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LETTER FROM THE PASTOR

A Tale of Two Williams

Two very influential men flourished in the late Victorian period - a time of upheaval and change in the churches of our land. They had the same first and middle names: William Robertson Smith (1846-1894) and William Robertson Nicoll (1851-1923).

Robertson Smith was Professor of Hebrew and Old Testament Literature at the Free Church College in Aberdeen. He had sworn commitment to the Westminster Confession, which included the divine inspiration of the Scriptures. However, in articles for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* he taught the very opposite of that. It amounted to a popularising of unbelieving German Higher Criticism that was gathering momentum on the Continent.

Smith's denomination tried him for heresy, and he lost his professorship in 1881. He afterwards secured a post at Cambridge University and had a distinguished academic career until his death. However, the views he drip-fed students lingered within the Free Church and were largely responsible for its spiritual decline. It was part of a wider movement of theological liberalism that infected most training colleges, church denominations and pulpits in those days.

Robertson Nicoll was also a Scottish Free Churchman. An ordained minister, he served two pastorates before ill health led him down to London to work for Hodder & Stoughton, the famous publishers. Among his many successful projects, he founded *The British Weekly* – a religious, social and literary paper which at its height had a circulation of 100,000 readers.

Where did Robertson Nicoll stand regarding Higher Criticism? He was a friend of Robertson Smith, and sympathised with his views, although a professed evangelical. He held to a cautious “believing criticism.” His paper was evangelical, yet he invited liberals to contribute to it. He sincerely believed that was necessary to appeal to the enlightened people of the late 19th century. He thought it was possible to have evangelical belief *and* progressive views.

When it came to the Downgrade Controversy and Spurgeon's stand, Robertson Nicoll was ambivalent. He was a good friend of Spurgeon as well

as Robertson Smith. However, he believed Spurgeon represented the older generation whose views were no longer sustainable in the light of the biblical scholarship and scientific discovery of the 19th century. Spurgeon's *Sword and Trowel* magazine was very different from the uncertain sound of the *British Weekly*. In the battle for truth in those days, Spurgeon declared: "Highly-cultured soul murderers will find their boasted learning of little excuse on the Day of Judgement."

On one occasion Spurgeon wrote to Nicoll: "I wish you would come out most decidedly, and wholeheartedly [for the Truth]. I shall be pleased to see you if you call round. I would not say a word to silence or hinder you if you are *not* on the right side; but believing that you are so, I should be very sorry to say half a word to vex you, or hurt your paper."

Spurgeon was generous regarding his friend's true position. All this leads us to some lessons from this tale.

1. Robertson Nicoll could have done so much for the truth. But he did not support Spurgeon in the Downgrade. The furore was useful to report impartially because it boosted the circulation of the *British Weekly*! This would not have been so if he had supported Spurgeon.
2. Neutrality regarding the truth is to betray the truth. Our Lord declared, "He that is not with me is against me" (Matthew 12:30). When truth falls in the street it needs a decisive witness to bear it aloft (1 Timothy 3:15).
3. Liberalism will spread everywhere. It is like a killer virus. The former Aberdeen Free Church College building is now a wine bar with a night club section called *Babylon*. The *British Weekly* is no more. Church buildings and chapels across the land stand empty. Because of Liberalism, people lost confidence in the Bible as the Word of God and deserted a religion with no authority.
4. And yet God's Word remains, with all its divine authority. And He can revive His work. And we are to believe it, live by it, and preach it. And Spurgeon is still read avidly. Where are all the volumes by Smith and his fellow-liberals? Hardly anybody wants them – *they* now are out of date, superseded by other unbelieving theories. Where is the *British Weekly* and

its compromise? It is no more. Yet the *Sword and Trowel* continues its faithful witness.

5. Neutrality is cowardly and a betrayal of trust. The Robertson Nicolls of the church are almost as dangerous as the Robertson Smiths. Let *us* stand up for the truth in our day with clarity. It is not a question of the difference between modernisers and traditionalists – it is between unfaithfulness, and loyalty to God and eternal truth.

Yours in the love of the truth,
John Thackway

FELLOWSHIP NEWS

Daniel Tribe

The beginning of September is often a time of great change for the younger ones who worship with us. Some have begun school for the first time, others have changed year groups and some have even changed schools. We remember them all before the Lord in prayer. We particularly commit Katie M and Anna R to the Lord as they begin life at university. It is our prayer that, while they part from their families for a time and join their fellow students, that they would be very aware of the Lord's presence with them and be able to say with the Psalmist; "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life" (Ps. 23:6).

Our dear friend and brother in Christ, Duncan M, began his new teaching job in September. We're grateful to the Lord for leading Duncan to this role and it is our prayer that he will be much helped and blessed.

The Youth Work saw an encouraging return after the summer-break, with the Toddlers, Sunday School and Seniors all seeing good numbers. We join with the leaders of these groups in praying that the Lord would work savingly among the young people in Salisbury.

On the first Saturday in September, we held our annual Evangelistic BBQ. We're thankful to the Lord for good weather and good food, but above all we give thanks for another opportunity to share the glorious gospel of the blessed

God. In God's mercy a good number of visitors were with us on this occasion, and we pray on that the good Word they heard will yet bring forth fruit unto salvation in many a soul.

We've been much in prayer for Chloe H's Nan who has had several spells in hospital over the last few months. The Lord has answered our prayers as she is back home and continuing to recover.

Rejoicing with them that do rejoice, during the morning service on 3rd September, we publicly gave thanks to the Lord for Zach. We pray God's rich blessings upon Nathan and Esther, and the whole family. We especially remember Esther who has suffered back pain in recent weeks. May the Lord grant her relief.

The Larbert School in Theology was held 4th — 7th September at Corronvale House, Larbert, in Scotland. It was a very blessed week, with 40 ministers in attendance. On the Tuesday, at the evening meeting, Malcolm Watts addressed the School on "The Blessedness of God."

Salisbury Reformed Seminary held an Open Lecture Day on Saturday 14th October. There were over 20 visitors who joined the three regular students for the lectures, with many of them testifying to the blessing received, showing the importance of the Seminary's emphasis upon heart-religion. Please join us in praying that the Lord would call and equip men to labour faithfully in the ministry of the gospel.

On Saturday 21st October we held our last Open Air of the year. We thank the Lord for these opportunities to preach the gospel in the streets of Salisbury. We go forward bearing the precious seed of the Word with expectation that we shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, all for the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

On Wednesday 11th October, Susan R's mother went to be with the Lord. We earnestly pray for the Holy Spirit to minister much comfort to Susan and the whole family. May the God of all comfort be their portion at this sad time.

REPORT OF THE SALISBURY CONFERENCE 2023

It was with great rejoicing and gratitude to the Lord, that the weekend September 22nd — 24th saw the return of the Salisbury Conference (our first since 2019). We were pleased to welcome the Reverend Dafydd Morris to our pulpit, and the theme for the weekend's ministry was 'Experiencing Christ'.

The conference began with a biographical address of the life and ministry of William Gadsby. We were challenged and encouraged by the compelling account of his life, which was helpfully applied to us today, with an emphasis upon heart-felt Christianity.

In the three Saturday sessions we considered Genesis 18 where the LORD appears to Abraham.

We saw, in the first address, 'The Manifestation of Christ'. As the Son of God appeared to Abraham so the Lord Jesus is able to manifest Himself to His people, the Holy Spirit giving them spiritual sight of Him through the Word. At such times Christ appears to believers as most excellent and excites their graces of love and faith.

In the second address, 'The Entertainment of Christ', attention was drawn to the way in which Abraham received the LORD with watchfulness, perception, a Christward desire and humble abasement. We were encouraged to entertain the LORD in our hearts by the exercising of these graces.

The final address, 'Our Communion with Christ', drew attention to the sacrifice of Christ which opened the way for our communion with Him. As Abraham sat with the LORD "under the tree", so believers have communion with Christ in the shade of Calvary, trusting in the Lord's substitutionary atonement.

On the Lord's Day, the Reverend Malcolm Watts, our former Pastor, preached ably both morning and evening; and the weekend was brought to a close as we heard a word of personal testimony from Dafydd Morris.

We were very pleased to welcome many visitors from near and far, and we glorify the Lord, whose Spirit was felt and known among us.

Recordings of the preaching sessions can be found online at salisburyemmanuel.org.uk/conference2023

God willing, the next Salisbury Conference will be held the weekend 20th – 22nd September 2024, with Dr. Jeffery T. Riddle as the expected speaker.

Daniel Tribe

REPORT OF THE LORD'S WORK IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

At our After-Church Fellowship Meeting on 10th September we welcomed Mrs Nicola Karasek, and two of her sons, Daniel and Joel, representing a work in the Czech Republic. Nicola and her husband Zdenek were given a burden for the spread of the Gospel in that former Communist, and still atheistic, land. In 2001 they began an independent Baptist church in Liberec, a city of over 100,000 people. Since then, around ten members worship and serve together.

They are highly active in outreach, and have seen some remarkable works of grace. Included were the testimonies of Daniel and Joel – their conversion experiences were moving, and a precious reminder that the Lord can save even the most rebellious and hardened of teenage sons.

It was also a pleasure to welcome these young men to some sessions of the Salisbury Reformed Seminary during that week.

We wish our friends well, and trust the Lord will continue to build His church in Liberec.

SCATTERED ISRAEL TO BE GATHERED

John Charles Ryle (1858)

The point on which I propose to dwell is one purely practical. It is the duty which Gentile Churches owe to Israel. Reader, in touching on this point, I would not have you for a moment suppose that the future gathering of Israel depends

on anything that man can do. God's counsels and purposes are independent of human strength.

The sun will set tonight at its appointed hour, and neither Queen, Lords nor Commons, — Pope, Presidents, nor Emperors, — can hasten, prevent, or put off its setting. The tides of the sea will ebb and flow this week in their regular course, and no scientific decree nor engineering skill can interfere with their motion. And just in like manner the promises of God concerning Israel will all be fulfilled in due season, whether we will hear or whether we will forbear.

When the “times and seasons” arrive, which God has “put in His own power,” Israel will be gathered; — and all the alliances and combinations of statesmen, and all the persecution and unbelief of apostate Churches, shall not be able to prevent it. But seeing that we look for such things, it becomes us all to be found in the path of duty. It behoves us to consider gravely the solemn question, What manner of persons ought we to be? And, in what way can we testify our full assent to God's purposes about the Jews? Can we in no sense be fellow-workers with God? Should we not remember that remarkable saying of St. Paul, — “Through your mercy they also may obtain mercy” (Romans 11:31). This is the question to which I now desire briefly to supply a practical answer.

1. I believe, then, for one thing, that it is a duty incumbent on all Gentile Christians to take a special interest in the spiritual condition of the Jewish nation, and to give their conversion a special place in our prayers.

I say, advisedly, their spiritual condition. I leave alone their civil and political position. I speak, exclusively, of our duty to Jewish souls. I say that we owe them a special debt, and that this debt ought to be carefully paid.

We prize our Bibles, and we are right to do so. A sky without a sun would not be more blank than a world without a Bible. But do we ever reflect that every page in that blessed book was written under God's inspiration by Israelitish hands? Remember that every chapter and verse you read in your Bible, you owe under God to Israel. There is not a religious society that meets in London in the month of May which is not constantly working with Israelitish tools. We prize the glorious Gospel of the grace of God, and we are right to do so. A land without the Gospel, like Mongolia or China, is nothing better than a moral wilderness. See the vast difference between Europe and America with the Gospel, notwithstanding all their vices — and Africa and Asia without it.

But do we ever reflect that the first preachers of that Gospel were all Jews? The men who, at cost of their lives, first carried from town to town the blessed tidings of Christ crucified, were not Gentiles. The first to take up the lamp of truth, which was passed from hand to hand until it reached our heathen forefathers — were all men of Israel.

We rejoice in Christ Jesus and glory in His person and work. Well may we do so! Without a living Saviour and the blood of His atonement once made on the cross — we would indeed be miserable. But do we ever reflect that when that Saviour became a man, in order that, as man's substitute, He might live, and suffer and die — He was born of a Jewish woman? Yes, let that never be forgotten! When "God was manifest in the flesh" and was "born of a woman," that woman was a virgin of the house of David. When the promised Saviour took flesh and blood that He might bruise the serpent's head and redeem man — He took not flesh and blood of any royal house among the Gentiles — but of one of the twelve tribes of Israel.

Reader, I know well that these are ancient things. They have been often urged, often alleged, often pressed on the attention of the Churches. I am not ashamed to bring them forward again. I say, that if there be such a thing as gratitude in the heart of man, it is the duty of all Gentile Christians to take special interest in the work of doing good to the Jews.

2. I believe, furthermore, that it is a duty incumbent on all Gentile Christians, to be especially careful that they take up the stumbling-blocks out of the way of Israel, and too that they do nothing to disgust them with Christianity or hinder their conversion.

This is a matter which is expressly mentioned in Scripture. There in Isaiah we find, "Take up the stumbling-block out of the way of my people" (Isaiah 57:14). Truly the Prophet might well speak of this. No man can look round the Gentile Churches, and fail to see that he had cause. What shall we say of the glaring unholiness and neglect of God's Ten Commandments which prevail so widely in Christendom? What shall we say of the open unblushing idolatry which offends the eye in all Roman Catholic churches? What shall we say of the rationalistic mode of interpreting Old Testament history, which has crept so extensively into modern commentaries — the system of regarding the histories of Abraham, Jacob, Joseph and the like, as so many myths or ingenious fables, but not as narratives of facts which really took place? What shall we say of the

traditional mode of interpreting Old Testament prophecies, in which so many Christians indulge the system of appropriating all the blessings to the Church of Christ and handing over all the bitter things to poor despised Israel; the system of interpreting all prophecies about Christ's First Advent literally — and all prophecies about His Second Advent figuratively; requiring the Jew to believe the first in the letter — and refusing in turn to believe the second, except in what is called (by a sad misnomer) a spiritual sense? What shall we say of all these things but that they are stumbling-blocks — great stumbling-blocks in the way of the conversion of the Jews? What are they all but great barriers between the Jew and Christ, and barriers cast up by Christian hands?

Reader, we must all do our part in aiding to take these stumbling-blocks away. Here at least all may help. Here, at any rate, every Gentile Christian can aid the Jewish cause. The more pure and lovely we can make our holy faith — the more we are likely to recommend it to Israel. The more we can check the progress of the Roman apostasy, and protest against its idolatries and corruptions — the more likely is the Jew to believe there is something in Christianity. The more we can promote the habit of taking all of Scripture in its plain literal sense, the more we are likely to remove prejudices in the minds of honest inquirers in Israel, and to make them ready to hear what we have to say.

3. Finally, I believe it is a duty incumbent on all Gentile Christians to use special efforts in order to promote the conversion of the Jews.

I say special efforts advisedly. The Jews are a particular people and must be approached in a particular way.

They are particular in their state of mind. They require an entirely different treatment from the heathen. Their objections are not the heathen man's objections. Their difficulties are not the heathen man's difficulties. They believe many things of which the heathen man has never heard. They have a standard of right and wrong with which the heathen man is utterly unacquainted. Like the heathen, they need to be converted. Like the heathen, they need to be brought to Christ. But the lines of argument to be pursued with the Jew and the heathen, are widely dissimilar. A faithful missionary who might do admirably well among the heathen, might find it difficult to reason with a Jew.

They are particular in their position in the world. They are not to be found all assembled together, like the Africans at Sierra Leone, or the Hindus, or New Zealanders, or Chinese. They are emphatically a scattered people, a few in one country and a few in another. An effort to get at them, must aim at nothing short of sending missionaries in search of them all over the world.

Circumstances like these appear to me to point out clearly that nothing less than a special effort will ever enable Christians to discharge their debt to Israel. There must be a division of labour in the missionary field. There must be a special concentration of preaching, praying, and loving fellowship on the Jewish people — or the Church of the Gentiles can never expect to do them much spiritual good. Without such special effort, the cause of Israel will inevitably be lost sight of in the cause of the whole heathen world. Without such special effort, I cannot see how the command of the text can be rightly obeyed.

I leave the whole subject with three remarks, which I pray God to impress on the minds of all into whose hands this address may fall.

1. For one thing, I charge every reader of this address to remember the special blessing which God has promised to all who care for Israel. Whatever a sneering world may say, the Jews are a people "beloved for their fathers' sake." Of Jerusalem it is written, "They shall prosper that love thee" (Psalm 122:6). Of Israel it is written, "Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee" (Num. 24:9). These promises are not yet exhausted. We see their fulfilment in the blessing granted to the Church of England since the day when the Jewish cause was first taken up. We see their fulfilment in the peculiar honour which God has put from time to time on individual Christians who have laboured especially for the Jewish cause. Charles Simeon, Edward Bickersteth, Robert M'Cheyne, Haldane Stewart, and Dr Marsh are striking examples of what I mean. Is there anyone that desires God's special blessing? Then let him labour in the cause of Israel, and he shall not fail to find it.
2. For another thing, I charge every reader of this address never to forget the close connection which Scripture reveals between the time of Israel's gathering — and the time of Christ's Second Advent to the world. In one Psalm it is expressly declared, "When the LORD shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory" (Psalm 102:16). Where is the true believer who

does not long for that blessed day? Where is the true Christian who does not cry from the bottom of his heart, "Thy kingdom come"? Let all such work and give and pray, so that the Gospel may have free course in Israel. The time to favour Zion is closely bound up with the restitution of all things. Blessed indeed, is that work of which the completion shall usher in the Second Coming of the Lord!

3. Finally, I charge every reader of this address to make sure work of his own salvation. Rest not in mere head-knowledge of prophetic subjects. Be not content with intellectual soundness in the faith. Give diligence to make your own calling and election sure. Seek to know that your repentance and faith are genuine and true. Seek to feel that you are one with Christ and Christ in you, and that you are washed, sanctified, and justified. Then, whether the completion of God's promises to Israel are near or far off — your own portion will be sure. You will stand safely, when the kingdoms of this world are passing away. You will meet Christ without fear, when He comes the second time to Zion. You will join boldly in the song, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord." You will sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the Kingdom of God and go out no more.

A GRACIOUS MANIFESTATION OF GRACE

Henry Clay Morrison (1857-1942)

Some twenty or twenty-five years ago, I was assisting in meetings in one of our great Eastern cities. The Lord was blessing us and quite a number of people were professing salvation. One young man in particular evidenced spiritual concern.

One evening after service, he asked if he might walk with me to my boarding-place. I willingly consented. As we walked along the street, he unburdened his heart; he told me that he was not quite twenty-four years of age, but that he felt he had completely sinned away his day of grace and that there was no help or hope for him; that he had been coming to the meetings on the advice of some friends who thought it might possibly warm up his heart and turn him to God.

He told me of his sins. He had blighted a life; he had sworn a lie, he had signed a false statement and while he had not actually committed murder, he had

been connected with the planning of a murder and felt that he was as wicked as if he had committed murder with his own hand. I have hardly ever heard just such a confession as he made. He said that for a number of years he had not been able to pray, that he could feel no emotion, that he could shed no tears, that while he regretted his wickedness and would give the world, if he owned it, to undo his past, yet there seemed to be a cold deadness in his heart and that he was not conscious of any godly sorrow; that for several years he had walked about with a sort of graveyard in his breast, in which everything that was good or could produce happiness, repentance for sins or exercising of faith seemed to be dead and buried. He asked if I thought it was at all worthwhile for him to hear the Gospel or if I could believe there was any mercy for so great a sinner as he had been.

We had just come under a street-light. I wheeled suddenly around, caught him by the lapel of his coat, gave him a vigorous shake and said, "Doesn't the Bible say that Jesus Christ came to seek and save the lost?" And then, crying out as loud as I dared on the street, I said, "Aren't you lost? No doubt Jesus is seeking you!" He looked at me with surprise and then broke into tears. As we walked toward my boarding-house he said, "Well, thank God, I have some feeling and these are the first tears I have shed for several years. I wouldn't take the world for these tears. It may be that there is mercy for me."

I stopped at my doorstep and we talked for some time. I urged him to press on, to let nothing prevent him seeking the Lord on all public occasions, and constantly in private, and to remind himself that Jesus had come "to seek and save the lost."

As we parted, he expressed great gratitude for the good words of encouragement and said again and again, "I am so thankful that I can weep, that that awful hardness is broken up; there must be hope for me." I saw nothing more of the young man, and often wondered what had become of him.

This fall, while preaching in one of the Eastern cities, frequently at the night services I noticed back in the congregation a large, well-dressed, handsome gentleman. He gave the closest attention and had a most receptive face and I judged from his appearance and manifestation that he was a devout Christian. On the last night of the meeting, he came forward and gave me a most hearty and brotherly greeting and assured me that he had attended the services as frequently as possible and had been greatly benefited by the meeting. He held

on to my hand and looking up with a beaming countenance, he said, "We have met before. Do you recall a good many years ago a young man walked home with you when you were holding gospel meetings in a certain city and told you of his great wickedness and that for several years he had felt that there was no hope for him; that he had sinned away his day of grace; that he couldn't feel any contrition or pray with any faith, and that you insisted to the young man that he was lost and that Jesus had come to seek and to save the lost?"

The incident flashed into my mind at once and I assured him that I did remember very distinctly the whole matter as he related it.

"Well," said he, "I am the man." He said, "I sought the Lord and found Him most graciously. He called me into the ministry and for a number of years I have been preaching the blessed Gospel and the Lord has sealed my ministry in the salvation of many precious souls." We rejoiced together for a few moments; friends were crowding about to bid me goodbye and we had no time for further conversation.

The reader may be sure that I was delighted to meet this man and to hear the witness from his lips of the wonderful mercy of God and the gracious power of Jesus to save from sin.

Relating this incident reminds me that quite frequently in my ministry and by correspondence I have met up with or come in touch with persons who believed they had committed unpardonable sin and for them there was no hope and, in a number of instances, I have been able to help them back to repentance and saving faith. I recall one case of a young man who had brooded over his sins and his lost condition until he had been sent to a sanatorium for the insane. He wrote to me from that place. We had quite a correspondence. He was finally able to exercise saving faith in Jesus. His heart was comforted with peace, his health improved, his mental equilibrium was restored and the last time I heard from him he was preaching the Gospel.

I think a very large number of people at some time in life are more or less troubled with the fear that they had sinned away their day of grace and that for them there is no mercy or hope. In fact, this is one of Satan's shrewd schemes. First, he will say to the sinner, "There is no danger; God is merciful. Enjoy yourself. Gratify your appetites. Feed your passion. Get the most out of life. There is plenty of time." And thus he will draw the soul away from God into sin.

Second, he will turn upon the soul and say, "You have gone too far. There is no hope. You can't repent. God will not be merciful. He has entirely cast you away and it is useless to seek salvation." This father of lies has no truth in him. He is lying when he says there is no danger and he is also lying when he says there is no hope.

There is great danger in sin, any sin of any character; there is great danger in delay, but there is hope; repentance is possible and God delights in mercy, however far the prodigal may have wandered; however fallen and fearful may be his or her condition. When the lost soul turns to God, pleading the name of Jesus, there is mercy. If anyone should read these lines who has fallen into despair, do not listen longer to the voice of the tempter, but throw yourself upon the divine mercy of God, plead with Him, cling to Him, tell Him how that the Christ who has tasted death for every man has tasted death for you, and let no one, man or devil, persuade you that you may not repent and pray and trust in Jesus Christ for salvation.

THE EXPERIMENTAL KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST

Thomas Boston (1676-1732)

"That I may know him" (Philippians 3:10)

A mere speculative knowledge of Christ, and of the great doctrines of the gospel, however laboriously acquired and extensive it may be, is of small importance in itself, and quite vain and ineffectual, if it be not sanctified, and issue in *experimental knowledge of Christ, and a real feeling of the beauty and excellency, and efficacy of divine truth on the heart.*

A man may have a competent, nay, a very extensive acquaintance with the whole doctrines of the Christian religion, as laid down in the scriptures, and of which we have an excellent compendium in the *Shorter Catechism*, which I have been endeavouring to explain to you for a series of years; yet if you have not the experimental knowledge of Christ, all your knowledge is in vain as to the salvation of your souls. I therefore come, as a conclusion of the whole, to press this experimental knowledge upon you.

In the preceding verse, Philippians 3:9, the apostle speaks of the gain he received in Christianity, in point of justification, flowing from the soul's closing

with Christ and renouncing all other. Here he speaks of that gain in point of sanctification.

“That I may know him”. But might not the Philippians hereupon have said, “do you not know Christ, whom you have preached for so long?” There are two ways of knowing. One by hearing of a thing, another by experience: sight and feeling. One can know of honey and its virtues by report, but tasting it himself is another thing entirely.

The apostle knew Christ by faith, when he first believed in Him; but here he would have the spiritual feeling and experience of Him, finding by experience Him to be what he has heard and believed Him to be. He had something of this, but still he would have more.

The doctrine arising from the text is: **The experimental knowledge of Christ is the sum of practical religion (1 Corinthians 2:2), flowing from faith, to be studied by all.**

In handling this point, I shall (1) show what this experimental knowledge is; and (2) confirm the point, with some application.

(1) This experimental knowledge of Christ is an *inward and spiritual feeling of what we hear and believe concerning Christ and His truths, whereby answerable impressions are made on our souls (Psalm 34:8)*, like that of the Samaritans in John 4:42 when they said unto the woman, “Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.”

There is a savoury report of Christ spread in the gospel; faith believes it, and embraces Him for what the Word gives Him out to be; and then the believing soul doth come and see.

There is a glorious scheme of the lovely perfections of Christ drawn in the Bible, and faith believes that he really is what He is said to be; and then that scheme begins to be drawn over again in the Christian's experience, and this is always drawing more and more till he come to glory.

It is just as if some eminent physician should give a friend remedies for all diseases to which he may be liable; and when he leaves them with him, he lets

him know that such a remedy is good for that distemper, and another is good for another such etc. Now, he knows them all; but he falls sick, and he takes the remedy fit for his disease, and it proves effectual. Now, the man knows the remedy by experience, which he knew before by report only.

Even so Christ is given as all in all to a believer, and he makes use of Christ for his case, and that is the experimental knowledge of Him. I will illustrate these by some instances:

(a) The Scripture says of Christ, He is the way to the Father, John 14:6. Now, the man that has tried many ways of attaining access to God, and communion with Him, and is denied access, and can find no way to come to God, at length comes by Jesus Christ, renouncing all things else, leans only on his merit and intercession, and he finds an open door of access to God, and communion with Him. The flaming sword he finds removed, and He who was before a consuming fire, he finds now a warming sun to his soul. Here is experimental knowledge of Christ. Hence the apostle says, Romans 5:1, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God".

(b) Christ's blood "purges the conscience from dead works to serve the living God," Hebrews 9:14. Now, the experimental Christian knows from experience that unremoved and unrepented of guilt defiles the conscience, leaves a sting in it, unfits him to serve the Lord, as much as a man in filthy rags is unfit to stand before a king: it breeds in the heart an unwillingness to come before God, and mars his confidence: he tries to repent, overlooking the blood of Christ, but it will not do. He looks to an absolute God, and his heart is indeed terrified, but nothing softened. At length he looks to God in Christ, throws the burden of his guilt, and dips his soul in the sea of Christ's blood; and then the heart melts for sin, the sting is taken out of the conscience, the soul is willing to converse with God, and is enabled to serve Him, as a son doth a father.

(c) Christ is fully satisfying to the soul, Psalm 73:25 and Habakkuk 3:17, 18. We all know this by report; but the Christian experimentally knows it by a spiritual sensation in the innermost parts of his soul.

Sometimes, when all his enjoyments have been standing entire about him, he has looked with a holy contempt on them all, saying in his heart, these are not

my portion. His heart has been loosed from them, and he has been made willing to part with them all for Christ, in whom his soul rejoiced, and in whom alone he was satisfied.

Sometimes, again, all outward things have been going wrong with him, yet he could comfort, encourage, and satisfy himself in Christ, as David did in a great strait, 1 Samuel 30:6.

He has gone away to his God and his Christ, and, with Hannah, returned “with a countenance no more sad” (1 Samuel 1:18).

(d) Christ helps His people to bear afflictions, and keeps them from sinking under them; and He lifts up their heads when they go through these waters, Isaiah 43:2. Now, the Christian meets with affliction; and he takes a good lift of his own burden, for it is the thing he thinks he may well bear. But his burden is too heavy for him. He wrestles with it: but the more he wrestles, it grows the heavier, and he sinks the more. At length he goes to Christ, saying, “Lord, I thought to have borne this burden, but I am not able; I will sink under it, if I get not help: “Master, save us, for we perish.” And so, he lays it over on the great Burden-bearer, and he is helped, Psalm 28:7. Now, the man, when he thought he could do all, could do nothing; and when he thinks he can do nothing, he can do all, 2 Corinthians 8:9, 10.

(e) Christ is made unto us wisdom, 1 Corinthians 1:30. The experimental Christian finds that when he leans to his own understanding, he mistakes his way at mid-day; and all that he reaps of it is that in the end he has to call himself a “beast” and a “fool” for his error. But when he comes into difficulties, from which he knows not how to extricate himself, and is weary, and he lays out his case before the Lord and gives himself up as a blind man to be led by the Lord, he finds he is conducted in the way he knew not; and the result is to “bless the Lord who has given him counsel.”

(f) Lastly, Christ is made unto us sanctification, 1 Corinthians 1:30. Now, the Christian falls secure, does not make use of Christ, and then, ‘ere ever he is aware, he is like Samson without his hair. When he awakens, he sees his case is all gone to wrack, the course of sanctifying influences is stopped, and graces are lying in the dead thraw and lusts are strong and rampant. He falls a grappling with them, but is worsted still; until he come to himself, and acknowledge his utter weakness to stand in this battle, and so he renews the

acting of faith in Christ ; and then, out of weakness, he is made strong, waxes valiant in fight, and turns to fight the armies of the aliens, Hebrews 11:34. He flings down the confidence in himself, like the broken reed that has pierced his hand; and though the promise lie before him like the rod turned into a serpent, which unbelief tells him he would be too bold to meddle with, he ventures and takes the serpent by the tail, and it becomes the rod of God in his hand.

Let these suffice for examples of experimental religion.

(2) I proceed to confirm the point: or to shew that the experimental knowledge of Christ is the sum of practical religion. Consider:

(a) The Scripture testimonies concerning this. To learn religion in the power of it, and in all the parts of sanctification, is to learn Christ. Hence the apostle says, Ephesians 4:20-24, "But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard Him, and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts: and be renewed in the Spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." There needs no more to be known, for that comprehends all, 1 Corinthians 2:2, "I determined not to know anything among you," says Paul, "save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." It is "eternal life", John 17:3. It is a pledge of eternal life; it is eternal life begun.

Yea, Christ is the sum and substance of a believer's life, Philippians 1:21, "To me to live is Christ."

(b) All true religion is the creature's conformity or likeness to God, made by virtue of divine influences, transforming the soul into the divine image. Now, there can be no conformity to God but through Jesus Christ; for He is the only channel of the conveyance of the divine influences, and God can have no communication with sinners but through him. He alone makes us partakers of the divine nature, 2 Corinthians 4:6.

(c) Whatever religion or holiness a man may seem to have, that doth not come and is maintained this way, is not of the right sort. It is but nature varnished over: for "he that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father."

The soul's closing with Christ by faith opens the way to this experimental knowledge of Him; so that whosoever would know Christ thus, must in the first place so close with Him.

- I. Faith closing with Christ, believes He is such a one as is held out in the gospel and gives credit to the report; and it is the want of this that mars this knowledge, Isaiah 53:1.
- II. Faith closes with Christ to that very end, that the soul may so know Him. The soul stands in need of Christ in all that wherein He is held out as useful to a sinner, and faith takes Him for that.
- III. Faith unites the soul to Christ, and so makes way for this knowledge, which is the happy result of this union.

* * *

I come now to a word of improvement, which I shall discuss a little later in an exhortation. O Sirs! Labour to be experimental Christians, to have the inward feeling of what you hear and say ye believe concerning Christ. Why will ye stand in the outer court all your days? Come forward, and dip into the heart of religion. Come in where the world's ungracious feet could never carry them. And be not satisfied with less of religion, than what the beloved disciple in the name of believers says he felt, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ," 1 John 1:3. This is a weighty and seasonable point. To enforce this exhortation, I offer the following motives.

(a) Religion is not a matter of mere speculation to satisfy men's curiosity, but a matter of practice. Men's eternal state lies at stake, which can never be brought to a comfortable issue by a speculative knowledge, more than a man can be cured by the knowledge of a remedy, without application of it. **An unexperimental professor is like a foolish sick man, who entertains those about him with fine discourses on the nature of medicines, but, in the meantime, he is dying himself for want of application of them.**

(b) The sweetness of religion lies in the experience of it: hence the Psalmist says, "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness", Psalm 63:5. **No man can have the idea of the sweetness of honey like him that tastes it, nor of religion like him that feels the power of it. One reads the word, and it is tasteless to him; to another it is sweeter than the honeycomb; why? because he feels the power of it on his spirit, Psalm 19:11.** Religion would

not be such a burden to us as it is, if we could by experience carry it beyond dry sapless notions: it would be a reward to itself, and so chain the heart to it.

(c) All the profit of religion to ourselves lies in the experience of it, Matthew 7:22. What avails all the religion men have in their heads, while it never sinks into the heart? **Knowledge without experience will no more sanctify a man, than painted fire will burn, or the bare sight of water will wash.** Ah! what avails that knowledge to a man, by which he is never a whit more holy, nor less a slave to his lusts? True, it may do good to others, as the profit of the carpenter's gift came to Noah, while they themselves perished in the deluge. Light without heat serves only to shew the way to hell, where there is scorching heat without light. Gifts without grace are like a ship without ballast in a boisterous sea, that cannot miss to sink. And when such an one is sinking into hell, his gifts will be like a bag of gold on a drowning man, precious in itself, but which will only help to sink him the faster.

(d) The experimental Christian is the only Christian whose religion will bring him to heaven. Heaven in effect is but a perfect experimental knowledge of Christ, where the saints will for ever feed upon that sweetness they have heard to be in Him. And there is no attaining of heaven, unless men first begin on earth to know Christ thus.

(e) Lastly, it is absolutely necessary to qualify a man to go on and hold right in an evil time. And surely, if ever there was need for it, there is need now.

The experimental Christian is fitted thereby to suffer for Christ, because he has the testimony within himself, that the way which the world persecutes is the way of God. No arguments give such a certainty of the truth of religion as experience does.

When wickedness prospers, and piety is oppressed, experimental religion keeps a man from being led away with the error of the wicked, Malachi 3:16.

When many stumbling-blocks are laid in the way, especially in divisions and church-contentions which make many wicked men think there is no reality in religion at all, yet the righteous, in such a time, shall hold on his way.

THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

Malcolm H. Watts

Part 2

Our position is one of total rejection of ecumenism. Why do we make this stand? In answer to this question, I make the following points.

1. The ecumenical movement is unprepared to recognise Scripture as the sole authority, and therefore it embraces people who cannot agree even on the fundamentals of the Christian Faith. The basis of the World Council of Churches was issued at New Delhi in 1961. It reads as follows: "The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the Scriptures, and therefore seek to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit."

Needless to say, this basis is totally inadequate. It does not affirm the Scriptures to be the inspired and inerrant Word of God, the only authority for faith and practice. It omits all reference to Christ's virgin birth, His substitutionary and atoning death, His physical resurrection from the dead. It does not even mention the doctrine of Justification by Faith alone. The result is that all and sundry are in fellowship in the coming world Church. Dr J. DeForest Murch says, "The World Council of Churches is composed of a wide assortment of Churches which have differences in theological doctrine. There are Unitarians and Trinitarians. There are Liberal, Evangelical, Neo-orthodox, Arminians, Calvinists, Lutherans, Catholics and Eastern Orthodox." The liberalism represented in the World Council of Churches may be seen in this quotation from Archbishop Ramsay who was president of the World Council of Churches. In 1961 he was reported as saying, "Heaven is not a place for Christians only. Those who have led a good life on earth, but found themselves unable to believe in God will not be debarred from Heaven. I expect to meet some present-day atheists there." Ecumenism therefore, conceives not only of a world Church, with all and sundry within its pale, but it conceives of a Heaven

where all and sundry at last meet together. Where professing religionists from the Christian position to the atheistic position all find a home at last.

Now the Biblical rebuttal of these things is not difficult to describe. While our Lord prayed that His people might be one in John 17:21, He first prayed that they might be affected by the truth. Indeed seven times in that High Priestly prayer our Lord mentions God's Word and God's truth (verses 6, 14, 17, 19) and it is only after this repeated mention of the Truth, which He came down from Heaven to reveal, and which He had committed to those whom the Father had given Him, does he pray that they may be one. It was not therefore unity at the expense of truth; it was unity on the basis of truth. We find therefore that in the Book of Acts, which describes the beginnings of the Christian Church, that there is mention made of a body which received God's Word as that Word was faithfully ministered by the Apostle Peter. And therefore these people adhered to the apostles' doctrine as the pre-condition for fellowship: "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." (Acts 2:42).

Again, it was the truth which was laid as the foundation, and upon that truth men and women who had known the grace of God stood together in holy union. In the teaching of the epistles, Christ's Church is said to be built upon the foundation of the apostles and the prophets: "And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone." (Eph. 2:20). Now this is true as to their offices, and it is also true as to their teachings. The apostles' and the prophets' teachings constitute the basis for faith, and they also constitute the basis for communion; and so of the unity of Christian people.

The Apostle Paul has us to believe that when people receive the apostolic doctrine as the Word of God this enables them to associate themselves with other Biblical churches. The Apostle can speak in 1 Thess. 2:13 of the way the Thessalonians had received God's truth, "For this cause, thank we God without ceasing because when ye received the Word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth the Word of God which effectually worketh also in you that believe. For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judea are in Christ Jesus."

Their reception of the truth, and the whole truth, and nothing but the truth of God meant that they became followers of other churches. They became like them, and they were able to hold much in common with them. There was clear resemblance between them, and such a resemblance that made unity a reality. In those moving little epistles, 2 and 3 John, the Apostle John, who is known as the apostle of love, nevertheless qualifies his exhortation to love in these words: "Love in the truth." You will find that qualifying note in 2 John and in 3 John, and what he means is that believers love within the sphere of the truth.

That is not Christian love which disregards divinely revealed truth; but that is Christian love which is expressed within the confines of divinely revealed truth. It is because the truth of Scripture is not recognised and there is not belief in the fundamentals of the Christian faith amongst ecumenists that we are bound to reject it as a deviation from God's revealed will.

2. The ecumenical movement aims not at true spiritual unity, but at an organisational union of denominations and churches. Dr. Douglas Horton, chairman of the American committee for the World Council of Churches said at Amsterdam, at the formation of the World Council of Churches, "An effective welding of the Christian Churches of the world into a single unit is the burden of our hope." A former president of the World Council of Churches, Dr John Butley said, "The ultimate goal of the World Council and the ecumenical movement is that there might be one Christian Church." Some of you may remember Archbishop Runcie's address at a council in Durham Cathedral in 1981, when he said, "It is our vocation as Anglicans to seek our own extinction by working for the restoration of the one great universal Church, the coming Church."

Now what is in view here? It is the uniting of structures. The coming together of societies. The unity for which our Lord Jesus Christ prayed in John 17:21 was a unity of true believers. In verse 6 of the prayer He says, "I have manifested Thy Name unto the men which Thou gavest to me out of the world. Thine they were and thou gavest them me, and they have kept Thy Word." And in verse 8, "I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from Thee, and they have believed that Thou didst send me." And in verse 20, "Neither pray I

for those alone but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one.”

Who are the “they”? Can they be identified? Yes! Those who have kept the Word, these who have received, those who have believed that the Father sent Him, and believed on Him through the Word, and this faith being manifested in spiritual life and in spiritual love: “I in them and Thou in me, that we might be made perfect in one.” This is the unity envisaged by our Lord. A unity which is essentially spiritual. A unity which indeed was witnessed in the early Church in answer to that and other prayers of our Saviour when we read in Acts 4:32, that “the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul.” They thought, they felt, they believed along with others which made them brethren and sisters. It is that spiritual unity which we are exhorted to keep by the Apostle in Ephesians 4:3, “Keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

It is not that we are waiting for 2000 years before our Lord’s High Priestly prayer is answered. The Father ever hears the Son, and the prayer has been heard and answered from the very beginning, in that the Lord’s people have this common faith. They are given this oneness of heart and oneness of soul. They enjoy the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, and they are exhorted to do nothing to disturb it by unchristian behaviour but everything to promote it by holiness of life. The ecumenical dream is that of a coming together within the visible church. It emphasises the visible church to such an extent that there is no proper emphasis upon the invisible church, that is, upon the church which God beholds as he views the hearts of men and he sees the work of grace. There is union there. There is one holy Church in all the world, and there is a unity which is established in our souls with the souls of others as we believe the truth, and experience the truth, and then manifest the truth in holy living.

3. The ecumenical movement has become progressively less Protestant, and its whole trend in recent years is unmistakably Rome-ward. Father Flerovski, one of the delegates at Amsterdam made clear the future direction of the World Council of Churches. He said, “There can be no real ecumenical co-operation, no real Christian communion, no real reunion of Christians if Rome is not included.” Cautious at first, Rome appointed five official observers for the New Delhi Assembly in 1961. Commenting upon that New Delhi

Assembly in a despatch from New Delhi, Kenneth Slack wrote this, "This Assembly marked the moving of the Council out of what one observer called the 'world of the Reformation.'" Those are staggering words, shocking words - Moving out of the world of the Reformation. Leading ecumenists have boldly declared themselves, as Dr Runcie again, who is reported as saying that he would like to see the Church of England become a uniate Church in communion with Rome, adding, that "the Pope be given a primacy by the Anglicans and the Archbishop of Canterbury would be a Patriarch." The Roman Catholic Church is not a part of the true Church of our Lord Jesus Christ. We might remember Knox's words to Mary Queen of Scots when Mary said to him in a conversation, repeatedly, "my Church, my Church, my Church." To which Knox replied, "your Church madam is no Church, but a harlot."

The traditions preserved in Romanism are essentially heathen - a sovereign Pontiff, altars, relics, worshipping of saints, sacrifices and so on. Can any man committed to the Scriptures and to the Son of God revealed therein, flirt with a movement therefore that is corrupt in doctrine and practice, and is that Antichrist and Man of Sin? "Have no fellowship," says the Apostle, "with the unfruitful works of darkness." (Eph. 5:11). What are we to do with idolatry as evidenced in Mariolatry? In prayers to the saints? In the abomination of the mass? I tell you what we have to do with it; in the words of the Apostle Paul, we ought to flee from it. We are not to align ourselves with it. We are not to seek the lowest possible common denominator so that we can co-exist peacefully with such a false religion. We are to turn away from it. We are to shun it and we are to escape from it. Flee idolatry, and if not for idolatry's sake, then because in Romanism the gospel of Jesus Christ is denied by the Roman church. Jesus Christ is the one mediator between God and men (1 Tim. 2:5). This is denied by the Roman church, making Mary co-mediator with Christ, making angels and saints intercessors, making priests intermediaries. And, not only His Person, but His work is denied in the Roman system. The all-sufficiency of His atoning work is denied every time the mass is celebrated. The mass is, according to Roman dogma, the repetition of Calvary, the unbloody sacrifice of the cross, offered for the sins of the whole world. Our Lord Jesus Christ cried upon the cross, "It is finished." (John 19:30). The Apostle teaches us, "this man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his

enemies be made His footstool.” (Heb. 10:12-13). To contemplate a repetition of that which was all-sufficient is blasphemy. It strikes at the heart of our holy faith, and it destroys the whole redemption in which we glory as Christian believers.

If the ecumenical movement is what I believe it to be, a falling away which results in the Romanism of 2 Thess. 2, we must see it for what it is. We must identify it for what it appears to be and we must condemn it because it is anti-God, anti-Christ, anti-the Holy Spirit and anti-our faith. The clearest commands are given to us in the Scriptures: “Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.” (Rev. 18:4).

Bishop Ryle of Liverpool said, “Unity without truth is useless. When Rome has renounced image worship, Mary worship and Transubstantiation, as well as her other erroneous doctrines, then, and not till then, will it be time to talk of reunion with her. I call on Christians to resist to the death this idea of reunion with Rome.” Long gone are the days when Anglican Bishops spoke like that.

4. The ecumenical movement disparages the idea of Biblical separation.

In the report of the Amsterdam conference we read, “If we take seriously our world-wide task, we are to be certain to be driven to think again of our divisions. Can we remain divided?” Archbishop Temple said, and this is a strange and appalling statement, and here is a leading representative of the ecumenical movement of past years: “To those who made the breaches,” that is in the Church’s outward unity, “the matters seemed worthy to die for. We may look back with a calmer vision and see how here and there a division which occurred could have been appointed by a more conciliatory temper, and a more sympathetic habit of mind.” I was recently in Oxford and again saw the monument to the Martyrs, Cranmer, Latimer and Ridley, who did not die for nothing. They died for the truth of God which they were unprepared to compromise, and they were unwilling to sell. “Buy the Truth and sell it not.” (Prov. 23:23).

According to Romanists, the “in” word now is convergence, not separation. We will bring this ecumenical mind-set to the Holy Scriptures. Tell Paul that when he is writing Galatians chapter 1, “convergence, Paul, convergence not

separation:” “If any man preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.” (Gal.1:8).

Devoted to God’s indignation and separated from us to the awful consequence of apostasy. Am I right, or am I wrong, that the Apostle Paul repeatedly says words such as these, “A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject.” (Titus 3:10)? What do we say to the words of the Apostle John, that we are not even to allow into our homes those who preach a doctrine which is contrary to the truth which we have received? “If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed.” (2 John 10). These are the clear calls of the Holy Scripture, “from such withdraw thyself.” (1 Tim. 6:5).

We have no doubt that there is a separation which is nothing short of schism, but we are equally in no doubt that there is a separation which is mandatory. When truth has fallen and when men trample under foot the great doctrines of our creed, from such we are to withdraw, and it is not only in obedience to God’s Word we do that, but in preservation for our own souls: “And their word will eat as doth a canker” (2 Tim. 2:17). It turns only to defile, and, ultimately to destroy.

5. The ecumenical movement is so obsessed with the idea of Church unity that it is prepared to sacrifice evangelism and missionary work. This was clear from the start. Churches and societies working in the so-called Christian continents of Europe and South America were not invited to participate in the Edinburgh conference of 1910. I notice also that in New Delhi in 1961, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church made the following statement, “We are distressed by the misplaced evangelism evinced by certain groups and bodies who call themselves Christians, to draw away members of the Orthodox Church into their folds. They seem to think that this kind of sheep-stealing is part of their legitimate missionary work.” The World Council of Churches subsequently accepted the suggestion that proselytising, that is preaching the gospel to all including nominal Christians, should not be allowed in churches associated with the World Council of Churches. So if we find ourselves in a country which is purportedly Christian, though it is not Protestant, not evangelical, then according to the World Council of Churches it is an error to

try and convert anyone within that country to Christ and His church. How can this be reconciled with our Lord's great commission which requires the proclamation of the gospel to every creature, whether he be Roman, Greek Orthodox, Russian Orthodox, Coptic or whatever else? Whose side are these professing believers on? Upon the side of our Lord Jesus Christ who wants the gospel preached to every creature, or on the side of him who is the enemy of our souls, whose whole desire is to blind men?

6. The ecumenical movement can only lead to a form of ecclesiastical totalitarianism. The emerging world Church will in account of its size and authority exert tremendous influence locally, nationally and internationally. Ecumenism will produce a uniform organisation in which distinctive doctrines and practices will be discountenanced. A great united Church will not look favourably on Protestants and Protestant dissenters. When Rome imbibed the idea that she was the one holy catholic and apostolic Church, persecution began, and any student of history can refer back to the terrible tortures and murders of the Inquisition, the bloody massacre on St Bartholomew's Day in 1572, and the burning and suffocation of hundreds upon hundreds of Waldensians.

James DeForest Murch wrote of the National Council of Christian Churches in Northern California; "It has a community commission, which has assigned certain territories to certain denominations at the exclusion of others. Before any other new churches can be established, permits must be secured for the church from the council. Churches that do not bear the stamp of council approval should not be allowed to construct buildings in areas which are under their control." What is that but ecclesiastical totalitarianism? What saith the Scriptures? God's Word is not bound. When it comes to the proclamation of the Gospel we ought to obey God rather than men. We have the light of truth and we are to let that light shine wherever we are. There is no controlling organisation in the book of Acts but the Gospel was preached, men and women were added to the church through grace, and companies of believers were raised up to worship the true God and extend the kingdom of His dear Son.

We oppose the ecumenical movement because we value our liberties, and because we are unprepared to sell liberty for bondage, and freedom for enslavement. "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free" (Gal. 5:1).

7. The ecumenical movement will fulfil prophecy by producing an apostate religious system linked with papal Rome. This is developing by the hour. Dr. D. T. Miles, one of the presidents of the World Council of Churches said, "Don't call anybody a non-Christian. A Hindu has a saving encounter with Christ, he is either a possessor of Christ or possessed by Christ." The assembly of the World Council of Churches in Vancouver began with entrance into the "spirit house" and the lighting of a fire by a witch from the North American Indians. This was followed by a reception and erection of an Indian totem pole around which prayers and dances were offered to the "Indian great spirit."

What does the Word of God teach? Does it not tell us that the fallen church depicted for us in Revelation 17 and 18, and situated upon the seven hills of Rome will eventually become "the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird." (Rev. 18:2). Does that not reveal that the final state will be one worse than apostasy from Christianity, if that is conceivable, but one which cannot be distinguished from heathenism. And it is upon that basis that the call is made by God in Rev 18:4, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues."

We live in an age of doctrinal indifference, when Christians have forgotten their Scriptures, and they have forgotten history. And when there is such little faith in evidence, men are more than willing to embrace the unbelieving and the unholy. The ecumenical movement presents such with an objective and a goal; a sacrificing principle for the sake of a cheap and common union. A forsaking the heritage of the Lord in order to grasp a human program, and one which is destitute of truth and spirituality. The movement grows apace. It gathers speed, and like a torrential flood it seems to sweep all in its way along with it. So, the churches and Christians who stand apart are looked upon with pity, if not scorn, and are accused of being unloving, living in the past with antiquated

doctrine. But though the power be great, it is the power but of man. The kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ is with the power of God. In every age there have been faithful believers who stood up and stood apart, and stood fast for truth, for Christ. There was Noah, there was Lot, there was Caleb, and there was the Apostle Paul. Do not be deceived by those who, even under the cloak of evangelicalism, will teach you that the ecumenical movement is harmless, that we can learn a great deal from it, that we ought not to stand aloof any more, in it to win it. Utterly pathetic! To lose all for that mess of pottage.

The call of God to each and every one of us, if we be true Bible believers, regenerated by the Holy Spirit, trusting solely in the Son of God for our salvation; is to hold fast that which we have till Christ comes, to be faithful unto death that we may be given a crown of life, to hold on our way. May our eyes be opened to what is taking place. May our eyes be turned to God that He would be pleased to vindicate His truth. That He would raise again the truth of God. That He would exalt His grace. That He would magnify His Son. That He would build Him on this earth a pure church in worship, in government, and in godly living which will ever stand as a rebuke to that which is false, and a condemnation of that which in the final analysis is satanic.

“Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven, for thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever, Amen.”

Concluded

Correction to Part 1 (The Messenger, Sep/Oct 2023, p17, par. 2): “Robinson Smith” should read “William Robertson Smith”, the professor of Hebrew in the Free Church College, Aberdeen, 1870-81.

EPILOGUE

“I thank my God upon every remembrance of you” (Philippians 1:3)

We come to another ‘end of year’ season when there are a number of ‘Remembrances’ in our society. There is November the 5th when we recall that the plot in 1605 to blow up King and Parliament was prevented. Otherwise we would not have had the 1611 Authorised Version of the Scriptures. There is also the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month when we recall with thanksgiving the end of the First World War in 1918 and remember those who lost their lives in that war and other conflicts since. Then there is much looking back at the end of December over the events of another year.

However, in the Philippians text quoted above, the Apostle Paul remembers the believers at Philippi. He remembers them in frequent prayers with joy. He even goes so far as to say he has them in his heart. (Philippians 1:7)

Through all the ages since our Lord Jesus’ return to glory, believers have been encouraged by the Lord’s provision for his Church. One such provision is the mutual encouragement of fellow-believers.

Paul wrote to the Romans, in chapter 12, and verse 10: “Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another.” This is just one of many such verses throughout the New Testament where we are urged to remember, value and encourage our fellow believers.

So, amidst this season of remembrance let us be reminded of our fellow believers who need our prayers and at times practical support.

Let’s thank the Lord for all those who have been a help to us. Think back on all those who have helped us along the pilgrim path. Recall how they have been dependable, patient and faithful. Remember with thanksgiving those who have been to us as Barnabas was in the Antioch Church (Acts 11:23,24) and as Timothy and Epaphroditus were to the Apostle Paul (Philippians 2:19-30). Do take a moment and read what Paul said of these faithful brethren.

So let us, by God’s grace, be prayerful, dependable and faithful encouragers of our fellow believers.

Ron Morris