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WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?

Youth: Too happy to think – there's time enough for sure;

Manhood: Too busy to think – of gold I want much more;

Prime of Life: Too anxious to think – toil, worry, and fret;

Declining years: Too old to think – old hearts do harder get;

The Dying Bed: Too ill to think – weak, suffering and alone;

Death: Too late to think - the spirit has now flown;

Eternity: For ever to think - God's mercy is past.

And I into Hell am righteously cast,

To weep o'er my doom, which for ever must last.

FELLOWSHIP NEWS

Our summer picnic took place in the field adjoining Crosslanes Chapel at Ibsley in the New Forest on 7 July. As we were in the midst of a prolonged heatwave, this may have accounted for the slightly lower numbers attending this year. However, for those who were there, it was a happy time of fun and fellowship. We are very thankful to our friends at Crosslanes for kindly allowing us to use their field.

The temperature for our Evangelistic Barbecue on Saturday 21 July, held at Grove House, was slightly cooler, for which we were very thankful. We were glad to welcome a good number of visitors who happily joined with us. Our deacon, Tony, gave a very challenging gospel talk towards the end of the afternoon, and we look to God to add His blessing to His Word as He has promised.

We were privileged to welcome Pastor Brian Ellis to our midweek meeting on Wednesday 1 August. Mr Ellis has spent 52 years in the Philippines, and has pastored the Cubao Reformed Baptist Church since its inception in the Ellis' home in 1978. We were encouraged to hear of the work of Grace Ministerial Academy - a reformed Bible School for men training to be pastors. Another service for which the church has oversight is the Christian Compassion Ministries which provides a home for boys and girls who would otherwise be living on the street. All the children hear the gospel each Lord's Day at the church, as well as from the staff who care for them. We pray that Brian and his wife, Nessie, will be encouraged during their retirement years to see God continuing to build his church, and believers being established in the faith.

A number of our members attended this year's Summer Conference at the Tabernacle, Cardiff, from 30 July to 3 August. The main speaker this year was Rev John Greer, minister of Ballymena Free Presbyterian Church, his subject being: "Holy living in an unholy world." Our Pastor, Malcolm Watts, gave the two evangelistic addresses on Monday and Friday. We are thankful for such conferences where Christians have an opportunity to meet together to encourage one another and be built up in their faith.

"They that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened and heard it..." Malachi 3:16.

SALISBURY CONFERENCE

God willing, this year's **Salisbury Conference** will be held **28-29 September**. On Friday 28 September, the meeting will be at 7.30pm and on Saturday 29 September the meetings will be at 10.30am, 1.00pm and 2.30pm.

Sadly, Dr Michael Haykin is unable to be with us, due to ill-health and pressure of other commitments, but we are extremely grateful to **Rev. John Keddie of Kirkhill, Inverness-shire**, who, at short notice, has very kindly agreed to come and be our Guest Speaker for the weekend.

Mr Keddie is a retired Minister of the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing), serving in Burghead and Bracadale until 2011. Since 2014 he has been the Principal of the Seminary of the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing).

The general theme of the Conference will be: **The Church of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

The titles of the four addresses will be as follows:

1. **John Knox: The Reformation of the Church**
2. **The Synod of Dort (1618-19): The Doctrine of Grace in the Church**
3. **Revival: Spiritual Life in the Church of Scotland (1596-1630)**
4. **The Covenanters (1638-90): Faithfulness to Christ's Church, His Crown and Covenant**

Mr Keddie will also be preaching at both services on the Sabbath, September 29, at 11.00am and 6.30pm and he will be speaking at the After Church Meeting at 8.30pm.

We are prayerfully looking forward to this Conference Weekend and we trust God will be with us in the blessing of His Grace; and we very much hope that you will be able to join us on this special occasion.

SALISBURY REFORMED SEMINARY

Another Open Study Weekend took place on Friday & Saturday, 6 & 7 July, when the following lectures were delivered:

Friday:

8.30 - Creation (1) (Malcolm Watts)

10.00 - New Testament Introduction: The Synoptic Problem (Simon Green)

11.30 - The Biblical Warrant for Preaching (John Saunders)

13.45 - Important Principles in Preaching (John Saunders)

15.15 - Hermeneutics (1): The History of Interpretation (Simon Green)

Saturday:

8.30 - Hermeneutics (2): The Schools of Interpretation (Simon Green)

10.00 - The Theology of Evangelism (1): Free Will versus Sovereign Grace (Christopher Buss)

11.30 - The Theology of Evangelism (2): Persuasive Gospel Preaching (Christopher Buss)

13.45 - New Testament Introduction – God’s Sovereignty in the Intertestamental Period [Malachi to Matthew] (Christopher Buss)

15.15 - Hermeneutics (3): Scripture Interpreting Scripture (Simon Green)

Creation (1) – Malcolm Watts

In earlier lectures consideration was given to God’s “Decree” – “His eternal, unchangeable, holy, wise, and sovereign purpose” (Dr A. A. Hodge) (Isa. 46:9,10; Dan.4:34,35; Eph. 1:11). This decree is represented in Scripture as singular because it is essentially one grand, comprehensive plan (Acts 4:28; Rom. 8:28; Eph. 3:11); and a part of this plan is executed in the work of creation (Ps. 148:6) and part of it is executed in the work of providence (Dan. 4:35).

Creation is the bringing of everything into being or existence (Gen. 1:1; Isa. 45:10).

In this lecture, consideration was given to: *the Author of Creation* – God, and God alone, is responsible for this work (Isa. 44:24; 45:12; Jer. 10:11,12); the Father (1 Cor. 8:6), the Son (Jn. 1:3), and the Holy Spirit (Job 26:13 cf. Ps. 104:30); *the Object of Creation* – out of nothing (*ex nihilo*) (Rom. 4:11; Heb. 11:3), God has produced the world, and everything else (Gen. 1:1; Heb. 11:3); *the Time of Creation* – it was “in the beginning” (Gen. 1:1; Matt. 19:4; Heb. 1:10), a phrase marking the boundary between eternity and time, time becoming the measure of the creature’s duration; *the Means of Creation* – God’s creative work was accomplished by His “Word”, since He spoke everything into existence, by the mere expression of His sovereign will (Gen 1:3,6,9ff.; Ps. 33:6,9; Heb. 11:3); *the Work of Creation* - it was a work of six literal 24-hour days, evidenced by the repeated reference to “the evening and the morning” (Gen. 1:5,8,13ff.) and the confirmation of this in the Fourth Commandment (Exod. 20:8-11; cf. 31:17); *the Goodness of Creation* – the whole work showing the divine goodness (Ps. 33:5) and pronounced “very

good” by the Creator Himself (Gen. 1:31); and *the End of Creation* – to set forth God in all His glory (Ps. 19:1,2; 104:24; Rom. 1:20), and so to bring to Him great, and never-ending praise (Prov. 16:4; Isa. 40:25,26; Rev. 4:11).

New Testament Introduction: The Synoptic Problem – Simon Green

We began by giving the historical background and the biblical reasoning for the distinction between the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) and John’s Gospel, noting the key structure and events that bind the Synoptics together and distinguish them from John’s account. From there we used the opening four verses of Luke’s Gospel to discuss the three processes that are understood to lie behind the gospel accounts: eyewitness account and oral tradition of the life of Christ, literary works by others concerning the Saviour, and then the selection of different material by the individual gospel writers for their own presentation of Jesus Christ.

These three processes have come to be termed Form Criticism, Source Criticism, and Redaction Criticism respectively. Though a lot of the work done in these fields has proceeded from liberal, and therefore unbelieving presuppositions, it addresses genuine questions concerning the compilation of the Gospels, and some useful material has emerged as evangelicals have refuted the erroneous conclusions of the liberal scholars. For example, redaction criticism has shown that Luke writes with a theological emphasis on prayer which should not be missed by anyone preaching through his gospel.

The remainder of the time was spent briefly discussing some of the chronology associated with the life of Christ, pointing out the textual clues which help us arrive at a date for the major events in it, such as His birth, commencement of His ministry, length of that ministry, and the date of His death.

The Biblical Warrant for Preaching – John Saunders

This lecture established the preaching ministry as being God’s own appointment for His church, this being a most important principle in an age when preaching is seriously devalued, neglected, or even rejected outright. A survey of Scripture pointed to the preaching of Old Testament prophets and priests and of New Testament apostles, together with the ministry of Christ

Himself. Reference was also made to the specific commands given that there should be a preaching office in the churches to be fulfilled by men called and equipped to preach. Finally, history proves that God is pleased to bless preaching to the conversion of sinners and the edifying of His church. Preaching with heaven-sent blessing remains the great need of our times and is a ministry for which there is no substitute.

Important principles in Preaching – John Saunders

Some basic matters of principle were introduced, many of which will be dealt with more fully in later lectures. The lecture began with emphasis on the necessity of the preacher's care of his own soul and of his personal life before God, along with the importance of prayer in preparation. Reference was then made to other aspects of preaching including the principles of exposition and the importance of both clarity and simplicity. There is a vital need to apply the scripture to the spiritual state and lives of the hearers in a way that will be to their true benefit. In all preaching, we seek the glory of God.

Hermeneutics (1): Introduction to Hermeneutics – Simon Green

This was the first of eleven lectures on the subject of hermeneutics, which is a technical term, derived from a Greek word found in the New Testament, meaning "to interpret." From there we defined Biblical Hermeneutics as "the science and art of interpreting the Bible, that is finding, in an accurate and judicious manner, the meaning of the author, and explaining it accurately to others." The vital importance of hermeneutics was then stressed by showing its foundational place within theological studies and sermon preparation.

From there a survey was made of the pernicious factors which necessitate hermeneutics, the biblical warrant for it as demonstrated from several OT and NT texts, the spiritual heart that the biblical interpreter needs to cultivate, and the particular presuppositions of Reformed Hermeneutics. The lecture concluded with various goals that all interpreters of the Holy Scriptures should keep in view.

Hermeneutics (2): History of Biblical Interpretation – Simon Green

It is important to consider how significant interpreters of the past have approached Scripture, especially more difficult passages, since their insights

can still be of great value and the occasions when some of them went astray can serve as pedagogical reminders of the inherent dangers of not consistently employing a correct hermeneutic.

With those considerations in mind, a broad overview was undertaken, initially of the various Jewish schools of interpretation, noting their strengths and weaknesses. The Church Fathers were then briefly surveyed before looking more fully at the Antiochene and Alexandrian Schools that arose in the early centuries of the church. The contributions of Augustine and Jerome were evaluated before summarizing and critiquing the largely faulty hermeneutics that emerged during the Medieval period.

Special attention was given to the recovery made at the time of the Reformation, with special focus on the works of Luther and Calvin, followed by mention of the developments made during the Puritan era. The hugely detrimental effects of rationalism brought about by The Enlightenment were then described before key figures such as Schleiermacher, Wellhausen, and Bultmann were assessed. Finally, some conclusions were drawn for our own interpretation of God's Word.

Hermeneutics (3): Principles of Biblical Interpretation – Simon Green

Having laid the groundwork of the introductory lecture and the consideration of the hermeneutics of those that have gone before, this lecture sought to establish the overriding principles which need to guide our interpretation of Scripture. Starting from 2 Peter 1:20, the principle was established that nobody has the right to foist on to any text their perceived interpretation of it; rather, the text must be allowed to speak for itself and the author's intended meaning must be sought.

Reflection was made on the unity of the sense of Scripture, an important guiding principle for all accurate and proper interpretation. This was followed by an explanation of the *Analogia Fidei* or 'Analogy of Faith', which states that every text of Scripture must be interpreted in light of the rest. From the preceding considerations the Reformed historical-grammatical-theological hermeneutical principle was shown to have its basis. These three coordinates

of history (the setting of the text), grammar (the words and literary structure of the text), and theology (the meaning of the text) were then developed in greater detail as they impinge on sound hermeneutics. Succeeding lectures will see these principles applied to different literary genres within the Bible such as narrative, poetry, prophecy, and epistle.

Theology of Evangelism (1): Free Will versus Sovereign Grace – Christopher Buss

This lecture aimed to show how the doctrine of free-will first arose under the teaching of Erasmus and was rigorously opposed by Luther. Erasmus taught the freedom of the will, wherein salvation is dependent on the free-will of man to choose Christ as Saviour. Luther taught that salvation was totally dependent upon grace and expressed his understanding of the biblical position of God's Sovereign Grace under his work, "The Bondage of the Will". Later Arminius and Calvin continued this debate on the will from which we get the Five Points of Arminius and the Five Points of Calvinism. The lecture sought to show how Luther and Calvin were holding to the biblical position according to the Doctrines of Grace, and it concluded with consideration of 1 Peter 5.10.

The Theology of Evangelism (2): Persuasive Gospel Preaching – Christopher Buss

This lecture sought to show how the Apostle Paul, while assuredly believing in the Sovereignty of God in election, maintained a passionate persuasive evangelistic ministry. While trusting wholly in the Holy Spirit to bless the Word, Paul pleaded with souls, he reasoned, he warned, he preached Christ warmly and with an engaging spirit. 2 Corinthians 5 was considered where we saw the Purpose directing his preaching, the Principles inspiring his preaching, the Persuasion evident in his preaching.

New Testament Introduction (2): The Sovereignty of God in the Intertestamental Period [Malachi to Matthew] – Christopher Buss

While knowledge of the period between Old & New Testaments is not vital to understanding the Gospel, such knowledge is important to an accurate understanding of the background & context of the Gospels. Significant changes took place in the religious leadership and direction within the Inter-Testament period. We can learn from this period of history despite the Old

Testament canon being closed. Under the same principle, we also learn from the history of the Christian Church - after the New Testament Canon was closed. The religious scene, upon which the curtain is drawn in Malachi, is quite different however from the religious scene in the late first century.

For example there are no Synagogues, Pharisees, Sadducees or Sanhedrin-Councils, recorded in the OT. Yet in the New Testament Gospel accounts they are a regular feature. Then we can also see how, under the Sovereignty of God, a political and language infrastructure developed in that period. A development, which was conducive to the rapid spread of the Gospel after the birth, death and resurrection of Christ!

In conclusion, lessons were drawn from this period of time, for warning and encouragement.

On 27 & 28 July a further Two-day Open Study Weekend took place at Grove House. The lectures delivered on that occasion were:

Friday:

8.30 - Creation (2): Angels and Men – Malcolm Watts

10.00 - Overview of British Church History (3a): Men and Movements in the Second Part of the First Millennium – Roland Burrows

11.30 - Overview of British Church History (3b): Men and Movements in the Second Part of the First Millennium – Roland Burrows

1.45 - Overview of British Church History (3c): Men and Movements in the Second Part of the First Millennium – Roland Burrows

13.45 - Providence (1) – Malcolm Watts

Saturday:

8.30 - Providence (2) – Malcolm Watts

10.00 - Creation Views – Simon Green

11.30 - The Kenosis Theory (1) - Paul Karageorgi

13.45 - The Kenosis Theory (2) – Paul Karageorgi

15.15 - Sermon Preparation - Malcolm Watts

Creation (2): Angels and Men – Malcolm Watts

This lecture began with the laying down of certain important principles: namely, that God existed before creation (Ps. 90:1,2), that He alone created the worlds (Isa. 44:24; 45:10); that in this He acted sovereignly and independently (Neh. 9:5; Rom. 11:36); that it was something supernatural and miraculous, different from any other observable process (2 Cor. 4:6a); that it was an “act”, after the performing of which He ceased from further creative activity (Gen. 2:1,2); that, as the only “eye-witness”, He has told us what happened at that time (Gen. 1:31; Job 38:1-11); and receiving His account by “faith”, we understand exactly what happened at the “beginning” (Heb. 11:3).

Some attention was then given to the creation of *Angels*.

In God’s eternal purpose, it had been ordained that the eternal Son should be Head of these principalities and powers (Eph. 1:9,10, 17-22; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:6). And in that same purpose, some were “chosen” to be confirmed in their state of holiness, while others were left to sin and to judgment (1 Tim. 5:21 cf. Lk. 12:8,9 – “angels of God” and 2 Pet. 2:4 – “angels that sinned”). “In the beginning”, therefore, God created them, within the 6-day period, and probably on the first day (Gen.1:1; 2:1 – “host of them” cf. Lk 2:13. See also Job 38:7; Ps. 148:2,5). They were created “spirit beings” (Heb. 1:14 - “ministering spirits”. Compare references to fallen angels, devils and demons, as “evil spirits” and “unclean spirits”, Lk. 8:2; 11:24,26). Evidently they possessed the characteristics of personality – intelligence (1 Pet. 1:12), emotions (Job 38:7; Isa. 6:3; Lk. 15:1), and power to will and choose (Heb. 1:6). They were originally holy (Mk. 8:38 – “holy angels”), endowed with strength (Ps. 103:20; 2 Thess. 1:7) and knowledge or wisdom (2 Sam. 14:20). There were myriads of them created, as may be gleaned from various scriptures (Matt. 26:53 – a “legion” numbered 6,000; Lk. 2:13-15; Rev. 5:11). And some appear to have been made greater than others, or higher in rank: hence the references to “dominions”, “principalities” and “powers” (Rom. 8:38; Col. 1:16; 2:10).

Chief among them, one of the cherubim, was he that is now called “the devil” and “Satan” (Jn.13:2; Eph. 6:11, Matt. 4:10; 1 Thess. 2:18). In pride (cf. 1 Tim. 3:6), he appears to have resisted God’s revealed will concerning His Son (Jn. 8:44 – “abode not in the truth”). In the context, “truth” is the truth about Christ,

the Son of God (verse 25). As a result, he led a rebellion (hence, the reference to “the devil and his angels”, Matt. 25:41); and God, in judgment, cast them out of heaven (2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6; cf. Lk 10:18).

Entering this world, he tempted Adam and Eve to pride and then to rebellion; and still he, and his followers, oppose the Lord Jesus Christ and His Church (Matt.4:1ff. Eph. 6:12).

Then, we examined Scripture’s teaching on the Creation of *Man*.

Man: God created not only the world, but man within it (Gen. 1:26-28; Job 35:10; Ps. 100:2; Acts 17:26). He created Adam, “the first man (Gen. 2:7; 1 Cor. 15:45) and Eve, “the mother of all living” (Gen. 2:21-23; 3:20). This was on the sixth day of the creation-week, God having prepared a dwelling-place and all the creatures for his use (Gen. 2:8; Ps. 8:6-9). In every way, this was the climax of creation - God’s final creative act and His greatest creative work (cf. Isa. 43:21). Adam was made of the dust of the ground, making clear that, contrary to evolutionary theory, there was no beast or man before him (Gen. 2:7). Noteworthy is the fact that, according to the Scripture, there was a council convened and a consultation held before his actual creation (“Let us make man...” cf. 3:20; 11:7; Isa. 6:8). This is because man’s creation was a very great matter. This creature was to bear God’s image and was appointed to be God’s vice-regent in the earth. He was also to possess an immortal “soul” or “spirit” (Gen 2:7; Num.16:22; Eccl. 12:7; Matt.10:28; James 2:26) and have the very same nature the Son of God would one day assume, when at last He would come into this world to save sinners (Jn. 1:14; Phil. 2:5-7; 1 Tim. 3:16).

Image: In Scripture, other than the reference in Genesis 1:26 & 27, the term is used three times with respect to man (Gen. 9:6; 1 Cor. 11:7; James 3:9); and “image” and “likeness” appear to be synonymous, one of the terms sometimes being used, but plainly as including the other (Gen. 1:27).. Obviously, this is no outward, physical resemblance, since God possesses no body and is a pure “spirit” (Jn 4:24); and it is here that the similarity is to be found for, like God, man is essentially a “spirit” (Lk.1:46,47; 1 Cor. 2:11). Furthermore, when treating the subject of the new creation, the apostle informs us that “the image of God” consists in “knowledge”, “righteousness” and “true holiness” (Col. 3:10;

Eph. 4:24); and this is the state in which man was created – “Lo, this have I found, that God hath made man upright...” (Eccl. 7:29). Although this “image” has been marred by the Fall, there is still in men some faint outline and reminder of it (Gen. 9:6; James 3:9). Regeneration, sanctification, and, finally, glorification will restore the image of God in man (2 Cor. 3:18; 1 Jn. 3:2).

Dominion: This is not part of the “image” and “likeness”: rather, it is a consequence of these things, and it is separately conferred by God. That dominion, lost in Adam, will be restored in Christ – “*we shall also reign with him*” (2 Tim. 2:12); “Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and *we shall reign on the earth.*” (Rev. 5:9,10)

Men and Movements in the Second Part of the First Millennium - Roland Burrows

Our last session on Church History completed the work on the life and influence of Augustine of Hippo. We recognised his enormous significance as one of the most prominent leaders of the church of his day, whose influence extends down to present times. We summarised his influence as follows:

1. His greatest significance lay in his influence on the Church’s understanding of the Doctrines of Grace. In opposing the Pelagians, he brought the Church back to the great Pauline teaching that the entire human race was represented by and mysteriously present in Adam. When Adam fell, human nature sinned and fell in him. This is the doctrine of original sin, and because of our slavery to sin, Augustine then argued that people could not become Christians by their own wills, but only by the almighty transforming power of God, that is, by God’s grace.
2. Secondly he contributed greatly to the Church’s understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity. It might be said that through his work the doctrine of the Trinity was for the first time clarified.
3. Augustine emphasised the truth that there is one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.
4. Augustine’s thought was profoundly Biblical, he wrote commentaries and preached many sermons on the books of the Bible, believing that the Scriptures constitute a special revelation which carries us far beyond the

powers and the reasoning of the philosophers. Faith is the one thing which enables men to understand the world and themselves within it, on a rational and secure basis. "Understanding is the reward of faith."

5. Augustine also opposed the dualistic doctrines of the Manicheans. These sought to solve the problem of evil by teaching the existence of an evil agency eternally opposed to God.
6. Augustine also had a profound impact on our understanding of history. He is credited with ridding Europe of the ancient superstition that history simply went round and round in ever repeated cycles.
7. Augustine also taught that the validity of the ordinances depended on Christ and what he had done, and not upon the moral standing of those who administered them.
8. He taught that the civil power was part of God's providence but held that it was good only in so far as it was founded on justice.
9. Augustine was a prolific writer producing in the region of 232 books, the chief being his 'Confessions' and 'The City of God'.
10. Augustine was not perfect and there would be aspects of his understanding with which we would disagree.

This session included a glance at the work of Gregory the Great, sometimes called *the last of the good Popes and the first of the bad*. We also touched on some of the missionary movements taking place at this time in regard to the conversion of Northern Europe. In addition, we considered the influence of the Emperor Charlemagne, and the good and bad legacy of the Holy Roman Empire. Two famous Englishmen at this time were also considered, that is, the influence of Alfred the Great, and that of Alciun the court chaplain, confidant and adviser of the Emperor Charlemagne.

Providence (1) – Malcolm Watts

The lecture began with the observation that the word "providence" originally meant "foresight." It came to mean "timely care" and "preparation." It therefore contains the idea of foreseeing things and making due and wise preparation. The term itself appears just once in our Authorised Version, in Tertullus's flattering address to Felix, the Roman Governor. Tertullus wrote, "Very worthy deeds are done unto this nation by thy providence" (Acts 24:2). Here the

reference is clearly to the Governor's "administration." In a theological context, the word means God's administration or government of all things.

Providence connects to the doctrine of Creation. Creation is calling everything into existence: providence is controlling and regulating everything created.

Proceeding, we took account of *the God of Providence*. It is because He is *God* that He has the right to keep and order the whole universe (Job 12:7-10; Acts 17:28). He is eminently qualified to undertake this role: He is most holy (Ps. 145:17), most wise (Isa. 28:29), most powerful (Ps. 66:7), most good (Ps. 33:5), and most faithful (Lam. 3:22,23). And this is the One who is ever present (Acts 17:27) and active (Jn. 5:17) in this world, a truth denied by atheists, of course, and also by deists who teach that God created the world, set it in motion, and then withdrew from it, allowing natural laws to take over (Dan. 4:34,35; Eph. 1:11). Inevitably, since He is God and not man, there is a mystery in His works, and therefore we are not always able to discern His purposes and reasons (Job 33:13; Ps. 36:6). Nevertheless, it is to our comfort and peace to believe in the God of providence (Ps. 57:1,2).

Then attention was given to *the Work of Providence*. This was seen to be twofold: Preservation and Government. With respect to the former, God causes the whole creation to continue (Neh. 9:5; Col. 1:16,17; Heb. 1:3) and without His maintaining of it, everything would quickly fall apart and utterly perish (Ps. 104:24-29; Acts 17:25,28). Included in this particular work of providence is not only the granting of creatures His support, but also the granting of them necessary provision (Ps. 145:15,16) and protection (Ps. 47:9). The other work of providence is Government. God rules and directs every thing and everyone. "The Lord reigneth" (Ps. 93:1); "His kingdom ruleth over all" (Ps. 103:19). From all eternity, He has determined what shall be (Acts 15:18) and throughout time He sovereignly fulfils His will and purpose (Eph. 1:11).

Finally, we considered *the Domain of Providence*. God's providence is over all creatures (Matt. 10:29,31) and their actions (Prov. 16:9). However, there is a special providence concerned with God's people (2 Chron. 16:9; Ps. 46:1-3), and the lecture concluded with emphasis upon this, which alone can bring peace and joy to our hearts (Ps. 146:5,10).

Sovereign Ruler of the skies!
Ever gracious, ever wise!
All my times are in Thy hand,
All events at Thy command.

He that formed me in the womb,
He shall guide me to the tomb;
All my times shall ever be
Ordered by His wise decree.

Plagues and deaths around me fly;
Till He bids I cannot die;
Not a single shaft can hit
Till the God of love sees fit.

Providence (2) – Malcolm Watts

The lecture began with a quotation from Dr John Dick's *Lectures on Theology*, "Providence...is...the action or conduct of God towards the universe, which he upholds by his power, and regulates by his wisdom." This was followed by the stating of some basic principles: (1) God is in control of everything, ruling even in the midst of apparent disorder (Ps. 29:10; Eccl. 3:17); (2) His eternal will is the rule of whatever He does (Ps. 135:6; Eph. 1:11); (3) Providence reaches to everyone, everywhere (Isa. 40:26; Job 23:13,14); (4) Since the Fall this administration has been Mediatorial, God's Son being appointed to universal dominion (Ps. 2:6-8; Prov. 8:15; Isa. 6:1-3 cf. Jn. 12:40); (5) Although perplexing at times, faith assures us of a good issue (2 Kgs. 4:23; Ps. 73:1,17); (6) Ever efficacious, God accomplishes everything He sets out to do ((Job 23:13; Ps. 33:11); and (7) The end of the divine rule is the revelation and acknowledgment of God's glory (Isa. 66:1; Rom. 11:36; Rev. 15:3).

After this, consideration was given to some of the objections raised to this doctrine. The *first* concerns the Fall - Adam's Fall from a state of innocence into a state of sin and misery. It is true, of course, that God could have willed to prevent the Fall (cf. Gen. 20:6) but He evidently willed to permit it (cf. 78:29). In no way does this imply His approval of what happened, sin ever being most

hateful to Him (Jer. 44:4); but He determined that Adam would not be the Saviour of the race but His beloved Son to whom the honour and glory would ever be given (Rev. 5:11-13). The *second* concerns the consequent sin in the world. This He also wills to allow (Ps. 81:12; Acts 14:16), but such is His sovereignty that, in His wisdom, He brings out of this evil a greater good (Gen. 45:5; 50:20) and ultimately prepares for the coming of His Son to save men from their sins (Matt. 1:21). The *third* concerns the problem of suffering, which He sovereignly authorises and sanctions. Although this is true (Job 1:21; Isa. 45:7; 1 Thess. 3:3), God takes no delight in it (Lam. 3:32,33). Rather, He turns it to His own glory (Jn. 9:3; 11:4; 21:19) and to the spiritual good of men and women (Ps. 119:67; Hos. 5:15; James 5:13).

Divine sovereignty must be recognised and acknowledged. It is no small comfort to know that “the Lord God omnipotent reigneth” (Rev. 19:6).

Creation Views – Simon Green

The focus of this lecture was, necessarily, largely polemical as much of our time was taken up with the consideration of various erroneous theories concerning the origins of this world. We began with a brief survey of some false theories of origins of life and being that were prominent in the ancient world, including Dualism and Emanationism. We then moved on to consider Evolutionary Theory in its naturalistic and theistic strands, showing that although the latter tries to give a place to Scripture in its understanding of origins, human reason remains the final arbiter, and so it is to be rejected.

That raised the question of the relationship between revelation and science which we summarised as being one where revelation must maintain priority, but that science can, and does, supplement our understanding from God’s revelation, and occasionally even corrects our fallible interpretation of God’s infallible Word.

In the final part of the lecture we considered the four major approaches to the Genesis account of creation that depart from the orthodox view of everything being made by God in six literal 24-hour days. Those theories are known as the Gap Theory, the Pictorial-Revelatory Day Theory, the Day-Age Theory, and the Framework Hypothesis. Space prevents explanation of their details

here, but we concluded that none of them deals fairly and honestly with the text of Genesis 1 & 2 as it is. Rather, we believe the plain teaching of Scripture is that “in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is” (Exod. 20:11).

The “Kenosis” theory (1) – Paul Karageori

The lecture began with prayer and the reading of Phil. 2:1-18. The focus was on the well-known verses concerning Christ’s humiliation and exaltation, verses 6-11 and, in particular, verse 7, “But made himself of no reputation..., and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.” The interpretation of this verse and the meaning of the words have been the cause of much dispute and misinterpretation over the centuries.

The wrong interpretation of the original Greek, whose literal meaning is “emptied himself”, has led to the heresy of “kenosis” or “kenoticism”. This is the belief that the Son emptied Himself of His deity and divine attributes at his incarnation and regained them when He ascended bodily back to heaven.

Two sets of data in the Bible were examined. On the one hand there are verses which clearly show that our Lord Jesus Christ is God (e.g. 1 Tim. 6:15-16; John 1:1; 10:30; 8:58; 20:28) and, on the other, there are verses showing He was a man (e.g. Lk. 2:52; Heb. 4:15; James 1:13; Heb. 5:8-9; Mk. 13:32).

The faulty kenotic Christology seeks to harmonise these verses by emptying the Lord of His deity. But the correct way to understand these verses is that the Son took on human flesh at his incarnation and became one person with two natures: divine and human.

The Creed of Chalcedon, 451, was examined. Then there was a historical overview of certain heresies regarding our Lord over the centuries. The focus was on the 19th century. It was during this period that a fuller “kenotic” Christology developed and became popular in Germany and then spread to the rest of Europe and around the world. Some theologians which promoted kenosis were named and quotations from them highlighted their faulty views about Christ e.g. Gottfried Thomasius, Frédéric Godet, Augustin Gretillat, Anglican Bishop Charles Gore, Scottish Congregational minister P. T. Forsyth

and Church of Scotland Moderator H. R. Mackintosh. We also looked at certain church leaders and denominations currently promoting this theory.

The “Kenosis” Theory (2) – Paul Karageori

The lecture began with prayer and the reading of Col. 2:8-10. Emphasis was stressed on the deity of Christ and Paul’s warning, “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.” I then related my experience with the Free Evangelical Church of Greece. I was a young person, new to the Christian faith, when I encountered this denomination and became confused by their erroneous, faulty “kenotic” Christology.

During this lecture attention was given to the views of the founder of this Greek denomination, Constantine Metallinos. By examining Metallinos’s views of Christ, we proceeded to examine the views of Godet and Gretillat. Metallinos read their works and adopted their “kenotic” Christology.

Of course, Metallinos was challenged on his views even by members of his own denomination. We examined what his critics expressed about his views. Members of the Brethren movement in Britain protested to him directly about his views including F.F. Bruce. Metallinos’s views were brought to the attention of Martyn Lloyd-Jones who commented, “The trouble, as always, is due to an attempt to understand what cannot be understood, instead of being content to abide by the statements of Scripture.”

The students asked many interesting questions including the following: If it was impossible for Christ to sin, then does that mean His temptations were not real? Lack of time prevented us from fully discussing this question. Perhaps this can be examined in future lectures or informal personal discussions.

Sermon Preparation – Malcolm Watts

In this final lecture of the weekend, attention was first given to the divine institution of the ministry (Isa. 52:8; Matt. 13:52; 28:20; Eph. 4:11), then, turning to Ecclesiastes 12:9-12, we considered the “Preacher” (a term derived from the verb “to call” or “to collect”: hence, a convener, one who gathers people in order to speak to them). “The preacher was wise”, we are told, “and still taught

the people knowledge”: in other words, he must needs study to acquire knowledge that he might benefit those who hear him (Jer. 18:18; Matt. 13:52; Acts 20:27; 1 Tim. 4:6, 13-16).

In the study, the preacher “gave good heed and sought out in order many proverbs. The preacher sought to find out acceptable words and that which was written was upright and words of truth” (vv. 9,10).

He must therefore be diligent in preparation, delving into the meaning of Holy Scripture and then setting out its truths in methodical order, always ensuring that they accord with the revealed Word of God.

In the pulpit, the preacher must remember that “the words of the wise are as goads, and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies which are given from one shepherd” (v. 11). The preaching must evidence “wisdom”, both in its matter and also in its manner. The preacher’s words should be as “goads”, piercing and prodding to appropriate response, and as “nails”, driven home and deeply fastened to the minds and hearts of his hearers. The sermon as a whole should come from the Lord, “from one shepherd” (Ps. 23:1; 80:1; 1 Peter 5:4).

Practical help was then given on the best way to prepare and deliver sermons to the Lord’s people.

THE LORD’S SUPPER

John Willison (1680-1750)

Part 4

Question. What obligations lie upon us to come and partake of this ordinance?

Answer. All the professors of Christ are obliged to it on many accounts: 1. In point of duty. 2. In point of interest. 3. In point of gratitude. 4. In point of safety.

Q. How are we obliged in point of duty?

A. Because Christ our Lord and Law-giver hath peremptorily commanded it; nay, for the more security, he repeats the command twice, 1 Cor. 11:24, 25, "This do ye, this do ye", and surely all of us owe obedience to his authority, without reserve.

Q. How are we obliged to partake in point of interest?

A. Because of the great advantages which are to be got by it, seeing Christ and all the benefits of the New Covenant are here sealed and applied.

Q. How are we obliged to partake in point of gratitude?

A. 1. Because the command enjoining this duty, was among the last words of our dying friend and Saviour, who did more for us than all the world could have done. 2. Because the design of the ordinance is to keep up the memorial of the love, which our dying Saviour expressed at the institution of it, in suffering death, and offering up himself a sacrifice to divine justice in our stead. 3. Because he seeks no greater return for his love than a thankful remembrance of it. 4. Because he puts us to no greater charge to express it, than by eating and drinking at his table.

Q. How are we obliged to partake in point of safety?

A. Because the slighting or wilful neglect of this ordinance, is a great sin before God, and very provoking to him, as well as dangerous to ourselves.

Q. Wherein lies the sin of neglecting this ordinance?

A. In that it is no less than contempt of the words of our dying Saviour, disobedience to his command, ingratitude to our greatest benefactor, a base slighting of God's love, Christ's sufferings, and all the great preparations he

hath made for us; a wronging of our own souls, and despising of our choicest mercies and privileges.

Q. What is the danger of neglecting this duty?

A. It draws on the wrath and vengeance of God, nay, of Christ the Mediator; which must be very terrible. As God threatened to cut off those that neglected the Passover of old, so he threatened severe wrath against those, who should neglect the gospel feasts. Num. 9:13; Zech. 14:16, 17, 18. And these threatenings are renewed, Matt.22:7; Luke 14:24.

Q. Is it a good excuse for neglecting this ordinance, for people to say, they are not prepared, or have quarrels with their neighbours, or cannot get such particular sins (overcome and) left?

A. No; for the want of preparation is our sin, and one sin can never excuse or answer for another. It is a fearful thing to live in a sinful course against light, and then to make sin an excuse for the neglect of commanded duty.

Q. Is it not enough that we partake of the Lord's Supper once in our lives, as we do of the other sacrament, baptism?

A. No; for baptism being the sacrament of initiation, is not to be repeated; but the Lord's Supper being for nutrition, is often to be received.

Q. What obligations lie on us to partake often?

A. We are obliged to it: 1. By our Saviour's words at the first institution. 1 Cor. 11:25, 26, "as often as ye do this," which have the virtue of a command to frequency in communicating. 2. By the example of the apostles and primitive Christians, whose practice it was to communicate frequently, or every Lord's Day, Acts 2:42, 46; 20:7. 3. Our souls' necessities do call for frequency in

partaking: for we are often ready to forget Christ, and therefore we often need this ordinance to bring Him to our remembrance. We are often subject to spiritual deadness, weakness of faith, and decays of grace; and therefore have frequent need of this ordinance, for strength and quickening.

Q. Are we as much obliged to frequent communicating as the apostles and primitive Christians?

A. Though they were in a much better frame for it, as having had more recent and warm impressions of the love and death of their Redeemer constantly upon their spirits, than we have; yet certainly we are under as strong obligations to frequent partaking, as the first Christians were, for we have the same Lord and Saviour that they had, and are under the same obligations of love and gratitude to Him. We have the same need of the application of Christ's blood, and a confirmed interest in His meritorious death that they had; and consequently the same need of this memorial-feast and sealing ordinance.

Q. Is not frequency apt to breed formality in this duty?

A. 1. The same thing may be alleged with respect to other duties, which yet is no good argument for the unfrequent practice of them. 2. This fault is no way chargeable upon the holy ordinance and institution of Christ, but upon the corruption and carelessness of our hearts; which we ought diligently to watch and strive against; endeavouring in Christ's strength, as often as we partake, so often to prepare for it, with all due care and solemnity.

Q. What is meant by showing forth the Lord's death in the sacrament, which seems to be laid down as our main business in this ordinance?

A. We may be said to represent, show forth and proclaim the death of Christ in the sacrament, three ways: 1. With respect to ourselves. 2. With respect to the world. 3. With respect to God.

Q. How are we to show forth the death of Christ with respect to ourselves?

A. As the external elements and signs, in the Lord's Supper, give a plain representation of the death and sufferings of Christ to the eye of the body, so in partaking of these elements, we ought to set the things represented by them, (viz. the death of Christ, with the matchless love He therein expressed) before the eyes of our minds and understandings, in order to beget a fresh remembrance of that dying love, and to raise our faith and hope in a crucified Saviour.

Q. How are we to show forth Christ's death in the sacrament with respect to the world?

A. By owning hereby, in the most public manner, that we are the disciples of a crucified Jesus; not ashamed of our master, or his ignominious death, but declaring before all that we glory in him, and rely upon the merits of his death here showed forth, as the only hope of our salvation, and that we have no Saviour besides him.

Q. How are we to show forth Christ's death in the sacrament with respect to God?

A. Two ways: 1. We are to show it forth to a loving and merciful God in a way of thanksgiving and praise; ascribing all glory to Him for such a noble ransom and sacrifice, as he hath found out and provided for us. 2. We are also to show forth Christ's death in the sacrament to a just and sin-avenging God, in a way of faith and prayer, pleading this sacrifice with God, as a screen and defence against the sword of justice, and curse of the law, and presenting it as the ground of all our hopes and expectations

Q. Is the Lord's Supper to be reckoned a sacrifice to God; as the Papists have turned it in their mass, into a proper atoning sacrifice for the sins both of the dead and living?

A. Not at all; for that is nothing but an abominable corruption of this blessed ordinance, for though the Lord's supper be a representation and memorial of the sacrifice of Christ's death and sufferings, which he offered to God upon the cross for our sins; and in partaking thereof, we may by faith plead this sacrifice to God: yet the sacramental bread and wine are no such sacrifice to God themselves; but only a sign and seal thereof, given of God to us for strengthening our faith in his mercy promised unto us through Christ's death.

Q. What are the absurdities of the Papists' doctrine and practice in this matter?

A. 1. The Popish mass-priests do usurp Christ's priesthood and office, pretending really to offer up Christ a sacrifice to God, which none but himself could do. 2. This highly reflects upon the perfection of Christ's sacrifice, that he once offered up on the cross, which we are assured by the Word of God, was acceptable to God, perfect, and never needing to be again repeated, Heb. 9:25, 26, 27, 28; 10:12, 14. 3. This is bottomed on their absurd doctrine of transubstantiation which teacheth that the bread in the sacrament is turned into Christ's real and true body, which is most false, as I proved before.

Q. What is the import of showing forth the Lord's death till he come?

A. Till he come, imports, 1. That this sacrament is to endure till Christ's Second Coming, and no longer. 2. That in communicating, we should have the lively faith of Christ's Coming at the Great Day to judge of our sincerity and faithfulness in covenanting with him, as also to fulfil all his promises to worthy communicants. 3. That communicants should always live in the hope and expectation of the coming of Christ, and of everlasting glory, Titus 2: 13; Jude 21.

Q. Why cannot the sacrament continue after Christ's coming?

A. Because in heaven there is no need of sacraments. Here we hold communion with Christ by signs and symbols, because of our darkness, distance and imperfections; but above believers will see him as he is, and enjoy him perfectly. Faith shall be turned into vision, and hope into fruition. The day then "will break, and all the shadows will flee away", Cant. 2: 17; Rev. 21:22, 23.

Q. What is the meaning of these words of Christ at the first institution, Henceforth I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until that day, when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom?

A. Christ designs hereby to teach His disciples several things: 1. That now He was taking His leave of sacraments and ordinances here below, and that there is no use for such above. 2. That the Lord's Supper here, is an emblem of the marriage-supper of the Lamb hereafter, or a representation of that heavenly communion above, which the saints for ever will partake of with the Lord Jesus, which is held forth by the pleasures of a banquet of wine. 3. That the pleasures of that communion, which they should entertain with him in heaven, will never wax old, but always continue fresh and new. 4. That in this world, they were no more to have communion with Him in his bodily presence, as they had formerly enjoyed, but they must henceforth feed on Him by faith till their happy meeting together in heaven: where faith will be swallowed up in vision. 5. That notwithstanding the want of His bodily presence, they should still keep up communion with Him in the use of this ordinance, patiently waiting and looking for the full accomplishment of it in that glorious eternal feast above.

Q. Is there not a great difference between the communion here and the communion above? or between our drinking the fruit of the vine here, and our drinking it new with Christ in His Father's kingdom?

A. Yes; the difference is very great: for, 1. The communion, which Christ allows His people here, is but the fore-taste or first-fruits of the promised land, given to wean their hearts from this world, and sharpen their appetites and desires after the Canaan above, where these first-fruits do grow and are fully ripe. 2. The comforts of the lower table are but small, and of short continuance, but those of the higher table are full, satisfying and everlasting. 3. Here we feed on an absent Christ by signs and symbols, and have but bad appetites for our food; but the communicants above will enjoy Christ's bodily presence, see him as He is, and have vast and never-failing appetites for that heavenly feast. 4. Here communicants meet in small assemblies and in sundry places: but above, the church of the first-born shall meet together in one general assembly; and be all set together with Christ, as it were at one table. 5. Here many traitors and unworthy communicants thrust themselves in among the children, and many things happen to mar the children's comfort: but above no Judas or unfurnished guest can come, nor any thing fall out to impair the glory of that feast. 6. The lower table is placed in temples made with hands, with earthly men attending; but hereafter the glorious heavens will be the rooms and the heavenly hosts the attendants. 7. Here the communicants are entertained with the singing of psalms; but above there will be the multitude of the heavenly host, singing "Hallelujah to the Lamb that sits upon the throne, and glory to God in the highest."

To be continued

EPILOGUE

"I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins:" Isaiah 44:22

Scripture gives various descriptions of the completeness of God's forgiveness of a believer for our encouragement and assurance. These descriptions are like pictures to help our understanding.

"Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow" Isaiah 1:18, and "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood" Revelation 1:5. Our forgiveness is compared to the effect of washing or dyeing a garment so that the original stain, dirt and colour of the garment is permanently changed. In Psalm 32:1 we read "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." God covers completely our sins so that on the Day of Judgement they will not be visible. God will "cast all their sins into the depths of the sea" Micah 7:19 and "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us" Psalm 103:12. "The iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found" Jeremiah 50:20. God will deliberately "lose" the sins of His elect. In a law court the evidence must be scrutinised to determine the guilt, or otherwise, of the defendant, but there will be nothing to be scrutinised on the Judgement Day for God's people. Hebrews 10:17 reads "And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more". Our Divine Judge will "forget" that we are sinners deserving eternal punishment. In Isaiah 44:22 God says that "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins:"

When God forgives a sinner, all his sins are washed away, dyed out, covered, lost, and blotted out. This is the action of our God who loves us. Christ has paid the penalty for every sin of the elect so that not even a single one of them can ever be held against us. What a comfort!

Bill Norton