

CONTENTS

<u>The Patchwork Quilt</u>	2
<u>Fellowship News</u>	3
<u>George Muller and Biblical Calvinism</u>	4
<u>The Received Text</u>	7
<u>Christian Courage</u>	9
<u>Departure from the Faith</u>	9
<u>The King's Highway</u>	10
<u>The Conversion of the Jews</u>	10
<u>The Testimony of Faithful Men</u>	17
<u>Sweeping out the Darkness</u>	19
<u>God's Pardoning Word</u>	21
<u>Alone!</u>	22
<u>My Church</u>	23
<u>The Bible of the Reformation</u>	24
<u>Epilogue</u>	26

THE PATCHWORK QUILT

A Christian woman, whose son was in the army, made a patchwork quilt for a Soldiers' Hospital. In the white squares she inserted some gospel verses, praying that the Lord would use these to spiritual blessing.

The quilt ended up in a Military Hospital, where many sick and wounded men were laid under it. One day a seriously ill service-man was seen to be holding it tightly and kissing one of its squares fervently. At first, the nurses thought he was mentally disturbed; but he kept looking at that one square with real tears in his eyes.

Eventually he spoke, and asked one of the nurses, 'Do you know where this quilt came from?' The nurse told him that 'a woman' had sent it and that 'a note had been pinned to it.' Learning that the note had been kept, he asked if it could be brought to him so that he could read it. The nurse fetched it and gave it to him. The soldier's hands trembled and his lips paled when he saw and recognized the handwriting. Turning to the nurse, he said, 'Please read it to me.' It was slowly read to him. Then he spoke and explained why he felt as he did. 'This note is from my mother', he said. 'The linen in this square was part of her dress. I recognized it at once.'

Then he pointed out the text in the square that had deeply moved him. It was from the parable of the Prodigal Son, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight and am no more worthy to be called thy son.' (Luke 15:21) He asked the nurse if she could possibly read the whole parable to him. She fetched a Bible and did so. There in that hospital ward, that soldier came back to God, believing in Jesus Christ, the only Saviour of sinners.

His mother had died long before, but that day her prayers were answered. Her own son had been won for Christ; and not long after this, he also died, but he died trusting in Christ, who, according to His own precious promise, received him into the kingdom of heaven.

FELLOWSHIP NEWS

The monthly Ladies' Evangelistic Coffee Mornings have been taking place for a year now, and have been very encouraging, with some visitors attending on a regular basis. Prayer is requested that as friendships are forged, there will be greater opportunities to make known the gospel.

Salisbury Reformed Seminary held its first Study Week of the year from 7-11 January. Subjects covered included: The New Liberalism (Neil Pfeiffer); The Place of Christian Ethics (David Kay); Standing for the Truth (John Saunders); The History of the English Bible [two lectures] (Malcolm Watts); A Balanced Biblical Ministry (Dewi Higham); The Romance of Preaching (Dewi Higham); The Covenant of Grace Revealed [two lectures] (Malcolm Watts); English Grammar [two lectures] (Simon Green); The Mediator of the Covenant [two lectures] (Malcolm Watts); The Person and Natures of Christ [two lectures] (Malcolm Watts); Church History: Bernard of Clairvaux (Roland Burrows); Church History: Mendicant Friars (Roland Burrows); Authorship Issues with Biblical Books (Simon Green); The Calling of a Minister (Pooyan Mehrshahi); and The Character of a Minister (Pooyan Mehrshahi).

A Study Weekend took place 8 – 9 February when the subjects covered were as follows: Christ, the Prophet [two lectures] (Malcolm Watts); Overview of New Testament Books (Neil Pfeiffer); The Moral Law (Neil Pfeiffer); English Grammar (Simon Green); Christ, the Priest [two lectures] (Malcolm Watts); Textual Criticism (Simon Green); Ethical Issues: Death and Dying (Tom Yates); and Ethical Issues: Abortion and Euthanasia (Tom Yates).

We now have four students taking the three-year course, and we are so thankful to God for His continued blessing on the Seminary and upon the various lectures given. May the Lord be pleased to use the Seminary to make students “able ministers of the new testament” (2 Corinthians 3:6).

"I will sing of the mercies of the LORD for ever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations." Psalm 89:1

GEORGE MULLER AND BIBLICAL CALVINISM

George Muller was born at Kroppenstedt, Prussia, on September 27, 1805. When 10 or 11 years of age, he was sent to the classical school at Halberstadt to be prepared for the University, in order that he might become a minister of the Lutheran Church. Although without saving faith, and destitute of repentance, he was 'confirmed' and in the year 1820 took 'communion' for the first time at the Cathedral Church of Halberstadt. After further education at Magdeburg, Heimersleben, and Nordhausen, he became a member of the University of Halle, but although a student of theology, he remained totally unconcerned about the salvation of his soul.

One Saturday, in the November of 1825, he and a friend attended a meeting at the house of a Christian man living at Halle. During this meeting the Spirit of God graciously worked in him and he saw his lost ruined and undone condition by nature and he was enabled then and there to believe in Jesus Christ' who died for the ungodly' and to trust for salvation only in His blood and righteousness. He entered at once upon a new life.

After concluding his studies at the University of Halle, he journeyed to London, in connection with the London Missionary Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews, because he possessed a great affection for God's ancient people and he had made good progress in the Hebrew language, and he desired to work among them. However, two months after his arrival, he was taken seriously ill and, on medical advice, he travelled to Devon, where he spiritually profited from conversations with Henry Craik. His hope to work among the Jews was not realised, and, in God's providence, he became a pastor of a church in Teignmouth, in Devon. Later, in 1832, Muller and Craik ministered together, first at Gideon Chapel, and then at Bethesda Chapel, Bristol. They both became prominent leaders in the Christian Brethren movement.

It was soon after his arrival in Teignmouth that the Lord began to teach him truths he had not really understood before and here we cannot do better than to quote from 'A Narrative of some of the Lord's Dealings with George Muller, written by himself', the First Part, pages 45-47:

'A few days after my arrival at Teignmouth, the chapel, called Ebenezer, was re-opened, and I attended the opening. I was much impressed by one of those who preached on the occasion. For though I did not like all he said, yet I saw a gravity and solemnity in him different from the rest. After he had preached, I had a great desire to know more of him; and being invited by two brethren of Exmouth, in whose house he was staying, to spend some time with them, I had an opportunity of living ten days with him under the same roof. Through the instrumentality of this brother the Lord bestowed a great blessing upon me, for which I shall have cause to thank Him throughout eternity.

I will mention some points which God then began to show me.

First, that the Word of God alone is our standard of judgement in spiritual things; that it can be explained only by the Holy Spirit; and that in our day, as well as in former times, He is the teacher of His people. The office of the Holy Spirit I had not experimentally understood before that time. Indeed, of the office of each of the blessed persons, in what is commonly called the Trinity, I had no experimental apprehension.

I had not before seen from the Scriptures that the Father chose us before the foundation of the world; that in Him that wonderful plan of our redemption originated, and that He also appointed all the means by which it was to be brought about.

Further, that the Son, to save us, had fulfilled the law, to satisfy its demands, and with it also to holiness of God; that He had borne the punishment due to our sins, and had thus satisfied the justice of God.

And further, that the Holy Spirit alone can teach us about our state of nature, show us the need of a Saviour, enable us to believe in Christ, explain to us the Scriptures, help us in preaching, &c. It was my beginning to understanding this latter point in particular, which had a great effect on me; for the Lord enabled me to put it to the test of experience, by laying aside commentaries, and almost every other book, and simply reading the Word of God and studying it. The result of this was, that the first evening that I shut myself into my room, to give myself to prayer and meditation over the Scriptures, I learned more in a few

hours than I had done during a period of several months previously. *But the particular difference was, that I received real strength for my soul in doing so.* I now began to try by the test of the Scriptures the things which I had learned and seen, and found that only those principles which stood the test, were really of value.

Second, before this period I had been much opposed to the doctrines of election, particular redemption, and final persevering grace; so much so that, a few days after my arrival at Teignmouth, I called election a devilish doctrine. I did not believe that I had brought myself to the Lord, for that was too manifestly false; but yet I held, that I might have resisted finally. And further, I knew nothing about the choice of God's people, and did not believe that the child of God, when once made so, was safe for ever. In my fleshly mind I had repeatedly said, If once I could prove that I am a child of God for ever, I might go back into the world for a year or two, and then return to the Lord, and at last be saved. But now I was brought to examine these precious truths by the Word of God. Being made willing to have no glory of my own in the conversion of sinners, but to consider myself merely as an instrument; and being made willing to receive what the Scriptures said; I went to the Word, reading the New Testament from the beginning, with particular reference to these truths.

To my great astonishment I found that the passages which speak decidedly for election and persevering grace, were about four times as many as those which speak apparently against these truths; and even those few, shortly after, when I had examined and understood them, served to confirm me in the above doctrines.

As to the effect which my belief in these doctrines had on me, I am constrained to state for God's glory, that though I am still exceedingly weak, and by no means so dead to the lusts of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, as I might and as I ought to be, yet, by the grace of God, I have walked more closely with Him since that period. My life has not been so variable, and I may say that I have lived much more for God than before. And for this have I been strengthened by the Lord, in a great measure, through the instrumentality of these truths. For in the time of temptation, I have been repeatedly led to say: Should I thus sin? I should only bring misery into my soul for a time, and

dishonour God; for, being a son of God for ever, I should have to be brought back again, though it might be in the way of severe chastisement.

Thus, I say, the electing love of God in Christ (when I have been able to realize it) has often been the means of *producing holiness, instead of leading me into sin*. It is only the notional apprehension of such truths, the want of having them in the heart, whilst they are in the head, which is dangerous.'

THE RECEIVED TEXT

Malcolm H. Watts

A question is sometimes raised about "variant readings" within the several editions of the New Testament *Greek Received Text* (TR). This is important but, sadly, it has received little serious attention. In a brief attempt at an answer, I offer the following points (in note-form):

1. The Received Text (TR) is the name of the group of printed texts beginning in 1516 and ending in 1881. They were all based on the Byzantine text-type (or the Traditional Text). Erasmus published FIVE editions (1516, 1519, 1522, 1527 and 1535); Colinaeus, ONE edition (1534); Stephanus, FOUR editions (1546, 1549, 1550, and 1551); Beza, NINE editions (four in folio, 1565, 1582, 1588, and 1598; and five in octavo, 1565, 1567, 1580, 1591 and 1604); Elzevir, SEVEN editions (1624, 1633, 1641, 1656, 1662, 1670, and 1678); and Scrivener ONE edition (1881).

2. These editions are remarkably similar. Erasmus conceded that his first edition was "done headlong rather than edited"; nevertheless Dr. Hills, referring to the 1516 edition, observes that it was "only slightly modified in subsequent editions" (*The King James Version Defended*, p. 199). Indeed, some of them were almost mere reprints: Erasmus's second edition, of 1519, for example, appears simply to have corrected misprints in the first edition, and Stephanus's edition of 1546 was really Erasmus's fifth edition of 1535, while Stephanus's second edition of 1549 scarcely differed at all from his first edition. This is to be noted because the "problem" is not a serious one, in that it is by no means as great as the number of "editions" appears to suggest.

3. The minor differences are listed by H.C. Hoskier in "*A Full Account and Collation of the Greek Cursive Codex Evangelium*", Appendices B and C, and "the most noteworthy" are given by Dr Hills (*The King James Version Defended*, pp 199,200). None are very striking or significant: for example, "Bethany" for "Bethabara" in John 1:28; and "because of his Sprit" for "by his Spirit" in Romans 8:11. Thus Dr. Hills can write: "the several editions of the Textus Receptus differ from each other very rarely" (*The King James Version Defended*, p. 200). Certainly, it is true that the differences are minor and few when compared to the "variants" in the so-called Critical Text, which omit key doctrinal verses (1 John 5:7) and huge sections of the New Testament (e.g. Mark 16:9-20; John 7:53-8:11).

4. Strictly speaking, a "textual variant" is NOT a minor difference ("a textual reading"), but one which is "SIGNIFICANT OR MEANINGFUL". Of these, there are very few indeed in the various editions of the TR. How do we account for any of them? Frederick Nolan refers to "careless transcription" (and, we might add, haste in publishing, as in Erasmus's first edition, or failure properly to collate the authentic manuscripts). The Divine purpose in permitting different readings is given by Dr. Owen (with primary reference to the Hebrew Masoretic Text, but the same principle will apply): "Where there is any variety it is always in things of less, indeed of no, importance. God by his providence preserving the whole entire, suffered this lesser variety to fall out, in or among the copies we have, for the quickening and exercising of our diligence in our search into His Word" (*Works*, vol. 16, p. 201). It is here, I believe, that true textual criticism can come into operation.

5. God has promised to preserve his written Word (Ps 119:152; Isaiah 40:8, 59:20-21; Matthew 28:19-20 etc.) and we believe he has done so in the Received Text which preserves the text given to and read by the professing church from the very beginning. True, God could have performed "a perpetual miracle" and made every edition of the TR exactly the same, but "miraculous inspiration" is one thing, "providential preservation" is another, and they differ from each other in the same kind of way that "creation" differs from "providence" (or upholding). Although work needs still to be done comparing and studying the editions of the TR, I do believe that WITHIN these editions

we have the preserved "autographs" or "inspired Originals". We possess, therefore, in our day, the whole Word of God.

CHRISTIAN COURAGE

John Chrysostom (A.D. 347-407), one of the Early Church Fathers, was brought before the Roman Emperor, and there he furnished us with an impressive and beautiful example of Christian courage.

The Emperor threatened him with banishment if he remained a Christian. Chrysostom replied, 'Thou canst not, for the world is my Father's mansion – thou canst not banish me.'

'Then I will slay thee', said the Emperor. 'Nay, thou canst not', said the noble champion of faith, 'for my life is hid with Christ in God.'

'I will take away thy treasures', the Emperor threatened. 'Thou canst not', was the retort, 'for in the first place, I have none that thou knowest of; my treasure is in heaven, and my heart is there.'

'But I will drive thee away from man, and thou shalt have no friend left', the Emperor said. 'Thou canst not', replied the faithful witness, 'for I have a Friend in Heaven, from whom thou canst not separate me. I defy thee. There is nothing thou canst do to hurt me.'

DEPARTURE FROM THE FAITH

William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army, once said this:

'I consider that the chief dangers which will confront the 20th century will be: religion without the Holy Spirit; Christianity without Christ; forgiveness without regeneration, morality without God; and Heaven without Hell.'

THE KING'S HIGHWAY

'The King of Heaven decided to build a highway from earth to heaven. It should span all the chasms of human wretchedness; it should tunnel all the mountains of earthly difficulty; it should be wide enough and strong enough to hold fifty thousand millions of the human race, if so many of them should ever be born. It should be blasted out of 'the Rock of Ages', and cemented with the blood of the cross, and should be lifted amid the shouting of angels and the execration of devils.

The King sent His Son to build that road. He put head, and hand, and heart to it, and, after the road was completed, He waved His blistered hand over the way, crying: 'It is finished!'

Napoleon paid fifteen million francs for the building of the Simplon Road, that his cannon might go over for the devastation of Italy; but our King, at a greater expense, has built a road for a different purpose, that the banners of heavenly dominion might come down over it, and all the redeemed of earth travel up over it.

Being the King's Highway, it is, of course, well-built. Bridges splendidly arched and buttressed have given way and crushed the passengers who attempted to cross them. But Christ, the King, would build no such thing as that. The work done, He mounts the chariot of His love, and multitudes mount with Him, and He drives on and up the steep of heaven amid the plaudits of gazing worlds! The work is done – well done – gloriously done – magnificently done.'

Dr. T. De Witt Talmage (1832-1902)

THE CONVERSION OF THE JEWS

Thomas Boston (1676-1732)

Doctrine I. There is a day coming in which there shall be a national conversion of the Jews or Israelites. The now blinded and rejected Jews shall at length be

converted into the faith of Christ, and join themselves to the Christian church. There are many promises of this in the Old Testament, but I shall confirm it from Romans, chapter 11, where the apostle purposely insists upon it.

1. Though that people hath dreadfully stumbled, the more dreadful that Christ was the stumbling stone to them, yet they have not fallen so as never to rise again, Romans 11:11. "Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, to provoke them to jealousy." Now as their stumbling by unbelief did eventually cause the Gentile world to rise to their feet, after they had lain long immersed in ignorance of God, and wickedness: so God will make use of the grace bestowed on the Gentile world, to awaken the Jews to the consideration of their true interest, by way of holy emulation, that they shall think with themselves as the prodigal, Luke 15:17.

2. The covenant made with their fathers, particularly with Abraham, Genesis 17. That he would be the God of his seed after him, secures the conversion of that people. It is with that covenant, in respect of them, as with some rivers of which it is observed that they run a good way above ground, and then are swallowed up in the earth, and so run many miles underground, but at length break out again, and run above ground till they come to the sea. So that covenant runs visibly till the days of the apostles, but now its visible efficacy is interrupted, but it will break forth again in their conversion, never to be rejected more. So the apostle tells us, they are thereby still the holy nation, verse 16, the nation particularly dedicated to God, and He will not always want (or lack) what is consecrated to himself. The national election is still their privilege, for verse 28. *as touching the election, they are beloved for the Father's sake.* And by virtue of the covenant made with their fathers, God has a love to that nation: and God's will will certainly terminate in good deeds at length: and that because the gifts and calling of that nation to the adoption and covenant are irreversible, Romans 11, verse 29, "*For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.*"

3. The apostle expressly asserts it in Romans 11, verses 25 and 26. In these he shews that the blindness of the Jews is only in part, and to last only to a certain time, when there shall be a national conversion, and so all Israel shall

be saved. This is not meant of the spiritual Israel, for their conversion could be no mystery as this is. But as the conversion of the Gentiles was a mystery to the Jews, and to Gentiles themselves under the Old Testament, Ephesians 3:3-6. So is that of the Jews, to the Gentiles and Jews themselves, under the New Testament. And as many Jews then would not believe the one, so many Christians now will not believe the other.

Use. Believe it and help it on by your prayers. Ply the throne of grace earnestly for it. Join cordially in the public prayers for it and remember it in your family and secret prayers. Be ashamed to say, What is it to us?

Motive 1. They were concerned for us when we were in their case, and they in ours, and therefore it is but just that we repay them thus, Song of Solomon 8:8, 9. O remember the case seriously. What think you of Pharaoh's butler that remembered not Joseph, who was so kind to him in the prison. Brethren, we of the Gentile world, were shut up in the prison of unbelief, then they walked at liberty, but minded us. Now they are in that prison and we are let out, and shall we forget them. "For God bath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all."

2. Have you any love to our Lord Jesus Christ, to the advancing of his kingdom and glory in the world? then pray, yea, pray earnestly for this. Are you not taught to pray, Thy kingdom come. O what an accession to the Mediator's glory will the conversion of the Jews be. Would you see the crown set on Christ's head in the world more solemnly and gloriously than ever it has yet been, then let us join with the great multitude, Revelation 19:6: "Alleluia; for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." And if we wish to see a great marriage day for Christ in the world, then verse 7. "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife bath made herself ready." O brethren, spread out your narrow spirits, be public spirited and show it here. True, we believe that Jesus is the Son of God, to his glory. But O! what a farther rich revenue of glory would accrue to him, if they whose countryman he was, and who crucified him as a malefactor and justify their deed to this day, were brought to repentance and to own him to be so with us.

3. Have you any pity to a nation of perishing souls, then pray for their conversion. Common compassion should engage you to this, for such a case as theirs is, for the present, hopeless for eternity "He that believeth not shall be damned." But there is more to challenge our concern for them than for any other nation in the world.

1. God Himself hath shown a peculiar concern for them, not only of old, when he took them for his peculiar people; but since, in that he hath made a particular promise of the conversion of that nation, when that of other nations has been wrap up in a general promise.

2. All the means of grace, and acceptance through Jesus Christ, that we have now, we had originally from them. They were our masters in the knowledge of God, and first put the book, even the book of God into our hands, Isaiah 2:3. Luke 24:47. It was their Moses, their prophets, their apostles, (all of them Jews) that wrote this book, by which eternal life is brought to us. Nay, it is their countryman Jesus, who is the ground of all our hope, who we believe is the Son of God. " For of them as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen." It was the light that came out from among them, that enlightened our dark part of the world. And now that our teachers are blinded, will we not put up a petition for them, Lord that they may recover their sight.

3. The church and all the privileges thereof, which we enjoy this day were originally theirs: "For to them pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises." We are well this day, and all the churches, in comparison of our fellow Gentiles, yet abiding without. And how so, but because we have got into the tents of the Jews, where the Lord shews his glory. "God shall, said Noah, enlarge Japheth and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be servant. But alas! the original possessors are out, they have left them in a fit of madness ; but there is room enough for them and us both, and shall not we pray, that they may come to themselves and return. It is their olive into which we are engrafted, they are the natural branches, Romans 11:17-21.

4. Have you any love to, or concern for the church, for the work of reformation, the reformation of our country, the reformation of the world? Any longing desire for the revival of that work now at a stand; for a flourishing state of the church, that is now under a decay? then pray for the conversion of the Jews.

Are you longing for a revival to the churches, now lying like dry bones, would you fain have the Spirit of life enter into them? Then pray for the Jews. " For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world ; what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead." That will be a lively time, a time of a great outpouring of the Spirit, that will carry reformation to a greater height than yet has been.

Are you longing for the increase of the church, then pray. Alas! our mother that has born seven, languisheth and waxeth feeble. Dry breasts and a miscarrying womb is much her plague this day. But then she shall renew her strength and bring forth many. " For if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fulness?" Not only shall she be increased with the coming in of the Jews, but with more of the Gentiles. For their conversion *shall be more the riches of the world, than their fall was*; yet to that is owing all the gospel riches this day among the Gentiles. " Then shall the light of the moon be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be seven-fold as the light of seven days, in the day that the Lord bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound."

Are you longing for a prosperous time to her members, by a full table spread for them in ordinances and they liberally fed there? then pray. Our Lord in the matter of his house-keeping brings always the best to the last course. The best wine comes at last. And his dinner which he prepares is good. The church hath been sitting at it more than seventeen hundred years, and many have been brought in to it, and sweetly filled. But the world's day is far spent, now it is near night and therefore supper-time is drawing on; and that is the best meal in our Lord's house. Now when the Jews are called in, the supper is served up. And happy they who have got a share of the dinner, but more happy they who shall share of the supper, before the marriage be consummated in heaven. "And he saith unto me, write, Blessed are they which are called unto the

marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me these are the true sayings of God."

Are you longing for the increase of the knowledge of heavenly mysteries, then pray. At the rising again of the witnesses, that had been slain by antichrist, John saw the temple of God opened, the doctrine of the gospel clearly discovered, Rev. xi. 19. But the Jews are converted, he sees heaven itself opened, Rev. xix. 11. yet a deeper insight into these mysteries. And we have no ground to doubt, but upon that great event, there will be a greater insight into the Bible, than is now among the most knowing. That promise however begun to be fulfilled, seems not yet fully accomplished. "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

Do you ardently desire purity in the churches, the extirpation of popery, prelacy and profanity, then pray. Whatever be done in these matters before the conversion of the Jews; we have ground to believe that event shall be accomplished with such a purity of the churches, as hath not appeared in the world, Zechariah 8:20-23.

Lastly We have more encouragement to pray for this, than the generations of the people of God that have gone before us. Because we are nearer the time of the accomplishment of the promise than they were. The church hath prayed long for it. The church of Scotland hath ever had a particular concern that way, when it hath wont to be made one of the causes of our national fasts. In the first which we had after the revolution it is particularly mentioned, and I find it in one kept about the year 1653. Let us follow the footsteps of the flock ; who knows but some now living may see the accomplishment of it. But though none of us should live to see it, yet let us leave prayers behind us for the conversion of that people. The sins of some live after them for evil as Jeroboam's did, and the prayers of others for good.

It is usual before a great revolution in favour of the church, that there are great wrestlings in prayer, for the mercy the Lord is about to give, Daniel 9:2. Ezekiel 26:37. He that has a mind to give, gives a heart to his people to ask it of him. And if there were strong cries to the Lord for these great things, at this day

among his people, it would be a good sign, that the promises that have gone so long big with these mercies, were near to bringing forth.

Doctrine II. The out-pouring of the Spirit will make a blessed change, on the case of a people or person otherwise hopeless. The land shall mourn. Strong is the grace of God and it will prevail, when it enters the lists with corruption whatever be the advantage on its side.

I will illustrate this from the case to which the text refers. Consider here these things shining in this case.

1. Grace can bring them back, whom their corruptions have carried quite off the foundation. So are. the Jews who despise Christ as a mere man. Such a case is absolutely hopeless in itself, but grace can bring them out of it. He that bath made the rejected stone the head of the corner, can make of the rejecters lively stones built up upon him. Compare I Peter 2:5 with chapter 1:1 of that epistle.

2. Grace can overcome the strongest, and root out the deepest prejudices against religion. No people in the world are so deeply prejudiced against Christianity as the Jews are, but their prejudices an out-pouring of the Spirit will totally carry away. When the eye is ill- affected, things appear in quite wrong colours; but cure the eye, and then the beauty of religion will recommend itself, Song of Solomon 5:9. and 6:1.

3. Grace can draw men freely out of that way, in which an erring conscience fixes them. The bond of conscience, right or wrong, is one of the strongest ties of which the soul is capable; "therefore publicans and harlots entered into the kingdom of God before the scribes and pharisees." The gospel had readier access into the hearts of pagans than of Jews. When sin is held fast as a piece of religion, it is fixed as with bars of iron. Satan is most successful when he drives a wedge of God's own wood. This he doth with the Jews at this day, who from a blinded conscience for the honour of God and his law, oppose Christ. But grace will reach, for it can do it. It did so most effectually with Paul, who verily thought with himself that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

4. There is no prescription against the grace of God. Satan by means of unbelief hath had seventeen hundred years possession of that people as his slaves. The fathers have taught the children from generation to generation to reject Jesus Christ. Yet grace will recover them after all, and denude the fraudulent possessor, though he had so long kept possession.

5. Grace will do that, which the heaviest strokes of judgement could not do. The sin of the Jews in crucifying Christ was a sin without a parallel, so their punishment also was a matchless punishment. "It was such great tribulation, as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be." They are under the weight of it till this day. But it has done them no good. O! hopeless case! But as hopeless as it is, an out-pouring of the Spirit will make a blessed change.

Lastly, grace will put an end to a national obduration. A nation is blessed with light, they abuse it, God is provoked to plague them with judicial hardness and blindness. Fearful case! But an outpouring of the Spirit looses these bands of death. Such is the case of the Jews, so has it been for seventeen hundred years, Romans 11:8-10.

THE TESTIMONY OF FAITHFUL MEN

Jonathan Edwards: Nothing is more certainly foretold than this national conversion of the Jews in Romans 11. (*Works, Vol. I, p. 607*)

John Murray: If we keep in mind the theme of this chapter and the sustained emphasis on the restoration of Israel, there is no other alternative than to conclude that the proposition, 'All Israel shall be saved,' is to be interpreted in terms of the fullness, the receiving, the ingrafting of Israel as a people, the restoration of Israel to Gospel favour and blessing, and the correlative turning of Israel from unbelief to faith and repentance. (*The New International Commentary on the New Testament: Romans, part 2, p. 98*)

John Brown: The apostle... represents the restoration of the Jews as not only possible and probable, but as certain. (*Analytical Exposition of the Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, p. 407)

Robert L. Dabney: The promise of Israel's ingathering is clearly stated. (*Discussions*, Vol. 1, p. 211)

David Brown: (On verse 26) Clearly the meaning here is the Israelitish nation at large. To understand this great statement, as some still do, merely of such a gradual inbringing of individual Jews, that there shall at length none remain in unbelief, is to do manifest violence both to it and the whole context. It can only mean the ultimate ingathering of Israel as a nation, in contrast with the present remnant. (*Romans*, p. 117)

Robert Haldane: (On verse 25) Here is the clearest attestation that the blindness of the Jews will yet cease, not only as to individuals, but as to the body. (*An Exposition of the Epistle to the Romans*, p. 541)

Charles Simeon: It is assured to them by a special promise; and that promise is ratified by an unchangeable covenant. He will by the power of His Word and the effectual operation of His Spirit, 'turn away all ungodliness from Jacob;' and make them a holy nation, a peculiar people zealous of good works. (*Expository Outlines on the Whole Bible*, Vol. 15 p.444)

Matthew Poole: (Speaking as St. Paul) God has revealed to me that He will one day call the Jews again, and restore them to his favour. (*Matthew Poole's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, on Romans 11:11)

Thomas Boston: There is a day coming in which there shall be a national conversion of the Jews. (*Works*, Vol. 3, p. 357)

Thomas Scott: The blindness will be removed from Israel, and the nation saved from its rejected and dispersed state, and be brought in a body to embrace the Gospel. (*Commentary on the Holy Bible*, on Romans 11:25)

James Durham: Whatever may be doubted of their restoring to their land, yet they shall be brought to visible church state. (*Comments on Revelation, on Romans 11:15-19*)

John Trapp: The blindness (of Israel) is neither total nor perpetual. (*Trapp's Commentary on the New Testament, on Romans 11:25*)

Charles Hodge: There is... to be a national conversion of the Jews... to take place before the second advent of Christ. (*Systematic Theology, Vol. 3, p. 807*)

A.A. Hodge: Paul, in Romans 11:15-29, both asserts and proves... the future general conversion of the Jews. (*Outlines of Theology, pp. 571-2*)

Robert Leighton: Undoubtedly, that people of the Jews shall once more be commanded to arise and shine, and their return shall be the riches of the Gentiles (*Works, Vol. 2, p. 178*)

SWEEPING OUT THE DARKNESS

Captain Brotchie, the devoted friend of seamen, found an old sailor one day leaning by the door of the Sailors' Reading Room, Greenock, whom he knew to be anxious about spiritual things, but, sadly, the poor man was still in bondage, and afraid of the future.

The Captain inquired kindly into the state of his mind. Robert (for such was his name) had made many spasmodic efforts to soften his heart and make it better, but all to no purpose. In answer to inquiries, he said his heart was as hard as ever, and he feared it would never be better

He was invited into the Reading Room. As soon as they entered, Captain Brotchie locked the door, and began to close the shutters. Wondering at these movements, the sailor began to inquire what this all meant. It was answered "Be not alarmed, you are about to be taught a very important lesson."

After a large brush, used for sweeping the place, had been put into his hand, the last shutter was closed. "Now, Robert," said the Captain, "put out the darkness." "I cannot," he replied. "Oh, take the brush, man," said the Captain, "and drive right and left, and see whether you cannot drive it out of the place." "Oh, no, that won't put out the darkness," he answered. He was then asked, "Well, can it not be put out?" "Oh yes," he replied, "but not that way." "And is it not strange," the Captain remarked, "that a simple act accomplishes what a thousand men could not by any amount of physical force! If I simply take my little finger and pull back the shutter, I will let in the light, and the darkness will be gone."

"It is quite true," said Robert. "Come then, friend," urged the Captain, "let in the light! Let in the truth as it is in Jesus! Let in that glorious light about the love of God: God so loved sinners, that He gave His only-begotten Son to die that they might live...Let that truth into your soul. Now that Jesus has suffered in the room and stead of sinners, sin is taken away, and the mercy of God is as free to you as the water you drink or the air you breathe. Let these truths into your soul as I have let the light into this room by putting back the shutter."

By this time the tears were flowing down the cheeks of the old man, through amazement and gratitude. He exclaimed, "I never saw the way to peace in that light before." The poor man was bathed in tears, and felt he was free from the awful load of condemnation. Before they separated the Captain said he had another lesson to teach Robert. "You often," he said, "went to the meetings among the anxious, and sang, and prayed, was deeply moved, and had happy feelings; but these were like the morning cloud and early dew, which soon pass away, and that because you knew not the truth."

"Now, observe, this room is full of light at present. We have enough to serve for a whole month, have we not? I may put on the shutters, may I not?" "Oh no", said the happy man, "if you put to the shutters, we shall be in darkness." "Why?" asked Captain Brotchie, "what has my putting to the shutter to do with putting out the light?" "I do not know," answered the sailor, "but so it is, that if you put to the shutter, the light is kept out."

“Is it not this, Robert,” said the Captain, “that you cannot get the rays of the sun separate from the sun itself? If you want to retain the light, you must keep up the connection between you and the orb of day. So be careful to walk in the light. In a few verses, the Saviour says seven or eight times, ‘Abide in me.’ Run the race that is set before you, looking to Jesus as your everlasting Saviour, and Prince of Peace.”

Robert went home in gladness, and soon afterwards he died in peace. His last words were, “Christ is precious; I can trust in Him.”

GOD’S PARDONING WORD

‘Someone asked Luther, ‘Do you feel
That you have been forgiven?’
He answered, ‘No! but I’m as sure
As there’s a God in Heaven.
For feelings come and feelings go,
And feelings are deceiving;
My warrant is the Word of God
Nought else is worth believing
Though all my heart should feel condemned
For want of some sweet token.
There is One greater than my heart,
Whose Word cannot be broken.
I’ll trust in God’s unchanging Word
Till soul and body sever:
For, though all things shall pass away
His Word shall stand for ever.’

Our Outlook, January – March, 1934

ALONE!

It is human to stand with the crowd, it is divine to stand alone. It is man-like to follow the people, to drift with the tide; it is God-like to follow a principle, to stem the tide.

It is natural to compromise conscience, to follow the social and religious fashion for the sake of gain or pleasure; it is divine to sacrifice both on the altar of truth and duty.

'No man stood with me, but all men forsook me,' wrote the battle-scarred apostle in describing his first appearance before Nero to answer for believing and teaching contrary to the Roman world.

Truth has been out of fashion since man changed his robe of fadeless light for a garment of faded leaves. Noah built and voyaged alone. His neighbours laughed at his strangeness and perished in style.

Abraham wandered and worshipped alone. Sodomites smiled at the simple shepherd, followed the fashion, and fed the flames.

Daniel dined and prayed alone. Elijah sacrificed and witnessed alone. Jeremiah prophesied and wept alone. The Lord Jesus loved and died alone.

And of the lonely way His disciples should walk, He said, 'Strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.'

Of their treatment by the many who walk in the broad road, He said, 'If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, therefore the world hateth you.'

The church in the wilderness praised Abraham and persecuted Moses. The church in the land praised Moses and persecuted the prophets.

The church of Caiaphas praised the prophets and persecuted Jesus. The church of the popes praised the Saviour and persecuted the saints.

And multitudes now, both in the church and in the world, applaud the courage and fortitude of patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and martyrs, but condemn as stubbornness and foolishness and uncharitableness like faithfulness to the Truth today.

WANTED, today, men and women, young and old, who will obey their convictions of truth and duty at the cost of fortune and friends and life itself!

MY CHURCH

'My church is the place where believers are assembled in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, where the Word of God is faithfully preached and expounded, and where the Spirit of God is present and the love of God is shed abroad in my heart.

It is the home of my soul, the mainspring of my devotion, the hearth of my faith, the centre of my affection, the foretaste of heaven; and I owe it my zeal, my benevolence, and my prayers.

When I neglect its services, I injure its good name, I lessen its powers, I discourage its members, and I chill my soul.

I am bound in the sight of God to advance its interests by my faithful attendance, by reading the Holy Scriptures, by observing its ordinances, by contributing to its support, by meeting with my fellow-members, by watching over their welfare, and by joining with them in worship and prayer and service.'

'What kind of church would my church be if every member were just like me?'

THE BIBLES OF THE REFORMATION

Notes of a lecture delivered at the
Seminary on 7 January, 2019

Malcolm H. Watts

1. Wycliffite Versions: To Wycliffe (1324-1384) belongs the honour of being the first to give us the whole Bible in English: the New Testament in 1380, and the Old Testament in 1382. Wycliffe himself probably translated the former, his disciple, Nicholas of Hereford, the latter. Its great drawback, however, was that the translation was from the Latin, not the original Hebrew and Greek

2. Tyndale's Translation: William Tyndale (1490-1536) was the man destined to give us a good part of the Old Testament (1530/31) and a complete New Testament (1526), from the Hebrew and Greek respectively.

3. Coverdale's Bible: Myles Coverdale (1488-1569) issued a complete Bible in 1535. Although heavily dependent upon Tyndale's work, the Bible books hitherto untranslated, were based on the Latin Vulgate and Luther's German Bible.

4. Matthew's Bible (in reality, John Rogers' Bible) appeared in 1537. Rogers (?1500-1555) was responsible for the first 'authorised' version, a reproduction of Tyndale's and Coverdale's versions.

5. Taverner's Bible, dedicated to King Henry, was published in 1539. Richard Taverner (1505-1575) was a certainly a scholar, but his Bible is really a revision of Matthew's Bible, with less polemical 'notes'.

6. The Great Bible: In 1538, Thomas Cromwell approached Coverdale with a view to producing yet another revision (of Matthew's Bible), which was issued in 1539; and, for its second edition (1540), Archbishop Thomas Cranmer wrote a Preface. A copy of this Bible was ordered to be 'chained' in every church.

7. The Genevan Version: During Mary Tudor's reign (1547-1558), some godly and learned Protestants fled abroad to various cities, including Geneva, in Switzerland. John Knox was there at the time, as was Miles Coverdale, William Whittingham, and others. Some of these Protestant exiles worked on what became the most important revision to date of the English Bible – the Genevan Version. The New Testament appeared in 1557 and the whole Bible in 1560. It became immediately popular due to the veneration the city of Geneva held in the Protestant world. It passed through no less than 130 editions. Professor Eadie declares it to have been 'much more correct than any of its predecessors.'

8. The Bishops' Bible: A reaction to the Geneva Bible, this Version appeared in 1568, but it did not have great appeal and was not printed after 1606.

9. The Authorised Version: Apparently, at the suggestion of Dr. John Reynolds, at the Hampton Court Conference (1604), King James thought that efforts should be made to secure one uniform translation of the Scriptures and, to this end, the most learned men in the country were to be appointed to the work. Fifty-four scholars were chosen (later reduced to forty-seven) to meet in companies at Westminster, Oxford and Cambridge.

Seven years later, in 1611, a new translation, indebted to its predecessors, but by far the most important of all English Versions, was published and presented to the world. It became the acknowledged Bible of the English-speaking people in England and throughout the world.

This lecture closed with some strong and compelling reasons for retaining in the Church today The Authorised Version of the Holy Scriptures.

EPILOGUE

“For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it: and the covering narrower than he can wrap himself in it.” Isaiah 28:20

On the Cutty Sark the beds provided for the sailors were not long enough for even the average sailor to stretch out and sleep comfortably – resulting in the crew being perpetually tired on every voyage. The Jews in Isaiah’s time thought that they could hide under a “refuge of lies” (v 15) and the fact that they had made a “covenant with death” (v 18) ensured that judgement would pass over them until a more convenient time. These Jews were convinced they were safe even though they did not hearken to the warnings given by God through his prophet Isaiah.

The majority took no account of Almighty God and the judgement He would pass on them as unrepentant sinners. However, God would sweep away their refuge of lies like a house built upon the sand is destroyed in a storm. They expected their covenant with death to protect them, but God would disannul that covenant and pass His eternal sentence of judgement upon them. Their expectations were totally without foundation.

Remarkably this prophecy accurately reflects our society today. Many today do not even consider the possibility that God could judge us as He once judged the Jews. They prefer to continue living the way they have always lived, and most other people live. Until God’s Holy Spirit begins to convict them of their dire state, they are totally unaware that their bed is too short, and their covering is inadequate to protect them.

However, by the grace of God the situation for the repentant sinner, who is trusting solely in Christ for salvation is totally different. His bed is more than adequate for him to rest upon, both in this life and the life to come. Christians are then covered in the righteousness of Christ, rather than an inadequate “tissue of lies” that is unable to provide any protection. Surely this prophecy calls us to pray for, talk with, and preach the gospel to our unconverted relations, friends and acquaintances urging them to turn to Christ before His judgement begins to fall upon them.

Bill Norton