wrote her name on a leaded-light window pane overlooking the grounds.

Is *our* name found inscribed in the Lamb's Book of Life? (Hymn 4, v8.)



## **JOHN Warburton (Part 4)**

A few of the Lord's providential dealings

Born in 1776, convicted of his sin as a young man, delivered from a temptation to end his life by drowning, and Christ revealed to his soul under a sermon preached by William Roby at Cannon Street Chapel, Manchester. We continue with the life of the Lord's servant.

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### **Rent to be paid**

The next trial that I had was a keen one indeed. My landlord began to want me out of his cellar, for, I suppose, he began to think that I should never pay my rent. And, indeed, there was little appearance of it at that time, for my wife, who was a fruitful creature (much too fruitful, many thought, for the times and our situation), was again in the family way. My landlord sent for me, and told me that he wished me to leave his premises, and get another house, as he wanted the cellar himself for a shop for his loom.

I answered him that I would endeavour to get another place as quickly as possible; and, indeed, I tried all I could for a long time. It really seemed for some time as if nobody would let me one. At last, my landlord lost all patience, and told me the shop he wanted, and the shop he would have, whether I had a place to go into or not. As I owed him about four pounds for rent, he put the bailiffs in to take an inventory of my few goods. Indeed, they were so few that, if they had been sold, they would not have fetched much money.

Then the devil, unbelief, and carnal reason set to work pretty sharply. Now, indeed, thought I, it is all over with me! There are four pounds due for rent, and not four pence in the world have I towards paying it. In a few days my bed, my loom, even dishes and spoons must be sold. Not a friend did I know who could help me with ten shillings. "What shall I do?" I exclaimed; "whither shall I go? O how it will rejoice my enemies who have been waiting for my halting. Now they will say, 'So would we have it.'" But the greatest trial of all was that God hid His face from me.

### **Approaches the parish overseer**

I tried every possible way to get the money, but all in vain. At last I went to the overseer of the parish, but he informed me that I did not

belong to his parish, but to the next one. So he gave me a shilling, and told me that he should remove me and all my family to my own parish the following day. I did not like this at all, but I was obliged to comply.

O what a night I passed through! How my soul was torn to pieces! Oh! thought I, how will professors and profane rejoice when I am in the workhouse! Then a little hope would spring up, that perhaps the parish would pay my rent rather than that I should go into the poor house.

The following day the overseer came, and I and my wife and three children went with him, and a weeping journey we had of, I think, three miles. Upon arriving there, we found that the overseer of the parish was not at home, and we therefore had to wait till he came in. His wife was very cross with us, but my poor soul was so broken down, that she might have wiped her shoes upon me, and I should not have turned again. At last I told her that I was very sorry we were under the necessity of troubling her, and that it was my heart's desire that, if it were the Lord's will, she might never be in the same situation in which we then were. At this she became quite pleasant, and fetched some provisions, and was very agreeable, which quite revived me, for I saw that the Lord could soften the heart in a moment, and cause even enemies to pity His people in captivity.

### **His goods to be sold**

In the evening the overseer came home, and when I told him my pitiful case, he heard me with great patience, and expressed a great deal of sorrow for me. He said, however, that he could not pay my rent, and that the best thing I could do would be to return, and if my goods were sold, I must come to him again, and he would take us to the workhouse. He gave me two shillings and sixpence, and off we came home. I

wondered that the man had given me half-a-crown, for we had no victuals in the house. What a night did I pass through again! I sometimes thought that I should sink into black despair. How it will grieve the church to which I belong, thought I, to hear that I have been forced to go to the workhouse! The church of which I was a member was one of independent principles, in Mosley Street, Manchester.



*Mosley Street Chapel*

A day or two after this I finished the work which I had upon my loom, and carried it home to my master, who lived in Manchester. As



*Shudehill, the oldest house in Manchester*

I was coming out of the warehouse, a thought struck me that I would call upon one of the deacons of the church, whose name was Ramsay, a tailor, living in Shudehill [today a Conservation Area]. I made up my mind, however, not to say anything to him of the circumstances in which I was, for I thought it would grieve the people to know that they had a member of their church in such a plight. I tried to pass the door, but could not; so I knocked, trembling all the time.

I was received very kindly by the old gentleman, who wondered that I had not called before, and asked me how I and my family were, and how we got on. I was speechless for a time, but at length burst into a flood of tears, for I really thought my heart would have burst with grief, and told him that my goods were about to be sold for rent, and that we were all going to the workhouse. I told him, too, that my greatest grief and sorrow was that the enemies of the truth would say, "So would we have it."

The old man smiled, and said, "Never fear, John, your goods will not be sold." "Oh! sir," said I, "next Monday is the day for the sale, and there is no possibility of its being prevented." I again burst into a flood of tears, and wished I had never joined their church, for I was afraid they would be reproached on my account. The old man's feelings were overcome as well as my own, and he could hold no longer. At length he asked me if I had seen Mr. Clegg, another deacon, and I told him "No." "Then," said he, "Mr. Clegg has got the money all ready for you, and has been expecting you to call upon him." "What," said I, "Can such a thing be possible? Oh! what shall I do to bless and praise the Lord?"

### **Rent money provided**

My feelings were such that I could hardly tell what I was, or where I was. I went to Mr. Clegg, but I was so overcome with the wonder-working hand of God, that it was some time before I could get there. Mr. Clegg himself opened the door to me, and, with a sweet smile as pleasant as May, asked me how I was, and how I was getting on. He told me that, having heard of my situation, he had begged part of the

money, and had added the rest himself. Many other things the old gentleman said, and what a pleasure he felt in being the instrument of delivering me out of my calamity.

My soul was so full, that I could do nothing but weep for joy; I wanted to be on some common, where no human eye could see nor ear hear me, and where I could shout forth the praises of God both with body and soul. The old gentleman gave me the money, and we both wept together for joy. The first secret place I could find after I got into the street I crept into; and O what praise, thanksgiving and adoration flowed out of my heart and from my lips unto God for His wonderful unthought-of deliverance.

I got out of the town in some way or other, but how I knew not, for I had such a weight of glory to carry, that at times I had to put my hand upon my mouth until I got into the fields, where I could see no human being; and then I gave vent to body and soul, sometimes dancing and shouting His praises, sometimes on my knees blessing and thanking Him. I called Him all the endearing names my soul could think of, or my tongue utter; and such glorious views I had of the glory of God, both in providence and grace, that I was so lost at times that I did not know where I was, or where I was going.

At last it struck my mind that I ought to go home, and let my poor wife know the wonderful deliverance that God had wrought for us; and then I went on as hard as I could walk, singing, praising, blessing and glorifying God with all my soul and with all my strength. At last I reached home, and into my little palace I went, for it appeared more like a palace than a poor cellar. I found my wife weeping, and almost exhausted for want of something to eat. I could not for a moment conceal the wonders that God had wrought for us. "Cheer up, woman," said I, "why weepest thou? God has sent us the rent, every farthing of it, and something to spare. I have it in my pocket."

As I spoke thus, I pulled out the money, and put it upon the table. Poor thing! when she saw the money she almost fainted away. She did not, at that time, know the Lord for herself. I counted the money, and found that, what with that which I had drawn for my work, and a little that Mr. Ramsay had given me before I went to Mr. Clegg, we could pay the rent and have nearly twenty shillings left for provisions. We both wept together like two children. I told her that this God was my God, and I believed in my heart that I should live to see Him as her God too.

After having had something to eat, I went to my landlord and told

him that I had brought him his rent money; but he said he had nothing further to do in the matter, and that I must go to the bailiffs who had marked my goods, and whatever they charged I must pay. So I went to them and settled the affair very comfortably.

For several weeks after this event I was so indulged with the presence and love of God, and with such transporting views of His power, faithfulness and goodness, that my soul was carried above all the empty things of this perishing world, though I seldom knew what it was to have a sufficiency to eat.

With considerable toil and trouble, I at last succeeded in getting the promise of a house in what they call the Narrow Lane, near Besses-o'-th'-Barn. For fear the man should run from his word, I packed all my traps on the very same day that I took the house, for I wanted to get away as much as my landlord wanted to get rid of me. At this very time I had not one single penny in the world, nor six pennyworth of bread in the house. I had about two days' work upon the loom, but I durst not stay until it was finished, lest my new landlord should hear of my poverty and stop me from going into his premises. So I rolled up the piece on the beam, and with the help of my brother and a horse and cart, we set off with the things.

When we had arrived there and unloaded the things, we began to want something to eat and drink. I accordingly went to the public-house, and asked the landlord if he would let me have a little beer until I took home my work. I told him how things were with me; and his answer was, "Yes, I might have whatever I wished."

I then called upon a shopkeeper and, having told him who I was and explained my situation, requested credit for a few provisions, saying that I hoped soon to be able to pay him. His reply was, "Yes, you may have anything you please that I have."

O how my soul looked on to see the angel of the Lord doing so wonderfully for me!

### **A dream**

One night, a short time after, I had a very remarkable dream. I thought that I was going to see my mother, and on the road I had to pass a farmhouse, and in turning the corner of a field near this farmhouse, I thought that I suddenly came upon a large black bull, which seemed, by his appearance, determined to attack me. I turned another way to avoid him, but I met him again. I then got into a way between two walls,



where he again made his appearance and, rushing violently upon me, knocked me down. There I lay for a few moments, and he stood a few yards distant from me. Again he made his approach, for the purpose, as I thought, of making an end of me. I thought it was now all over, and that I must die upon the spot. But oh, what a spirit of prayer I felt in my dream to the Lord that He would be with me this once, and give me strength that I might come off more than conqueror. In a moment I felt as strong and as bold as a lion. When he came in with all his might, intending to toss me up in the air, I seized him by the horns, one with my right hand and the other with my left, and, splitting him quite asunder from head to tail, dashed the two parts of him to the ground, one on each side of him. I then placed my right foot on one side of him and my left foot on the other, shouting in triumph, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy; when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me" (Micah 7. 8).

I awoke out of my dream with the precious words in my mouth, and for some time could hardly persuade myself that it was a dream. O the weight with which this lay upon my heart for weeks! I firmly believed it to be a token of some keen trial I had to endure; and hope, at times, sprung up that God would bring me through it, because I had gained the victory in my dream. And exactly so it happened.

Shortly after this dream my wife was taken very ill, and instead of getting better, grew worse and worse, till at length I was obliged to call in a doctor, who, when he arrived and saw her, told us she was in a very bad fever. He likewise gave a strict charge that nobody should come into the house, except one person to attend upon her. Oh, when he told me, my soul sank fathoms. "What shall I do," cried I, "with the poor children?" We then had four of them; provisions were very dear; we were already in debt at the shop; and without a single friend who could do much for me. Attend to the work I had upon the loom I could not, for my wife became so bad that she was light-headed for several weeks; and we had not much else but what one neighbour or the other sent us, for the shopkeeper would not let us have anything more until we had paid off the old score.

One night I feared it would be almost too much for me, for the poor little children cried for some bread before they went to bed, and as not one morsel had I in the house to give them, they were obliged to go without. O how the enemy did set on my soul that God had left me. "You have not one penny in the house," said he; "your poor wife is not

likely to live, and your children are starving for want; the shop is shut up, so that you cannot have one farthing's-worth there." For a few moments how I sank! O the groans, the sighs, the wrestlings, I had that God would undertake for me. I told Him that nothing was too hard for Him. "Oh!" cried I, "my dear Lord, appear for me. Let me once again see Thine arm made bare in working for me as the God of providence." And O how precious did those sweet words come, which set all right and straight in a moment: "The ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning." O the transports of joy I felt at the sound of these words!

"What I" said I, "the dear prophet of God in the same place as I, and did God send him flesh and bread by ravens?" and I firmly believed that God would as surely appear for me in the morning, as He appeared for the prophet.

Early the next morning there was a knock at the door. I opened it and saw a person, who called me out and asked me how my wife was, and whether we had anything to subsist upon. I told him the truth, and how badly off we were. He said he had had no rest all night for thinking of me, and that he had brought me half-a-guinea, though he did not like my religion. I told him that the Lord knew my situation, and that I had no doubt that He had sent him. I thanked him as the instrument, and then he left me. When he was gone, O the preciousness, the glory, the heavenly grandeur, and the solemn majesty in which my covenant God appeared to my soul. "Oh!" cried I, "who is a God like unto my God, that has sent a raven to feed me?" Indeed, I could see nothing but the goodness, mercy and kindness of my God and Saviour, on the right hand and on the left. O the preciousness of a wonder-working God in such scenes as these!

### **The dream explained**

But now I come to explain what I had been shown by my dream. A person with whom we had dealt for a long time for provisions, sent for me one day and asked me to pay him the money I owed him, which was about seven pounds, for he said he must have it. I told him the situation in which I then was, and had been for a long time, and begged him to have a little patience with me, and I hoped I should be able to pay him. He was very rough with me, and said he would have the money by some means or other. I now had fresh work for faith and prayer.

On the following Saturday morning, as I was returning from the doctor's house, I met my creditor going to market. He stopped, and

asked me if I was coming to pay him on Monday. If I did not, he said he was determined to put me to trouble. I burst into a flood of tears and begged him to have a little pity upon me. I told him how long the fever had been in the house, and that I had not one penny in the world. I hoped, I said, that my wife was now getting a little better, and that, in a short time, I should be able to bring him some money, which I would do then with pleasure. But he turned round and cursed me, declaring that if I did not pay him on Monday, and he lived till Tuesday, he would put me to trouble.

With this, off he went, and my poor soul sank fathoms in a moment. O how these words did sink me down: "The evil that I feared has come upon me." O what a day of misery I passed! Sometimes I feared that I should sink into hopeless despair. I could no more believe that God would deliver me than that I could make a world. My body was weak with loss of rest and want of food; my children were almost starving; my wife being a little better, was longing for something to nourish her; the devil was roaring in my ears, "God has forsaken him; pursue him and take him." Access to the Throne of grace was blocked up; the Bible was a sealed book; and the uncircumcised were rejoicing, "Ah, so would we have it."

Just at the time of my greatest sinking, a neighbour, who had been in Manchester, called upon me and said that he had been doing some business that day with a Mr. Clegg, a deacon of the church of which I was a member, and that he had inquired of him whether he knew a man in his neighbourhood named John Warburton, and upon his answering that he did, had asked very particularly whether I was well, saying he had not seen me in Manchester for several weeks. My neighbour told him that my wife was very ill of a fever, and had been so for a long time; and "indeed," added he, "the poor man must be badly off."

The dear old gentleman was quite surprised to hear it, and gave the man a particular charge to call on me as he went home, and tell me to come to Manchester the following day, as he wanted to see me. Upon hearing what the man said I felt hope spring up, and that precious text flowed in upon my soul with sweetness, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God" (Ps. 42. 11). My soul could now cast all her care upon Him; and promise after promise flowed sweetly and precious into my heart, and I verily believed that the Lord would appear for me.

On the Lord's day morning I went to Manchester, and saw Mr. Clegg, who was very sorry to hear that I had the fever in the house, and that I had been so sorely tried. He wondered that I had not been over to let him know, as he had told me before to be sure and inform him if I was in any distress. He bade me tell him my situation exactly as I stood. I told him how long my poor wife had been ill of the fever, and the conflicts of bitterness and the seasons of joy I had passed through, till the dear old man wept like a child. I explained to him the situation in which I was placed by a creditor, who threatened to put me to trouble on the following Tuesday, and I was so overcome by my feelings that I could no longer hold, but burst out, "O sir, sir, my greatest trouble is that I am afraid the cause of God will be blasphemed on my account."

The old gentleman's feelings were as much overcome as my own. He seized me by the hand, and said, "My dear brother, the Lord has given me plenty, and you shall have the money." He went directly and brought me back the full money for the debt, with a little besides for present support. No sooner was the money laid down, than the very text which I awoke with from my dream came into my mind with such power that I had hard work to keep from shouting it out in the house: "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy; when I fall, I shall arise; when, I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me." *TO BE CONTINUED*

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## GREATER LOVE

Early in the 14th century the Great Famine swept over northern Europe. Many families were starving.

One family was reduced to the necessity of selling one of their children for a slave in order to obtain food for the rest. But there was a difficulty. Which child should it be? Their first-born? He could not be sold. The second was just like his father. He could not be sold. The third, a daughter, was the image of her mother; and her father declared she should never be a slave. There was but one remaining. The father and mother looked at each other through their tears, and exclaimed, 'This is our babe, our youngest, we cannot sell her.' So they agreed that, sooner than one of their children should be sold, they would lie down and die together.

If this is earthly love, what must have been the love of the heavenly Father, who, sooner than man should perish, gave not His first, or second, or third, or last, but His only Son for His people?

## UNUSUAL BIBLES (4)

### The Treacle Bible

The Bishops' Bible was published in 1568, and soon became known as the "Treacle Bible". Its translation of Jeremiah 8. 22 reads: "Is there not triacle (treacle) at Gilead?" The Bishops' Bible was actually a revision of the 1549 Great Bible, which was the first to use the word, although then it was "tryacle." In the Authorized Version of 1611, "triacle" was changed to "balm": "Is there no balm in Gilead?"

What exactly is balm of Gilead?

Gilead was the mountainous region east of the river Jordan divided among the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh. The expression "balm of Gilead" stems originally from William Tyndale, and was used in the King James Bible of 1611.

The Latin name for balm of Gilead is *Cammiphora opobalsamum*. Its buds are large, brown, and resinous – and strong-smelling. The bark of young trees varies from cinnamon brown to green, turning grey and deeply ridged as it ages. Apart from its use as a rare perfume, it has been used medicinally for centuries. The perfume is derived from the resin found on the buds. If touched, the buds will stick to your finger and coat them with reddish brown gum.

The beneficial properties of balm of Gilead were glowingly recommended in a newspaper published in the early 1800's:

"Dr. Solomon's incomparable CORDIAL BALM OF GILEAD, at once the most elegant and efficacious medicine ever yet discovered for nervous diseases, in weak and shattered constitutions, weakness of sight or memory, hypochondria, tremblings, horrors of the mind, debility, and all other diseases arising from a relaxed state of the nervous system, and often the consequence of intemperance, debauchery, and inattention to the necessary cares of health. In luxurious, sedentary, inactive or studious lives, this cordial balm has universally established its restorative efficacy, and may be justly enumerated amongst the foremost of those happy discoveries which medical research have procured as the blessings of the human race, and greatest counteractive to human misery. Thousands at this day in the three kingdoms live to bless the day they first applied to this admirable remedy, and enjoy the blessings of health, who might otherwise have dropped into an untimely grave, the victims of early imprudence.

“Prepared (only) by S. Solomon, M. D. of the University and College of Physicians, and author of THE GUIDE TO HEALTH, at his house, Solomon’s Place, Brownlow Street, Liverpool, (where he may be consulted with his usual fee) and sold at 10 shillings and 6 pence by all the venders of genuine medicines in every country town in the kingdom, who will deliver pamphlets of its efficacy *gratis*.”

Balm of Gilead has three references in the Bible:

In Genesis 37. 25, as Joseph’s brothers contemplated how to kill him, a caravan of Ishmeelites passed by on their way to Egypt from Gilead. In their cargo were “spicery and balm and myrrh.”

Jeremiah 8 records God’s warning to Judah of the calamities that would befall them. Upon hearing of these solemn tidings, Jeremiah laments, “Is there no balm in Gilead?” (verse 22).

Later, in Jeremiah 46. 11, as Jeremiah describes an impending judgment on the land of Egypt, he says, “Go up into Gilead, and take balm, O virgin, daughter of Egypt.”

Many liken the power of the healing Balm of Gilead to the saving power of Christ. The old and well-known African spiritual has this chorus:

“There is a balm in Gilead  
To make the wounded whole;  
There is a balm in Gilead  
To heal the sin-sick soul.”

John Kent’s hymn, (Gadsby’s 916) refers to it, too:

“Oft as sins, my soul, assail thee,  
Turn thy eyes to Jesus’ blood;  
Nothing short of this can heal thee,  
Seal thy peace, or do thee good;  
Seek no healing,  
But from Gilead’s sovereign balm.”

## MY YOUNGER DAYS

**Mrs. Joan Harrison**

Mrs. Harrison died in the Harpenden Bethesda Home on 14th August 2020 at the age of 96 years.

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I had a godly mother who taught us three children about the Lord Jesus and God who has an all-seeing eye. She used to say, “Be sure your sin will find you out.” This had a very strong impression upon me, because I used to tell my sisters when they were doing wrong, “Be sure your sin will find you out.”

When about eight years old or so, I felt myself to be a sinner in the sight of this all-seeing God. I had been taught that He was a God of love but a God of justice as well. I used to be so fearful of going to hell because of my sins. Three times I dreamed I was in hell and, as my mother had taught me, there is a great gulf fixed that no man can cross, and the horror used to be dreadful. When I woke up I used to say in my childish way, “I am going to be better in future. I am going to read the Bible more.” Of course, “Our best is stained and dyed with sin,” but I did not know that then. I used to pray, “Prepare me, gracious God.” My mother taught me to.

Well, when I got to between twelve and thirteen I used to sit in chapel and tremble, and one Sunday Mr. Gascoigne was preaching and he was preaching in a very solemn way and I felt myself to be such a sinner, there was no hope for me; I shall never go to heaven and see Jesus. Suddenly his tone of voice altered and he put his hand up and he said, “Sinner, His arm is not shortened; His ear is not heavy that He cannot save,” and I immediately felt relieved of my sins. I felt they had gone. There was hope for me and I said, “O Lord Jesus, take me to heaven now. From my chapel seat I want to go to heaven and see Jesus.” I thought, “O, I wish I had not got to go out of these chapel doors into the world!” In my childish way I said I would like to stay in chapel all my life.

I looked around the congregation, [this was at Birmingham chapel] about four hundred, and I thought they were all the Lord's people and I loved them. I looked at dear Mrs. So-and-so and dear Mrs. So-and-so. Looking around, what a dear lot of people they were. I loved them. What I did not know then, I learned in later years, that, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." I hope I have loved them ever since.

When I got to about nineteen, I was working in the world and I was joining in their worldly conversation, joining in their laughter, but at the same time my conscience was pricked, and as I cycled home through the country roads I used to call out loud, "Lord, help me; Lord, help me." I even stopped when I got to the town and looked in a shop window so that I could pray to the Lord for help. It so happened that the shop belonged to Mr. Dennett, the pastor at Birmingham, and to his two daughters. I wanted the Lord to help me so much that I stopped in the middle of the town. I thought, "No-one will know."

I went to chapel one Sunday and heard Mr. Faulkner from Blackheath, and his text was, "He will keep the feet of His saints." I felt my feet had not been kept. I was absolutely devastated. I did not know whether to go out of chapel or not. When we came out of chapel, I could not go home. I was so concerned that there was no hope for me and I wandered round the streets in Birmingham.

I was not able to pray at night because each time I knelt down, the words came, "God is not mocked," and I could not pray. I used to sigh, but I did not know those sighs were prayers. I did this for nearly twelve months, and one night I thought, "I can't carry on like this." I kept looking in the Bible to see if there would be a word that told me I was entitled to pray although a sinner. I could not find anything. The Bible was closed to me. I could not understand it. This night I asked the Lord in great anguish to open the Bible and give me a word that would tell me I can pray. I was already praying, but I did not know I was. I opened the Bible on the words, "But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and He that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine."

It was so wonderful to me, such a great sinner: "Thou art Mine." I read the rest of the chapter which was so good and so simple. It was not a closed Book any more.

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## MODERNISM – OR THEOLOGICAL LIBERALISM

Isobel Miller was a first-year university student – a *fresher* – one of a group of a hundred. Seated in the lecture hall, the words of the lecturer caught her ear: “Of course, no one in this enlightened age believes any more in the myths of Genesis.” For a moment he paused. “Well,” he said, “I suppose I had better test it out, before being so dogmatic. Is there anyone here who believes there is a Heaven and a Hell? Anyone who believes Genesis is true? Please raise your hand.”

Bravely, up went Isobel’s hand. Nervously, she looked round to see if she had a companion. Only one other hand went up. The lecturer, sympathising with her and her companion’s embarrassment, said, “Oh, you just believe that because your dad and mum told you so.” He then went on with his lecture, assuming that no thinking human being believed the Bible anymore.

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*Modern Thought*, now called *Modernism*, began to emerge in the mid-1800's. By the 1880's the book of Genesis had become the subject of fierce controversy, which led to doubts as to the accuracy of historical accounts found in the Old Testament, and later in the New Testament. The Godhead of Christ and the sacrificial nature of His death were questioned and denied. It was against this slide into error that Charles Spurgeon, the Pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle, London raised His voice, and which led eventually to his withdrawal from the Baptist Union in 1887.

Earlier in this *Perception* we have given the introduction to Matthew Henry’s much valued Commentary on the Bible. By way of contrast, in 1919, Dr. Arthur Peake, a professor of Divinity at the University of Manchester, published a Commentary on the Bible, full of the most appalling errors. At the same time, other writers published books attacking the fundamental teachings of the Bible.

Here are a few samples of the thoughts Dr. Peake brought before the reading public:

In reading the **Old Testament**, we are not dealing with history at all, in the modern sense of the term; it lacks nearly all the marks of modern history. Myth and legend are noted as though they were actual occurrences.

**Exodus** at best enshrines some kernel of fact that would have been lost, but for its protective husk of unconsciously imaginative form.

Even the most plausible details in the book of **Numbers** can only pass as history in the absence of anything more trustworthy. What proportion, if any, of the narrative (in certain chapters) is fact, it is impossible to say.

**Joshua** appears to be a medley of contradictory narratives, most of which are unhistorical. It has to be admitted that the writers knew nothing of history in the modern sense of the term; myth, legend, tradition, were all accepted without question. A simple historical fact (Jericho) has been altered out of all recognition. The author of Joshua stated that what he thought *ought* to have occurred (Cities of Refuge) did, as a fact, actually occur.

**Judges** contains incidents which, while “not historically probable,” are “genuine folk-tales.”

The books of **Samuel** contain portions in which the author forgot that he was composing a speech for Samuel; others illustrate the imperfect morality ascribed to Yahweh (Jehovah).

Where the editor of the **Books of the Kings** was bored, he got over the ground at an alarming rate.

In **Chronicles I and II** the writers felt justified in modifying the narratives for their own purpose; in other portions the bias is so evident, the exaggeration so glaring, that they are the least valuable portions of the Old Testament for spiritual purposes.

In **Ezra** it is the fatal intrusion of the Chronicler’s own ideas which have been so harmful to history.

There are no **Psalms** which are even probably written by David.

The **Old Testament** knows nothing of a suffering Messiah.

The interpretation of **Psalm 22** in John 19. 24 is untenable.

We doubt whether there is any good reason for having the **Book of Lamentations** in our Bible, or in any collection of sacred writings.

**Daniel** is marked by flagrant historical mistakes.

**Jonah** is purely imaginative.

In the **New Testament** it is doubtful that we have the *ipsissima verba* (exact words) of Jesus, or any guarantee that the events of His life are related with absolute accuracy in the Gospels.

In the **Acts of the Apostles**, we must be prepared to allow for the growth of a quasi-legendary element, and we must refrain from claiming any certain knowledge as to the course of events in the first years of Christianity.

The **Apostle Paul**, when dealing with the resurrection of the body, sets forth one of his most daring pieces of speculation.

No one with ordinary medical training and a straightforward mind would to-day attribute **speaking in tongues** to the Holy Ghost.

**Verbal inspiration** is a monstrous belief.

There are some who think **Christianity** is believing in Jonah and the whale and the axe that floated – an endorsement of every misconception the Hebrews ever formed.

**Religion** must depend upon something more verifiable than detached sayings attributed to Jesus.

In interpreting the Scripture “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world,” Christ has historically taken a great deal of **sin** out of society: certain sins, common in the ancient world and not counted very serious, are rarely committed nowadays.

Paul was driven to think out a **Christology** [that part of theology which deals with the person of Christ] – lots of Christologies, one after the other.

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We sincerely trust and hope our readers will never be carried away by modernism, but will be sincere believers of all that is written in God’s most holy Word. It is an encouragement that many of the things most scorned by men were mentioned by the Lord Jesus Christ as a fact. Take, for example, the case of Noah and the flood. Jesus said: “And as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood

came, and destroyed them all.” Notice Christ’s words “*as it was.*” It is a fact, not a myth.

May we be blessed with that God-given faith truly to believe all that we read in His word. “Now faith . . . is the evidence of things not seen.”

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## THE SUNDAY SCHOLAR’S LEGACY

Wright Driver became a scholar of the Sunday School at Burnley at the tender age of four. His parents, though poor, feared God, and early trained their children to attend the school.

In constitution he was somewhat delicate, yet he loved the school, attended as often as possible, and for a boy of his age, took more than an ordinary interest in things pertaining to the school, and God’s house.

During this time a new chapel was in the course of erection, and collections were taken in the Sunday School from Sabbath to Sabbath. Little Wright, when present, contributed his half-pence, as his parents could afford.

But it pleased God soon to lay His afflicting hand upon this interesting little boy, who was for several weeks prevented from attending the school through illness. During this time he would frequently try to walk as far as the chapel to see how the work was progressing, and when unable to do so, asked his parents to carry him there. His desire was that he might see it completed.

But this was not permitted to him for his sickness proved to be “unto death,” and, after a protracted illness, which he bore without a murmur, his happy spirit took its flight on Tuesday, the 17th of November, 1868, while in the seventh year of his age. However, before his death, he had saved a small sum of money, and possessing a few books, he requested his parents when he was gone, to take charge of his money, to sell his books, and this being done to hand over the total amount to the chapel treasurer towards the new chapel. This dying request was complied with, and the legacy of 5s. 6d (27p) was duly added to the New Chapel Fund.

“Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise” (Mat. 21. 16).

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## THE CLOCK THAT STRUCK THIRTEEN

In *Perception* Spring 2020 we wrote about a man who was reprieved from a death sentence by two dice that threw thirteen. This time we write about another thirteen that saved the life of an innocent man.

It was midnight.

Captain Jarvis was in Plymouth, Devon, for a business trip. It had been a long and tense day. Jarvis, unable to sleep, walked through the empty town, and paused in the centre near the famous Plymouth town square clock. He would wait a few minutes to hear it strike midnight. Jarvis counted the hours, to be sure how late it really was. To his amazement the clock struck ten, eleven, twelve . . . and thirteen. Had he miscounted? He felt sure he had not.



*Plymouth Town Square clock*

Another man stood in the corner of the square. He, too, counted the chimes. *Thirteen?* He glanced across to Captain Jarvis and walked towards him.

“Excuse me, sir,” said the man, “but I counted the striking of the clock, and feel sure it struck thirteen times.”

“It did, I am sure,” said Jarvis, “but I wondered if I was mistaken. You have confirmed what I thought.” The two men parted on friendly terms, and continued on

their way down the darkened streets.

Several weeks passed.

That morning, Captain Jarvis woke earlier than usual, while still dark. As he lay there, a strong feeling came over him that he must go and open his front door – something he had never done before at such an early hour.

Getting up, he dressed, descended the stairs, and opened his front door. To his surprise, his groom was there with his horse saddled and bridled, ready for him to mount.

"My man, why are you here at this early hour?" enquired Jarvis.

"Well, Captain," said the groom, "All through the night I had a strong feeling come over me that you would be wanting your horse very early this morning. It was like a voice speaking to me. I tried not to listen to it, but the feeling got stronger and stronger, until I was forced to come."

Puzzled, Captain Jarvis mounted his horse. Before moving, he sat and prayed aloud: "Lord, a strange thing has happened this night. Show me what I am to do, as I do not know. May my horse, which is under Thy command, lead me to whatever it may be."

With the bridle slack, the horse moved off, and made its way straight to the riverside.

Here the Captain met with a second surprise. Although still dark, the ferryman was there standing by his ferryboat – and not a passenger in sight.

"Why are you here so early, ferryman?" inquired the Captain.

"Well sir," said the ferryman, "I could not sleep nor rest in bed, for I had a feeling I was wanted to ferry someone across. I could not believe I would be needed so early, but I felt I must come and see."

With amazement, the Captain and the horse got on the boat. The ferryman released the ropes, and minutes later they were on the other side. But what now? thought the Captain.

He felt there was nothing he could do but let the horse take him where it would. Once again he released the bridle, and allowed the horse to set off. Mile after mile, turn after turn, the horse continued on its way. By now the sun was up. Eventually they approached a town.

Meeting a man in the street, Jarvis asked if anything unusual was happening in the town.

"The court is meeting today," he said, "and a man is to be tried for murder. The courtroom is over there, and the court is already sitting."

Jarvis dismounted, entered the building, and stood at the back of the courtroom.

The judge was addressing the prisoner in the dock. "Have you anything to say for yourself," he asked.

For a moment, Captain Jarvis thought, I have seen this man before – but surely I must be mistaken.

The prisoner replied quietly. "I have nothing to say, your honour, except that I am innocent of the charges laid against me. I was not here on the night of the murder. I was on my way home and stayed a night

at Plymouth. At midnight I stood in the town square and heard the clock strike thirteen. There is only one man in all the world who could prove my innocence, but I do not know his name nor where he lives. I stood with this man, and he too heard the clock strike thirteen, and we remarked about it together.”

Laughter was heard in the courtroom, and the judge called for order.

Suddenly a voice was heard from the back of the courtroom. “I am here! I am here!” called the Captain. “I am the man who stood at midnight beside the great Plymouth clock and heard it strike thirteen instead of twelve. I ask to be sworn in as a witness.”

The clerk to the court swore him in. The Captain then continued: “What the prisoner says is true. I identify him as the man. On the night of the murder, at the very time it was committed, that man was with me at Plymouth, and we remarked to each other how strange it was that the clock should strike thirteen at the midnight hour!”

Readily the jury accepted the captain’s testimony, and agreed that the man was innocent. In thirty minutes, the stunned man walked free from the courtroom.

Captain Jarvis, as a Christian man, was convinced that it was through God’s mysterious intervention that he, his groom, the ferryman, and his faithful horse had saved the prisoner from a certain death sentence.

Correspondence between the Captain and the man followed for several months, in which the Captain attempted to set before the man the way of salvation. Remarkably, the Captain’s testimony was blessed.

One day, the Captain received a small note from the man. It said simply: “REDEEMED TWICE.”




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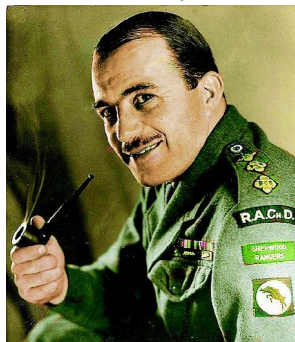
**HELMETS.** Although helmets provided some protection against shrapnel, soldiers were largely unprotected against enemy bullets as this steel German M-35 helmet shows. It was found in a bunker on Omaha beach in Normandy on D-Day by an American soldier, and was donated to the National D-Day Memorial, Virginia. How vital that we possess “the helmet of

salvation,” which the apostle Paul tells us is the word of God!

## DEVOTION TO DUTY

In times of war, one of the most distressing experiences for a family is to suffer the agony of not knowing what has happened to a loved one reported missing on active service.

During WWII, the Rev. Leslie Skinner was chaplain to one of the squadrons of the Royal Yeomanry. He was the first British chaplain to land in Normandy on D-Day, 6th June 1944. For the first fifteen minutes after landing he was under intense fire, with two men either side of him badly injured, one losing a leg. He was injured himself as his landing craft hit a mine, but he quickly started gathering up the wounded, and arranged for their evacuation.



He made it his mission that no family should suffer the uncertainty of having a relative reported missing if he could possibly be traced and, if dead, given a Christian burial. Often his own life was in danger as he set about tracking down missing members of his squadron.

To help him, he unofficially acquired a motorbike to scour the battlefields. When he found a fallen soldier he would ensure he was properly buried, frequently digging the grave himself despite offers of help to dig. “The Squadron Leader offered to lend me some men to help,” he wrote in his diary, “but I refused. My job.” The chaplain logged all the burial sites and wrote to the relatives of every single man who died. Sadly, at the age of only 26, he became very deaf, but still he continued in his work.

He felt he was there to provide spiritual comfort to those around him. He even carried with him a portable communion kit – including a cup for the wine, and a tray for the bread, and always a Bible. His communion kit can be seen at London’s Imperial War Museum.

Skinner received two medals for his bravery – the French Croix de Guerre 1940 and the Belgian Chevalier of the Order of Leopold II.

Leslie Skinner was a father of three and grandfather of six. On returning from the war, he devoted himself to the Methodist church. We are told his sermons were always thought-provoking, and with his excellent bass voice, he was able to lead unaccompanied singing.

He died in 2001, aged 89.

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## “WHILE SHEPHERDS WATCHED”



This Christmas hymn was written by Nahum Tate. Tate was Poet Laureate in 1692 – some think the worst ever.

Sadly, he died in a debtors' prison, and is buried in the now rather derelict churchyard belonging to the Church of St. George The Martyr (near London Bridge). This is the church where Amy Dorrit sought shelter one cold night in Charles Dickens' *Little Dorrit* which some of you may have studied at school.

Other hymns he wrote are 'Through all the changing scenes of life' (936 in *Gadsby's*), and 'As pants the heart for cooling streams' (320 in YPH).

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## LITTLE TOMMY ARMITAGE

It was the year 1831. In a small church in Yorkshire, the clergyman was preaching from the text, "Is it well with thee?" Suddenly a noise was heard from one of the pews, and a boy twelve years of age, who had been intently listening, fell on his knees, and began to weep and pray. His sins and his danger filled him with grief and alarm. The minister paused in his sermon, and all attention was rivetted on the kneeling boy.

Everybody knew little Tommy Armitage, for he belonged to one of the oldest Yorkshire families, one of his ancestors having been created a baronet by King Charles I. But his life now was sad, for his mother had died when he was five years old, and his father when he was eight. But he was a bright, some said gifted, boy, who carried in his heart the impression of his mother's early religious teachings.

The honest Yorkshire minister perceived that Tommy was deeply affected by the subject of the sermon he was preaching. Leaving his sermon, he said, "Let us pray." He saw that there was more need of prayer than preaching at that moment when, in front of the congregation, the soul of a young boy was in trouble. Many loving petitions went up for the little boy whom, like Samuel, God had spoken to in the sanctuary. The scene was a strange one – that sudden prayer meeting in the middle of the sermon.

The prayers were answered, for Tommy rose from his knees with a radiant face. From that time it appeared that there was a seal of a Divine anointing upon him. When just fifteen he preached his first sermon from the text, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Under this sermon, three of his hearers were brought into soul concern. On account of his age, he resisted calls to enter into the regular ministry, but continued as a “local preacher” for a few years, but while still young he was licensed to preach.



*Dr. Thomas Armitage*

At the age of twenty he left his native land and went to the United States. There he began to question the doctrines with which he had become acquainted, such as sinless perfection, falling from grace, and wrong views of the Lord’s Supper. He became a firm Baptist, and at the age of twenty-eight he was appointed Pastor of Norfolk Street Baptist Church, New York. In a two year period he baptised 140 persons, and a few years later 152 were baptised in a single year.

Little Tommy, the Yorkshire boy – Dr. Thomas Armitage – is remembered as one of the greatest of the American preachers.

*The once-spectacular, but now rundown, Norfolk Street Baptist Church, has all the wonderful Gothic touches of a mid-19th century church: arched windows, four-leaf tracery, and a high, vaulted nave inside. Thomas Armitage’s congregation remained there only ten years, moving uptown as the neighbourhood was taken over by poor immigrants. A congregation of Orthodox Jews bought it for \$45,000 – and stayed for 122 years.*



## THE BRIDE'S DRESS

Richard Woodhams

The Bride's Dress is perhaps the item at a wedding that is dreamt about, planned and looked at the most. It clearly is a significant item, and this little article will look at its significance at a Christian wedding. Our British tradition is for a white dress depicting purity. Other Christian traditions and cultures have a non-white dress because it cannot be said that any earthly bride is pure and sinless, and so giving that impression by wearing a white dress is wrong. We do not disagree with that view, but suggest that a white dress is desirable for two reasons.

Firstly, premarital purity is God's good and wise order, as declared in His word. Because sinners cannot perfectly attain to this purity (in body, mind and soul), that is no reason to discard the good symbolic tradition of the white dress; but rather we should desire to walk according to God's word, and in this way come to be joined together as man and wife on our wedding day.

Secondly, in the apostle Paul's epistle to the church at Ephesus concerning a husband and his wife the bride, he wrote "I speak concerning Christ and the church." We rightly hold our weddings in God's house, (a chapel or church building) in the "sight of God" (as stated in the Order of Service for Holy Matrimony), and we ought to consider that God sees and is watching us at all times and in all places. In particular God is jealous about what is found in His house. We ought also to consider what God's "view" is of that which we are attending to.

The bride then is to appear before her husband, as the church is to Christ. While the bride herself should seriously consider what her appearance is, it should also be of concern to her husband, her parents, the officers and members of the church, and to all of us.

If there is then this scriptural significance regarding the bride's dress, we can expect the dress to be one that has to be MADE READY, and there should be an appropriate PREPARATION of it. It should be FINE and an ADORNMENT. Isaiah 61. 10: "my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a ... bride adorneth herself." Revelation 19. 7,8: "the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and WHITE: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints." Revelation 21. 2: "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."

The church is the bride of the King of kings, and we might reverently

say her dress (of righteousness) will be the Dress of dresses, but very few of us here below have royal blood or are marrying royalty, and so we should be careful not to waste money on a dress (or anything else for that matter) which is above our God-given station in life. The dress should show the bride's pleasure in being married to her husband, but not pride in pretended or paraded riches.

The main glory that scripture (see Isaiah 61 and Revelation 19 again, quoted above) attributes to the dress of the bride is that of righteousness, but notice that righteousness is not a covering for sin underneath. The church has no sin, as its sin is washed away by the redeeming blood and love of the bridegroom.

The Holy (perfect, nothing lacking) Righteousness of God is that He is both good and upright in all that He IS and in all that He DOES. It might be remarked of someone that they never do anything wrong because they never do anything, but this can never be said of God because he is abundant and fruitful in his works. This is the righteousness that God requires, and the righteousness which the church as the bride of Christ has. Paul writes about this in Philippians 3. 9: "not having mine own righteousness, ... but that which is ... of Christ, ... of God." It is Jesus' perfect obedience unto death in keeping and fulfilling the good will and holy law of God, that is given by imputation to the church His bride for her righteousness. It covers that shame of nakedness which was exposed when God's word was not kept in the garden of Eden, nor since.

The bride's dress then should modestly cover her nakedness which is her shame.

The church's righteousness is OF God. It is perfect and complete covering all shame.

It might be argued that, as with everything, brides' dresses follow fashion. Does the righteousness of the church which is of Christ change? What a mercy that it never does.

In baring herself, including through lace, the bride is giving her body to the eyes and minds of others that are not her husband. The church in righteousness is Christ's alone, and when rightly exercised about his redeeming atoning love she will not want to give herself in any way to others, nor to offend her husband.

Just a quick note on the bride's veil which has a two-fold purpose.

Firstly, it is a head-covering to cover her hair which "is a glory to her", so that she shows that her glory and head is the man her husband, just as the glory and head of the church is Christ.

Secondly, it is to veil her face. Before the church is brought into union

with Christ, because of her sins she must be shame-faced and hide her face. On being brought into union with her Saviour, by whose bleeding love her sins are forgiven, she has nothing to be shame-faced about and it is to the glory of Christ that her veil is taken away. So symbolically when the bridegroom and bride are pronounced man and wife (solemnly and sacredly in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost), the bride's veil is taken away from her face.

May the truths concerning Christ and His church be made precious to us, so that the dress of the bride at each wedding day may have a true beauty.

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## A HEADMASTER'S ADVICE

The headmaster looked understandingly at the lad. This was his star pupil, and he would be sorry to see him go.

Stanley Browne's father had been ill for a long period, and then was involved in a road accident which put him in hospital for seven months on half pay. For the family it was a time of great hardship, and in spite of voluntary contributions from his colleagues, it was essential Stanley left school and got a job.

"Stanley," said the headmaster, "before you go I want to give you some advice. There are three things you will need to know as you go through life." He paused.

"Know men." He spoke from experience.

"Know the Bible." He paused again, and added:

"Know God."

"Yes, sir," Stanley said. "Yes, I'll remember that. Thank you, sir."

They shook hands, and he went out. He had left his schooldays behind for ever.

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Stanley Browne became one of the world's leading specialists in the treatment and control of Leprosy. For many years he worked in the Belgian Congo.



## THE PRIDE OF SHEBNA

*“Pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate” (Prov 8.13).*

One of the things the Lord hates is pride. But in how many different ways does pride manifest itself. How we need to examine ourselves, as so easily pride can overtake us. How can there *ever* be room for pride? If we truly believe that we have received all things from God, whatever they are, talents, abilities, strength, achievements, what room is there for pride? “What hast thou that thou didst not receive?” (1 Cor. 4. 7). Everything we have is God’s gift to us.

In Isaiah chapter 22 we read of the treasurer of King Hezekiah’s household whose name was Shebna. No doubt he was very proud of his eminent position and the esteem in which he was held by the people. Sadly, instead of quietly carrying out those duties which were laid upon him, he was concerned that when he died he should still be remembered. What could he do to ensure he would not be forgotten? So, in his pride, he embarked upon a scheme to ensure that his memory would not pass away with himself, and his reputation would continue after his funeral.

On the eastern side of the Kidron Valley is the village of Siloam, sometimes known as the “great city of the dead.” Here, decided Shebna, he would build himself a magnificent tomb high up in a prominent position so that all that passed by would say, “There lies the treasurer who was over the household of the king.”

The prophet Isaiah perceived the pride of his heart and the vanity of his ostentatious tomb-building project. No doubt Isaiah frequently passed by the tomb on his travels and at last, at God’s command, he cried out against it. “Go, get thee unto this treasurer, even unto Shebna, which is over the house, and say, What hast thou here? and whom hast thou here, that thou hast hewed thee out a sepulchre here, as he that heweth him out a sepulchre on high, and that graveth an habitation for himself in a rock?”

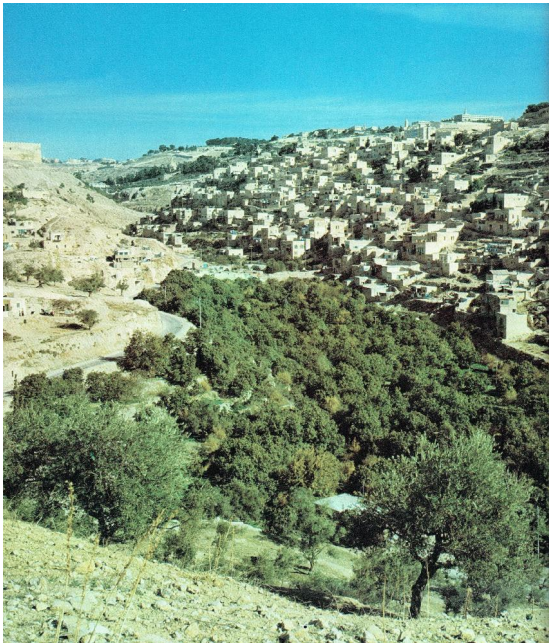
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About 150 years ago a French archaeologist, Clermont Ganneau, discovered a tomb cut into a rock in the village of Siloam high up on the eastern slope of the Kidron Valley, just 100 yards to the south of the

### Temple Mount.

Above the entrance to the tomb were inscribed three lines of writing in ancient Hebrew. The inscription was badly damaged. At first, the only word the archaeologist was able to read with certainty was the word *'bayit'* which is Hebrew for 'house.' On closer examination he thought he could make out the title *'asher al ha bayit'* meaning 'steward over the house.' Later, a professor from Jerusalem's Hebrew University, Nahman Avigad, was able to decipher the whole of the inscription which read: *'This is the sepulchre of Shebanaya steward over the house.'* The last part of the inscription was the usual addition to keep away grave robbers: *'There is no silver or gold here. Cursed be the man who will open this.'* After consulting with another professor they reached the conclusion that Shebanaya was simply the full name of Shebna.

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*Siloam village and valley*

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Did Shebna ever occupy the tomb he had made for himself? No. Isaiah told him that the day was coming when he would be carried away captive "into a large country: there thou shalt die." All his grandiose plans to perpetuate his memory came to nothing. He was destined to lie forgotten in the city of Babylon until the great judgement day, and the tomb would lie empty and unused for ever.

Oh, the folly of man's pride.

## THE PRAYERS OF SAUL AND DAVID

**Dr. David Doudney**

In summing up the character of Saul, it is scarcely possible to conceive of a man coming so near the truth, and yet not actually being a saving partaker of it.

The first point of resemblance to the Lord's people upon the part of Saul, is his asking counsel of God with respect to the warfare in which Israel was engaged against the Philistines. The simplicity which characterised this appeal of Saul is particularly worthy of notice. "And Saul asked counsel of God, Shall I go down after the Philistines? wilt Thou deliver them into the hand of Israel?" How was this inquiry of Saul like that of David: "Then said David, O Lord God of Israel, Thy servant hath certainly heard that Saul seeketh to come to Keilah, to destroy the city for my sake. Will the men of Keilah deliver me up into his hand? will Saul come down, as Thy servant hath heard? O Lord God of Israel, I beseech Thee, tell Thy servant. And the Lord said, He will come down."

The greatest possible simplicity marks the appeal both of Saul and David; and in both instances there was acknowledgment of personal ignorance and insufficiency, coupled with a deep-felt sense of the need of Divine counsel and instruction. But of Saul we read: "And when Saul enquired of the Lord, the Lord answered him not."

Reader, do you know anything of these things experimentally? Have your felt wants – your peculiar exercises – that special something pressing upon the heart and mind, brought you, of necessity, to the throne of grace, there to implore help, and there to watch and wait for deliverance? Let us add, that whatever so presses upon the heart, and maybe weighs down the spirit, if it leads to self-distrust, and to a looking up to the Lord for grace, wisdom to direct and strength to bear, it is unquestionably a blessing – a heaven-appointed good, that must result manifestly in the Lord's glory and to His dear children's benefit.

Dr. Doudney was born in 1811 at Portsea, Hampshire. His father was a soapmaker. At the age of 13 he was apprenticed to a printer in Southampton. In 1840 he became editor of *The Gospel Magazine*, and after six years went to Ireland to distribute funds raised by the readers for the relief of the Great Famine. Here he was ordained into the Anglican church, and continued his ministry there until 1859. He then moved to Bristol to a newly-built church (St. Luke's) near Temple Meads railway station. He died in 1893 and is buried in Southsea cemetery.



## VENUS

*“And I will give him the morning star” (Revelation 2. 28).*

*Grandad:* Did you know that Venus spins the opposite way to the other planets?

*Granddaughter (8):* No. Why does it?

*Grandad:* Nobody knows.

*Granddaughter:* Don't the scientists know?

*Grandad:* Some of them *think* they do.

Pause.

*Granddaughter:* I think God made it that way.

‘Morning star’ is most commonly used as a name for the planet Venus when it appears in the east before sunrise. It is the brightest planet as seen from the earth. Its brilliance has also earned it the name of ‘evening star’ if it is west of the Sun.

To make a calendar for life on Venus would be an almost impossible task. One day on Venus, that is, the time taken for the planet to rotate *once* on its axis, is the equivalent of 243 days on Earth. However, it takes only 225 Earth days for the planet to make a complete orbit around the Sun. This means that its day is longer than its year! It is the longest day of the entire solar system. Someone once calculated that at the equator it rotates so slowly so that a jogger could run faster than the planet spins!

Most of the other planets, including Earth, spin in an anti-clockwise direction, but Venus spins in the opposite direction so that on Venus the Sun rises in the west.

Why does the planet spin backwards? Scientists give us two theories. One theory is that Venus initially spun in the same direction as most other planets. Then, for some reason, it simply flipped its axis 180 degrees. It continued spinning in the same direction but, as it were, upside down. Scientists have argued that the sun's gravitational pull on the planet's very dense atmosphere could have caused strong atmospheric tides, resulting in the flip.

A later theory suggests that Venus may not have flipped at all. Instead, it is thought that its rotation slowed to a standstill, and then simply reversed direction.

A more Scriptural view is that God, in His infinite wisdom, made the planet so from the beginning (just as the little girl above thought). The Word of God refers to the “stars in their courses” (Judges 5. 20). They move in the way God ordained, as their course was determined by God from creation. It is just as Thomas Chisholm sings in his well-known hymn, “*Great is Thy faithfulness.*”

“Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest,  
Sun, moon and stars in their courses above,  
Join with all nature in manifold witness  
To Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.”

### **Life on Venus?**

The planet has been in the news recently. With a temperature of 470 degrees Celsius (above the melting point of lead), an atmosphere of carbon dioxide and thick clouds of sulphuric acid, Venus has long been ruled out as a potential home for life. Now, however, scientists have detected the gas phosphine in the cloud deck above the planet. On Earth, phosphine is produced by bacteria which typically do not need oxygen. Professor Alan Duffy, lead scientist of The Royal Institution of Australia, said “This is one of the most exciting signs I have ever seen of the possible presence of life beyond Earth.”

However, the Scriptures give no support to the idea that life in any form was placed on the heavenly bodies. We believe that the planets are just as God made them. “The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord’s: but the earth hath He given to the children of men.”

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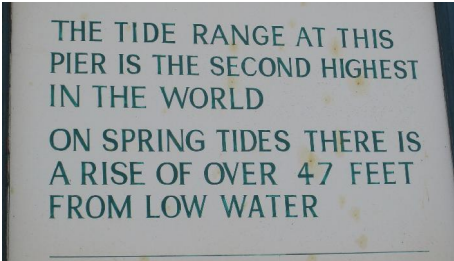
## **TIDES**

The word tide does not appear in the Bible, but there are many references to the waves that clearly refer to the ebb and flow of the tides.

The gravitational pull of the moon is the cause of the Earth’s tides. The Bible speaks of the “precious things put forth by the moon.” Let us think for a moment of some of the wonderful benefits of the tides:

- Without a tide there would be nothing to clean our beaches and river estuaries.

- It enables our boats to be easily beached for repairs and maintenance.
- Without a tide it would have been impossible to build some of the lighthouses on outcrops of rock which are such a hazard to shipping.
- Work on constructions to protect our beaches and properties near to the sea can only take place when the tide is out.
- Watching a tide come in is an exhilarating experience, especially when the waves are high.



THE TIDE RANGE AT THIS  
PIER IS THE SECOND HIGHEST  
IN THE WORLD  
ON SPRING TIDES THERE IS  
A RISE OF OVER 47 FEET  
FROM LOW WATER

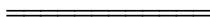
*Notice on Clevedon pier, Somerset*

It is important to know the times of the high tide and low tide, and also the height of the tides. Many people mistakenly think that when John Newton, in 1755, was appointed a tide surveyor in the port of Liverpool, he was responsible for measuring the tides. This is quite wrong as a tide surveyor was

employed by Customs and Excise to look out for smuggled goods. They waited for ships to arrive at port and then searched their cargo. They also dealt with salvage from shipwrecks.

God's wonderful gift of tides is something for which we should be very thankful. Like many blessings, there is sometimes a hidden danger. Occasionally a warning notice is displayed: "Do not swim at low tide." We may think that low tide would be the *safest* time to swim. The hour before and after a high or low tide is known as a 'slack' tide. In some locations rip currents will be at their strongest. An ebbing tide will make it harder to swim back to shore.

Perhaps some of you know the story of the two Margaret's, one aged 18 and the other 70, who were drowned by the tide in the Solway Firth for their faith. But that story will have to wait for another time, perhaps the next *Perception*.



## CURRENT MATTERS

### **Euthanasia, or assisted dying**

Euthanasia was legalised in the Netherlands in 2002. At the time, many in Britain felt it was a slippery slope leading to the eventual killing of defenceless people. Dr. Bert Keizer, a prominent Dutch practitioner of euthanasia, has said that assisted dying in Holland is likely to be extended to prisoners serving life sentences, and disabled children whose parents believe their suffering is hopeless. He added: “Every time a line is drawn, it is also pushed back.” British right-to-die campaigners are pressing for an assisted-dying law, but Parliament has repeatedly refused to change the 1961 Suicide Act which outlaws helping someone to die. The most recent Commons vote was in 2015 when MPs rejected such a law by 336 to 118.

### **UK’s wettest day ever**

On 3rd October 2020 an average of 31.7mm (1.25 inches) of rain fell across the country, the most since records began 129 years ago. The day of downpours came hours after Storm Alex battered Britain with 90mph gales. The Met Office said that enough rain fell on October 3rd to fill Loch Ness, the largest volume of water in Britain – containing more water than all the lakes in England and Wales combined.

### **Britain’s most powerful computer**

A supercomputer being built in Cambridge will be Britain’s most powerful computer. It will help medical specialists use Artificial Intelligence (AI) during research. It is so large, it would need a desk the size of a tennis court. How powerful is it? It is capable of 400 petaflops, *flops* standing for “floating point operations.” It has the ability to carry out one quadrillion (that’s 15 zeroes) floating point operations every second. Such colossal power can be used medically to analyse millions of molecules to see which drug compounds work best. We are truly thankful that the computer can be used for the benefit of mankind. It is, however, easy to forget that the machine has been designed by means of the human brain, a supercomputer the like of which never has, and never will, be made. Our brain enables us to think, remember, learn, create and feel emotions, as well as controlling every blink, breath and heartbeat. Our brains are full of thoughts (Psalm 94.19 “the multitude of my thoughts within me”) – no computer has ever had even one thought.

## THE PILGRIM FATHERS

### Four hundred years

The Pilgrims were mostly living in the city of Leiden in the Netherlands. They hired a ship called the *Speedwell* to take them from Delfshaven to Southampton, England, to meet up with the *Mayflower*. The two ships planned to sail together to Northern Virginia.

But what difficulties the Pilgrims had to leave England! The *Mayflower* and the *Speedwell* left Southampton on 5th August 1620, but only managed a few miles before the *Speedwell* sprung a leak. Both ships stopped at Dartmouth while the *Speedwell* was repaired. They set sail again from Dartmouth on 20th August 1620. They were 300 miles clear of Land's End when the *Speedwell* again took on water – the passengers were convinced it was about to sink. Both ships turned round and returned to Plymouth. The hull of the *Speedwell* was thoroughly examined. It was clear the ship was unfit to cross the Atlantic, and was abandoned. All who still wished to travel transferred to the *Mayflower*. After a voyage of sixty-six days the vessel finally anchored in Cape Cod on 11th November 1620. The Pilgrims spent the next month and a half exploring Cape Cod, trying to decide where they would build their plantation. They finally settled at Plymouth (today in Massachusetts), where, on Christmas Day, 25th December 1620, they began work on their first building for shelter and storage.

The last record we have of the *Mayflower* is in May 1624, when it was valued at £129 for the purposes of probate and was described as being *in ruinis*. It was broken up at the Rotherhithe shipbreaking yards on the River Thames in London.

Although the Pilgrim Fathers are the best remembered of all the American colonists, they were not the first. After the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus in 1492, the Pope granted the whole of the country to the Spaniards, who soon founded a colony.