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UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER

One of the most remarkable incidents of the war in South Africa was the unconditional surrender of the great Boer leader, General Cronje, with 4600 men, to the British General, Lord Roberts. This veteran warrior had suddenly thrown a powerful force across the Boer line of communication. Cronje, seeing himself hemmed in both in front and rear, resolved to retreat. By a night march he secured a fair start. But his heavy train of wagons hindered his flight. The British were soon around him on every side.

He took refuge in the bed of the Modder river near Praedberg, at a point where the stream runs through a kind of glen. A desperate encounter then took place. The circle of the besiegers was drawn closer and closer. More than a hundred British guns were now pouring a stream of death into the Boer trenches. This terrible fire ignited some of the enemy's ammunition wagons, which exploded with great noise. The losses of that devoted company will probably never be accurately known. It is certain that they suffered severely.

Cronje had the opportunity to surrender, and so save his force from annihilation, but he said he would fight "to the death." Days passed. Their position was now desperate. In the grey dawn of the 27th of February - the anniversary of a British defeat - the Boers saw that the British positions had been so advanced during the night that further resistance was now hopeless. Their commander accordingly went into the British camp to confer as to "terms of surrender."

The "terms" were at once made clear to him. The British General would have nothing but unconditional surrender. Cronje was asked what he had to say. He mused for a moment, and then said "Yes," thereby meaning that he and all his force of more than 4,500 men yielded unconditionally to their conquerors and laid down their arms.

We are told that these poor captives were quite surprised at the kind treatment they received. They had been suffering from the pangs of hunger and the fear of impending destruction while many of them were in terror as to what would happen when they fell into the hands of the British. But all was changed the

moment they made an “unconditional surrender.” The hungry were fed, the wounded had their wounds dressed, the terror-stricken were assured that they had now nothing to fear. One aged woman expected to be killed and it took the interpreter half-an-hour to set her mind at rest as to her personal safety. Many were glad they had surrendered and were happy to think their terrible suspense was at an end. All agreed that their condition after surrender was far better than they had expected it to be.

What a remarkable likeness we have here to the experience of those who have made an unconditional surrender to Jesus Christ! You are by nature and practice in rebellion against Him, and what He demands is an unconditional surrender. Failing this surrender, there is nothing before you but a “certain fearful looking for of judgment,” with the lines of justice closing nearer and nearer around you every day, and the final offer of mercy soon to be withdrawn for ever. But the moment you surrender, as a rebel and helpless sinner, that moment you are received, and justified, and fed, and cared for. Your fears are driven away, for you see how perfectly Jesus accomplished the work of atonement for sin. Then it is surely time, my friend, that you laid down your weapons of rebellion and yielded to the Lord Jesus Christ.

These are the simple terms: “Believe, and live.” If you yield, all will change in a moment; you will be saved, cared for, and, instead of landing in prison, ushered into the “Palace of the King.” Are you ready to make an “unconditional surrender”?

FELLOWSHIP NEWS

The 23rd Salisbury Conference was held the weekend of 27 - 29 September. We were very privileged to welcome as our guest speaker Dr Gerald Bilkes, Professor of New Testament and Biblical Theology at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, USA. We have fond memories of his visit to us at the 16th conference in 2012. The theme for this year's conference was “Redemption in the Old and New Testaments”. The conference opened on Friday evening when Dr Bilkes spoke on “Moses and the First Exodus”. Here we considered the fulfilment of God's amazing plan for his people by

redeeming them from slavery to freedom, from darkness to light. It was truly “a night to be much observed” (Exodus 12:42). On Saturday, the theme was continued in three very uplifting and memorable messages. Firstly, in “Elijah and the Second Exodus”, we saw how the people needed a renewed redemption, a renewed exodus, from their backsliding state (1 Kings 18:37). Secondly, in “Christ and the Final Exodus” we were reminded of Christ's decease: the exodus of all exoduses; and considered the glory of the Redeemer; of his redemption; and of being redeemed. Finally, we looked at “The Goal of the Exodus” - the final redemption of the body when we shall be forever with the Lord. On the Lord's Day, Dr Bilkes faithfully ministered God's Word to us at both services. At an After Church Fellowship Dr Bilkes directed us to Matthew 5:1-16 and spoke about “Living as light in the world”, using some personal testimony to illustrate his talk. We were pleased to have many visitors join with us over the weekend, the Friday meeting being exceptionally well attended this year. We were also greatly helped by the very well- stocked book table provided for us by James Dickson Books of Kylesyth, Scotland. It was a richly instructive and Christ-exalting weekend, and we are profoundly indebted to Dr Bilkes for so ably presenting these precious truths to us.

Our Autumn Evangelistic Supper was held at Grove House on Tuesday evening, 22 October. Once again we were pleased to welcome a number of visitors who joined us for a good meal and happy fellowship. During the evening one of our members brought a challenging gospel message, and we pray that God will be pleased to bless his Word, causing unbelievers present to be made aware of their need of salvation.

“O LORD, how great are thy works! And thy thoughts are very deep”. Psalm 92:5

CHURCH & PASTOR'S ANNIVERSARY, 2020

God willing, this Anniversary – the Church's 67th and Pastor Watts's 49th will be held the weekend of the 1 - 2 February 2020. Our Guest Preacher will be Rev. Graeme Craig, minister of the Stornaway congregation of the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing).

On Saturday, there will be a service in the church at 3pm, and then, on the Lord's Day, services will be at the usual times of 11am & 6.30pm. Mr Craig will be preaching at all three of these services, and he will also be speaking at the After Church Meeting on the Lord's Day which will commence at approximately 8.30pm.

As a church, we have been richly blessed this year and we look forward to these Anniversary Services when we shall have the opportunity of giving thanks to God for all His many kindnesses towards us.

If you are able to join us for these Anniversary Services, you will be most welcome. We shall look forward to seeing many of you at that time.

WHY PSALMS ONLY?

**Rev Professor R. J. George DD.,
Professor of Theology and Church History
in the Covenanter Seminary, Alleghany, Pennsylvania, USA.**

[This article first appeared in the "The Young People's Magazine" (July 1947). The full title was: "Is the Use of Uninspired songs in the worship of God Authorized?"]

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." (Colossians 3:16)

When there are differences in belief among Christians on any subject, it is always helpful to inquire how far they agree, and thus ascertain the exact point at which opinions begin to diverge. In regard to the songs to be employed in the praise of God, there are several points of general agreement.

1. It is agreed that the Psalms were given by divine inspiration and are the very Word of God. "David the son of Jesse said, and the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, said, the Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue" (2

Sam. 23:1-2) “Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas which was guide to them that took Jesus” (Acts 1:16) (See also Acts 4:25; Heb. 3:7 etc). Men should be careful how they speak against the Book of Psalms. The Holy Ghost is its author. This is the first point of agreement.

2. It is agreed that these inspired Psalms were appointed by God to be used in His worship. “Sing unto Him; sing Psalms unto Him” (1 Chron. 16:9). “Moreover Hezekiah the king and the princes commanded the Levites to sing praise unto the lord with the words of David, and of Asaph the seer” (2 Chron. 29:30). “Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving and make a joyful noise unto Him with Psalms” (Ps. 95:2). Bible expositors and Church historians alike agree that the inspired psalms were exclusively used in the worship of the Old Testament. God appointed them to be used and no one but God can change the appointment. This is the second point of agreement.

3. It is agreed that so far as the record goes our Lord Jesus Christ used the Psalms exclusively in worship. Only on one occasion is our Lord referred to as singing. This was in connection with the observance of the Passover. It is said, “And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives” (Matt. 26:30; Mark 14:26). Biblical scholars are not misled by the use of the word “hymn” in our translation of this verse. The original simply states the fact that they sang praises to God. In the margin it reads, “When they had sung a psalm.” It is a well-known fact that the Jews were accustomed to sing at the Passover the great Hallel which consisted of Psalms 113 to 118 inclusive. Certainly our Lord and His apostles did not depart from this usage. Strange indeed it would have been if the Lord Jesus, who always exalted and honoured the Holy Spirit, had put aside the sacred songs which He had indited for this very purpose. But He did not. Those who would follow closely in the footsteps of Jesus should sing Psalms. Jesus did. This is the third point of agreement.

4. It is agreed that we have express authority for the use of the Old Testament Psalms in the New Testament Church. “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Col. 3:16). Whatever differences of view there may be as to the “hymns and spiritual

songs,” all agree that the psalms here spoken of are the inspired Psalms of Scripture. The passage therefore contains an express warrant for the continued use of the Psalter in the New Testament church. This is not denied by anyone. This is the fourth point of agreement.

It is not affirmed that there are no opinions contrary to one or another of these four points, held by individuals, but that there is a general agreement among all classes of evangelical Christians on these points.

We have now reached the exact point of divergence. While all agree that the psalms referred to in Col. 3:16 are the Bible Psalms, there are many who maintain that the “hymns and spiritual songs” are mere human compositions; and that the new Testament Church is hereby authorized and instructed to add to her book of praises the writings of uninspired men. This is the crucial text on this subject. If this text contains a clear warrant for the use of uninspired hymns, other passages may lend it support; but if that warrant is not found here, it is not found anywhere. The advocates of hymn-singing will admit the truth of this statement.

It is now undertaken to show that not only does this passage not authorize the use of uninspired songs in worship, but that it enjoins the exclusive use of the Psalms of the Bible.

First. No warrant can be found for the use of uninspired songs, in the words, “hymns and spiritual songs.” At first view, these words seem to be conclusive in favour of the advocate of hymn-singing. In the Greek text it is “psalmois, humnois, odais pneumatikais,” “psalms, hymns, songs spiritual.” Now these three Greek names are all found in the titles to the psalms in the Greek translation of the Old Testament which was in use among the people to whom Paul wrote this epistle. They occur many times in the titles to the various psalms. The word “psalmois,” about sixty-nine times, the word “humnois” six times, and another word “alleluia,” which has precisely the same import, about twenty times, and the word “odais,” mostly in the singular form, “ode,” thirty-four times. With the fact before us that these three words are all actually found many times in the titles to the inspired Psalms – and when we all agree that the word “psalmois” does refer to inspired songs – is it not most unreasonable

to insist that “humnois and odais” mean uninspired songs. As if to remove all possible doubt the word “spiritual” is used to qualify the words. Thayer in his Lexicon of the New Testament, referring to this passage and the similar one, Ephesians 5:19, defines the word ‘spiritual’ as ‘divinely inspired’ and so redolent of the Holy Spirit.”

Albert Barnes in his commentary on 1 Cor. 10:3, “And did all eat of the same spiritual meat, and drink of the same spiritual drink,” says, ‘The word “spiritual” is evidently used to denote that which is given by the Spirit, by God; that which was the result of His miraculous gift; that which was not produced in the ordinary way.’ Again, ‘The word “spiritual” must be used in the sense of supernatural or that which is immediately given by God.’ Hence “spiritual songs” are songs produced in a supernatural manner, those given immediately by the Spirit of God. It is just as if it read, “teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and songs given by the Holy Spirit.” What songs are these? The sweet psalmist of Israel answers, “The Spirit of the Lord spake by me and his word was in my tongue.” These very names, therefore, which have been relied upon as furnishing a warrant for the use of uninspired songs, we find to be well known titles for Psalms of the Bible, and that as qualified by the word “spiritual” they cannot be used to designate uninspired songs, but furnish a warrant for the exclusive use of the songs of the Spirit.

Second. The Psalms are in an eminent sense “the Word of Christ.” *“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom. This is the condition of being able to “teach and admonish.”* How are the psalms “The Word of Christ?”

1. Christ by His Spirit is the author of them. This has been fully shown above.
2. Christ is the speaker in many of them. For instance, “I will declare the decree, the Lord said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee” (Psalm 2:7). “Then said I, Lo, I come, in the volume of the book it is written of me” (Psalm 40:7). “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Psalm 22:1). Such Psalms as these are the Word of Christ in the same sense that the Sermon on the Mount is His Word. He and no one else is the speaker in them.

3. Christ alone is the subject of many of them. The most ignorant and senseless objection ever made to the Psalms is the charge that they are "Christless." The truth is that no book in the Bible reveals Christ with such fullness as is done in the book of Psalms, not excepting the gospel by John or the Epistle to the Hebrews.

What may we learn from this wonderful book?

1. His divinity. Psalm 45:6, "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever." In Heb. 1:8, this is quoted as the address of the Father to the Son: "But unto the Son He saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." Psalm 110:1, "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool." In Matt. 22:42-45, this is quoted by our Lord to prove His divinity.

2. His eternal Sonship. Psalm 2:7, "I will declare the decree, the Lord said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee." In Heb. 1:5, this is quoted as the address of the Father to the Christ. See also Psalm 2:7 compared with Acts 13:33.

3. His incarnation. Psalm 8:5, "For thou hast made Him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned Him with glory and honour." In Heb. 2:7 this is quoted and in verse 9 is applied to the incarnation: "But we see Jesus who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour; that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man." Psalm 40:7, "Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me." In Heb 10:7, we read "Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God." And in Heb 10: 5, "Wherefore when he cometh into the world, He saith Sacrifice and offering thou woudest not, but a body hast thou prepared me," the incarnation and its purpose being introduced by the words, "Wherefore when he cometh into the world, He saith."

4. His mediatorial offices.

- i. His prophetic office. Psalm 40:9,10, "I have preached righteousness in the great congregation; lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, thou

knowest. I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation; I have not concealed thy loving kindness and thy truth from the great congregation." What a matchless description of the prophetic office! Heb. 10: 5-7, shows conclusively the speaker as Christ. See also Psalm 22:22 compared with Heb. 2:12.

- ii. His priestly office. Psalm 110:4, "The Lord has sworn and will not repent. Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek." In Heb. 7:17-21, this is quoted to prove the superiority of the priesthood of Christ, as it is said, "By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament."
- iii. His kingly office. Psalm 45:6, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever; the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre." In Heb. 1:8 this is quoted as the address of the Father to the Son. Psalm 110:1, The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool." In Matt. 22:44, 45, our Lord referred this directly to Himself, and in Hebrews 1:13, it is quoted to prove the exaltation of Jesus above the angels. See also Psalms 2 and 72 throughout and Psalm 22:28.

5. His betrayal. Psalm 41:9, "Yea, mine own familiar friend in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me." In John 13:18, Jesus says, "But that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me."

6. His agony in the garden. Psalm 22:2, "O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not and in the night season and am not silent. But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel." Also verses 11 and 19; compare these with Matt. 26:36-44, Mark 14:32-42, Luke 22:41-44, and Heb. 5:7.

7. His trial. Psalm 35:11, "False witnesses did rise up; they laid to my charge things that I knew not." In Matt. 26: 59-60, we read, "Now the chief priests and elders and all the council sought false witness against Jesus to put Him to death, but found none; yea though many false witnesses came, yet found they none. At the last came two false witnesses."

8. His rejection. Psalm 22:6, “but I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men and despised by the people”; compare this with Matt 27: 21-23 and Luke 23:18-23. “And they cried out all at once, saying, Away with this man and release unto us Barabbas: (who for a certain sedition made in the city, and for murder, was cast into prison.) Pilate therefore, willing to release Jesus, spake again to them. But they cried, saying, Crucify Him, crucify Him.” Psalm 118:22, “The stone which the builders refused is become the headstone of the corner. This is the Lord’s doing; it is marvellous in our eyes.” In Matt. 21:42, our Lord quotes these very words against the Jews for their rejection of Him. And the Apostle Peter in Acts 4:11, says, “This is the stone which is set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner.”

9. His crucifixion. Psalms 22 and 69 describe the scenes of the crucifixion with a minuteness almost equal to that of the four gospels. The mockery, the shaking of the head and parting the garments, the casting lots on the vesture, the thirst, the vinegar and the gall, the pierced hands and feet, the cry of the forsaken, the committing of His Spirit to God. Psalm 22 opens with the cry, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me,” and the closing words have been rendered, “It is finished.”

10. His burial and resurrection. Psalm 16:9-11, “Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoiceth; my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt show me the path of life; in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.” Peter, the apostle, after quoting these words, says: “Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we are witnesses” (Acts 2:29-32).

11. His ascension. Psalm 47:5, “God is gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet.” In Acts 1:11, it is said, “This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.” And in 1 Thess. 4:16, the manner of his second coming is

thus described: “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God.” This is the very terms of Psalm 68:18: “Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive; thou hast received gifts for men, yea for the rebellious also that the Lord God might dwell among them.” In Eph. 4:8-11, the Apostle Paul quotes these verses to prove the ascension of our Lord, and his ascension gifts to his church. “Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men... And he gave some apostles and some prophets,” etc. See also Psalm 24:7-10 as compared with Rev. 5:6-14.

12. His second coming. Psalm 50:3-6, “Our God shall come and shall not keep silence. A fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. He shall call to the heavens from above and to the earth that he may judge his people. Gather my saints together unto me, those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice. And the heavens shall declare his righteousness, for God is judge himself.”

Concerning the same even Christ says: “And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other” (Matt. 24:30, 31).

Well said Jesus, “It is written in the Psalms concerning me.” “The sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow,” are here unfolded, and these Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs are replete with Christ. If anyone will examine and compare these passages he will readily believe that when Paul wrote, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom,” it was as if He said, “Memorize the Psalms.”

To be continued

SEVEN POSITIONS CHRIST HOLDS FOR HIS PEOPLE

Dr. F. E. Marsh

- I. Within Us – Power (Gal. 2:20)
- II. Before Us – Example (John 10:4)
- III. Above Us – Representative (Heb. 9:24)
- IV. Beneath Us – Sustainer (Deut. 33:27)
- V. Beside Us – Guide (Ps. 16:8)
- VI. Around Us – Deliverer (Ps. 34:7)
- VII. Behind Us – Protector (Isa. 52:12)

I. Within Us

1.	As the Life to live out	Gal. 2:20
2.	As the Power for walk and service	2 Cor. 6:16
3.	As the Source of fruit-bearing	John 15:4
4.	As the Word to teach	Col. 3:16
5.	As the Peace to rule	Col. 3:15
6.	As the Joy to fill	John 15:11
7.	As the Hope of glory to cheer	Col. 1:27

II. Before Us

1.	As the object of faith	Heb. 12:2
2.	As the Light to direct	John 8:12
3.	As the Lord to obey	John 13:14
4.	As the Shepherd to follow	John 10:27
5.	As the Master to serve	John 13:13

6.	As the Prize to win	Phil. 3:8, 14
7.	As the Goal to reach	1 Cor. 9:24

III. Above Us

1.	As the Finisher of His Work on our behalf	Heb. 10:11
2.	As the Conqueror over His and our enemies	Heb. 2:14
3.	As our High Priest to represent	Heb. 9:24
4.	As our Advocate to plead	1 John 2:1
5.	As the Firstfruits of the harvest	1 Cor. 15:23
6.	As the Sun to warm	Ps. 84:11
7.	As the Shield to protect	Gen. 15:1

IV. Beneath Us

1.	As the Foundation on whom we are built	1 Cor. 3:11
2.	As the Way to walk in	John 14:6
3.	As the Shoes of Peace to protect	Eph. 6:15
4.	As the Arms to carry	Deut. 33:27
5.	As the Shoulders to bear	Luke 15:5
6.	As the Bosom to rest in	John 21:20
7.	As the Staff to support	Ps. 23:4

V. Beside Us

1.	As the Strength to uphold	Isa. 41:10
2.	As the Companion for fellowship	Luke 24:32
3.	As the Friend to counsel	Prov. 27:9
4.	As the Guide to direct	John 16:13

5.	As the High Priest to succour	Heb. 4:15
6.	As the Comforter to cheer	John 14:16
7.	As the Teacher to teach	John 15:26

VI. Around Us

1.	As an hedge to protect	Job 1:10
2.	As food to strengthen	Ps. 78:28
3.	As a Deliverer to deliver	Ps. 34:7
4.	As a Tower to shield	Prov. 18:10
5.	As a Wall of Fire to consume enemies	Zech. 2:5
6.	As the mountains around Jerusalem to shelter	Ps. 125:2
7.	As an Army to fight	2 Kings 6:17

VII. Behind Us

1.	As the Suffering One for us	Heb. 9:26
2.	As the Pillar of Fire for light and protection	Ex. 14:19
3.	As the Voice to direct	Isa. 30:21
4.	As the Beloved to encourage	S.S. 2:9
5.	As Goodness and Mercy to follow	Ps. 23:6
6.	As the Lord to reprove	Rev. 1:10
7.	As our Rereward for separation between us and the world	Isa. 52:12

THE DOCTRINE OF THE CROSS

Malcolm H. Watts

Scripture teaches that there is significance about the way our Lord Jesus Christ died. His death by crucifixion fulfilled a number of Old Testament prophecies and types (e.g. Ps. 22:16; Zech. 12:10; Gen. 22:6; Num 21:8). In this article we ask the question: Why did our Saviour die on a cross?

The origin of sin must be traced to Adam's offence in taking fruit from a forbidden tree. Somehow it seems strangely fitting that Christ, the last Adam, should deal with sin by means of a tree. The Bible says, 'his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree' (1 Pet. 2:24). Augustine, in one of his sermons, comments: 'As we have been made dead by a Tree, so have we been made alive by a Tree; a Tree discovered to us our nakedness, and a Tree covered us with the leaves of mercy'.

According to the Bible's doctrine, sin has completely destroyed the harmony which once existed between man and God. When man sinned he became alienated from God and subject to his wrath. There was therefore a need for someone to intervene between the two parties at variance and to reconcile them. Now the biblical word for such a person is 'mediator', which literally means 'middleman'. 'There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus' (1 Tim. 2:5). In his death, the Lord Jesus stood between the offended God and the offending sinner, making full satisfaction to divine justice by his suffering and death.

The cross - with its foot on earth and its top directed towards heaven - seems to symbolize the connecting link between them both. 'So seems my Saviour's cross to me, a ladder up to heaven'.

Christ's work on that cross is described as a 'sacrifice' for the sins of men. By this we mean that Christ offered his life to divine justice in order that guilty sinners might be saved. This sacrifice was wonderfully illustrated and exhibited in the vicarious sacrifices of Old Testament times. God intended that they

should foreshadow our Lord's atoning work. One of them, the lamb of the Passover, is specially important in this respect. 'Christ our passover is sacrificed for us' (1 Cor. 5:7).

We quote here an interesting footnote in Dr Farrar's 'Life of Christ': 'It is a striking circumstance that the body of the Paschal lamb was literally crucified on two transverse spits. I witnessed the Samaritan Passover on the summit of Mount Gerezim in 1870, and the bodies of the seven lambs as they were prepared for roasting looked exactly as though they were laid on seven crosses'.

So, Christ became the sin-bearer. Significantly, he suffered that particular death which the law had associated with the infliction of the curse: 'He that is hanged is accursed of God' (Deut. 21:23 cf. 27:26).

And by undergoing the curse on our behalf, he has liberated us from it. 'Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree' (Gal. 3:13).

Why was death by hanging regarded as so terrible? The criminal, in public disgrace, was lifted up between heaven and earth as if rejected and abandoned by both. 'Jesus cried - My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?' (Matt. 27:46).

The early Christians loved to meditate upon the cross and delve into its spiritual mysteries. Among other things, they noticed that it extended four ways as if it had reference to north, south, east, and west.

It was an interesting observation, for we know that the precious blood of Christ avails, not just for a few in one place, but for elect men and women the world over. We have been redeemed 'out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation' (Rev. 5:9); and it is this vast company of redeemed souls which will one day gather together in the heavenly kingdom. 'They shall come', said our Lord, 'from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God' (Lk. 13:29).

Observe too that, lifted up on his cross, Christ was exhibited to multitudes of men and women. According to Luke's Gospel, 'all the people...came together to that sight' (Lk. 23:48). Of course, this was all part of the divine arrangement, intimating that Christ was to be set forth and freely offered in gospel preaching, so that sinners everywhere may 'look' to him for salvation (Isa. 45:22; Zech. 12:10; Jn. 1:29).

In one of the ancient prophecies we actually hear Christ speaking of his long-continued offers of grace, and saying: 'I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people' (Isa. 65:2 cf. Rom. 10:21). Matthew Henry, with his characteristic spiritual perception, says: 'When Christ was crucified, his hands were spread out and stretched forth, as if he were preparing to receive returning sinners unto his bosom; and this "all the day", all the gospel day'. The cross is preaching to all; and the text of its sermon is: 'This man receiveth sinners' (Lk. 15:2).

So what is the good news of the gospel? It is that God grants a free pardon to every believer. The cross is a striking revelation of that. God's Law had become for all of us like one enormous bill informing us of the extent of our terrible debt; but the Lord Jesus met those legal demands on behalf of his people and all who believe can rejoice that their bill has been fully paid. Now here is something worth noting; the ancient way of cancelling a bond was by driving a nail through it and fixing it to a post.

What Christ did was to take to himself our liabilities which were then nailed with him to the cross. This was God's way of saying that the account had been settled. 'Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us,... (he) took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross' (Col. 2:14).

Take another look at the cross. People present at Calvary saw it raised up and it must have appeared to them as some kind of standard. The Gospels tell us of some, like the centurion, who enlisted under that blood-stained banner (Matt 27:54). And still today, the once crucified but now glorified Redeemer presents himself to the whole world, that sinners may give themselves up to him and

serve him to the end of their lives. 'In that day', Isaiah promises, 'there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious' (Isa. 11:10 cf. Lk. 1:70-75).

Finally, observe how the cross has a judicial significance. On the upright was a projecting peg (sedile) upon which Christ would have been able to sit, perhaps for a few brief moments. Its purpose was to prevent the weight of the body from tearing the hands. But when elevated above the people, the cross bore a resemblance to a seat, and Christ, sitting upon it, appeared like a Judge at a solemn Tribunal, settling the destinies of men. Was there ever such an awe-inspiring scene? On the one side of Him was a thief who had come to faith. He was acquitted. But on the other side was a thief who, in unbelief, rejected Christ. He was condemned. A little while before His death, Christ had said that this was how it was going to be. These were His words: "The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified...Now is the judgment of this world..." (Jn. 12:23,31). It is still true. If, when Christ and His cross are preached, you resolutely refuse to believe in Him, sentence will be passed against you. If, on the other hand, you receive Him as your Saviour, you will be absolved and declared right with God. "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (Jn. 3:18).

A GOD READY TO PARDON

Nehemiah 9:17

When William Dawson, the celebrated street preacher, was conducting a street meeting in London, he was told of a young man who in a neighbouring house was dying. He climbed the rickety stairway, and stood by the bedside of a young man, a victim of consumption, and just nearing eternity. He found that he was the son of wealthy parents, but that his father had cast him off because of his sin. When William Dawson said he would intercede with the father on behalf of the son, the boy said it would be useless, for the father had long ago cast him off. And it almost seemed that he was right, for when Mr. Dawson

entered the spacious mansion, and mentioned the boy's name, the father said, "If you have come, Sir, to talk of that scapegrace, I shall ask you to leave. He is no son of mine."

"Well, Sir," said the preacher, "he will not be here long to trouble you, for I left him dying."

In a moment the man's whole attitude had changed. "Is he sick?", he said, "Is Joseph ill?, then take me to him."

Soon he was on his knees by the side of the dying boy, his arms about him, and his head pillowed on his breast. All the boy could say was, "Father, can you forgive me?" and the father could only sob, "O Joseph, my son, my son; I would have forgiven you months ago if you would only have received it."

When, by God's free grace, we are convicted of sin, and we sense our misery, then it is that we apprehend the sweetness of God's mercy, that God grieves over our lost condition, longs for our recovery, and is ready to pardon us, even as He pardoned King Manasseh, Mary Magdalene, the Dying Thief, Saul of Tarsus, and countless others.

"Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity...because he delighteth in mercy." (Micah 7:18)

JOHN CALVIN: HIS IMPORTANCE TODAY

Malcolm Watts

John Calvin is recognised as one of the foremost leaders - if not the foremost leader - of the great Reformation. During his life-time his teaching affected hundreds of thousands of fellow believers; and today, more than ever, the effect of Calvin and Calvinism is felt throughout the world.

Calvin was, in the first place, *the theologian of the Word*. The underlying assumption in all that he taught was that Scripture, God's Word written, was God-breathed, absolutely inerrant and authoritative. "Hence the Scriptures obtain full authority among believers only when men regard them as having sprung from heaven, as if there *the living words of God* were heard." The modern Church desperately needs to recover the Reformer's doctrine of Scripture and so to present the Gospel that men, inwardly enlightened by the Spirit, may discern God's "*majesty*" and "*glory*"; man's "*corruption and depravity*" - as "plunged into this deadly abyss, ...not only burdened with vices, but...utterly devoid of all good"; and Christ's "*love*", "submitting himself even as the accused, to bear and suffer all the punishments they ought to have sustained". Then, by grace and power, elect sinners will be enabled to "*receive him* as he is offered by the Father" and thus "dare with contrite hearts to *stand in God's sight*." Let the world hear this Truth. It is the only Truth: it is *Bible, Reformation Truth*.

Secondly, Calvin was *the theologian of the life*. He stressed "piety" – "that reverence joined with love of God" which inevitably leads to "willing service." True piety, therefore, will mean life lived under the guidance of God: a life of constant obedience. For Calvin, this alone can properly be called "the life of the Christian man". Essentially, it includes "self-denial" (giving up control of our lives, that we may be devoted to his will) and "bearing the cross" (seeking to be conformed to the Lord Jesus Christ, even through suffering and sorrow), that, by the further means of "meditation of the future life" and "using the present life and its helps", we may continue in our "pilgrimage" towards "the Heavenly Kingdom." Calvin *still* teaches those prepared to hear him that the Christian life is a *consecrated life*, subject to the Law as the perfect rule and characterized in every part with holiness and purity. His emphasis is surely needed in these days when, tragically, many are lowering their standards, compromising with the world, and failing to evidence true and vital Godliness. Moreover, what Calvin taught as his doctrine, he *exemplified* in his life. Theodore Beza witnessed the way he lived for sixteen years and he could write after Calvin's death, "I now unhesitatingly testify that every Christian may find in this man the noble pattern of a truly Christian life and Christian death."

Thirdly, Calvin was *the theologian of the heart*. Spiritual experience really began for him when “by a sudden conversion, God subdued and brought my heart to docility”. Thereafter, as he grew in grace, he discovered that the Lord graciously admits us to “*greater familiarity with himself*”. “How then is it possible for thee”, he once wrote, “to know God, and to be moved by no feeling?” When under “the heavy affliction” of his wife’s death, he was able to write to Farel that the grief would “certainly have overcome me had not He who raises up the prostrate, strengthens the weak, and refreshes the weary, stretched forth His hand from heaven to me”; and when in his final illness he was informed that Farel, his dear friend, was determined to visit him, Calvin sent word to him not to make the arduous journey; and then, testifying to a “felt” Christ, he adds, “My respiration is difficult, and I am about to breathe the last gasp, *happy* to live and die in Jesus Christ...I bid you, and all my brethren, my last adieu”. Calvin was *profoundly experimental*. He would have had no sympathy whatsoever with that contemporary “Calvinism” which despises the spiritual feelings of the heart. Instead, he would surely impress on us – we who are so lacking in life within – that the vital essence of authentic Calvinism is to *glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever*.

Today, under the Divine blessing, Calvin’s influence could once again be the means of reviving doctrinal, practical and experimental Christianity, to the blessing of God’s Church and to the glory of his most excellent and worthy Name.

THE COUNSELS OF REV. PHILIP HENRY

Philip Henry (father of Matthew Henry, the Commentator) was born in 1631. Converted in his youth, and then called by God into the ministry, he began to preach the Word of God at Worthenbury. He was one of those who refused to conform in 1662. Bishop Wordsworth once said he “could nowhere find non-conformity united with more Christian graces than in him.” He died in 1696.

“There are three things, which if Christians do, they will prove mistaken:

1. If they look for that in themselves, which is to be had in another; viz, righteousness.

2. If they look for that in the law, which is to be had only in the gospel; viz, mercy.
3. If they look for that on earth, which is to be had only in heaven; viz. perfection.”

* * * * *

“There are three excellent rules to guide us in doubtful cases:

1. What would Peter, or Paul, or Christ Himself do in this case, if they were here?
2. What would I do myself if I were dying now, and going to judgment?
3. What is the first dictate of my own conscience; I say, the first, – before interest, profit, hath bribed it? Usually that is the right.”

* * * * *

“(There are) three good lessons in three Hebrew names twice put together:

1. Mishmah
2. Dumah
3. Massa

Genesis 25:14; 1 Chronicles 1:30; which signify, Hear, Keep Silence, Bear. The apostle has them together, James 1:19; – Be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.”

* * * * *

“In reply to the inquiry, – What means are we to use, that we may remember spiritual things better, to carry away with us more of what we hear, and keep it more faithfully? he says; – Get the heart filled with love to the things of God. I never yet saw a covetous man forget where his money lay. The reason is his heart is upon it. See Psalm 119:16.”

* * * * *

“Things to be remembered: Thy God, thy sin, thy death, thy Christ; the eternal pains of hell; the joys of heaven, the day of doom, – these seven, remember well.”