

CONTENTS

Letter from the Pastor	2
Fellowship News	4
The Dangers of Sandemanianism	7
Wise Words from Augustus Toplady	13
Helps when Troubled with Fears	15
The Greatness of John Calvin	17
John Calvin's Farewell to William Farel	18
The Death of John Calvin	19
Last Will and Testament of John Calvin	19
The Saint's Everlasting Rest	21
Epilogue	23

LETTER FROM THE PASTOR

Who knows the Future?

In North Yorkshire there is a town called Knaresborough. The place is famous for what is known as Mother Shipton's Cave. The story behind this is fascinating. Ursula Shipton (maiden name Southell) was born in this cave in 1488 and died aged 73 in 1561. She was a strange-looking woman: short, hunch-backed, with a long, hooked nose. She had a stall in Knaresborough market telling fortunes.

Later, Ursula went back to the cave to live. She became a virtual recluse but continued to tell fortunes and make prophecies about things that would happen in the future. Mother Shipton's local prophecies included the destruction of Knaresborough's Trinity Church which would "fall in the night, till the highest stone in the church be the lowest stone of the bridge." Not long after this, a terrible storm fell upon Yorkshire, destroying the steeple of the Church and causing it to land upon the bridge.

As time went by her prophecies gained more credence. She is supposed to have predicted the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588, the Great Fire of London in 1666, the discovery of America, the invention of the motor car, the telephone and more. People hailed her as England's most famous prophetess. Before she died, her last prophecy said that the end of the world would come when Knaresborough town bridge fell down three times. It has fallen down and been rebuilt twice so far...

What does the Christian make of this sort of thing? Could Mother Shipton - who never professed religion and was sometimes called a witch - have really foretold the future? Her prophecies seemed to be uncannily accurate at the time.

Firstly, the Bible teaches us that only God knows the future: "I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning" (Isaiah 46:10). He knows what the future holds because whatever happens He will be the doer of

it! No man, woman, angel, or devil can tell the future. This is the province of Almighty God alone.

Secondly, God gave the power of foretelling events to chosen men and women in Bible times. But they were the acknowledged servants of the Lord, and prefaced their prophecies with, “Thus saith the Lord...” They spoke on His behalf not theirs. Mother Shipton does not come into this category.

Thirdly, Mother Shipton’s predictions are couched in very general terms. Some of them are in poetic form,

A Carriage without a horse shall go;
Disaster fill the world with woe...
In water iron then shall float,
As easy as a wooden boat.

“Carriages without horses shall go” is supposed to be the invention of the motor car. “Iron in the water shall float as easy as a wooden boat” points to modern iron and steel ships and so on. It is easy to see how these later inventions and discoveries could be read back into the vague indications of Mother Shipton’s “prophecies.”

By contrast, biblical prophecies are remarkably detailed, demanding exact fulfilment to show that God had spoken through His servants. A remarkable example are the prophecies concerning the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. God revealed details such as His being born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14, seven centuries before), in the town of Bethlehem (Micah 5:2), His sufferings and death on the cross (Psalm 22) and many more: 333 in all. According to the law of probabilities, there would be one chance out of eighty-three billion that so many predictions would come true concerning one individual. This is real prophecy in contrast to Mother Shipton.

It reminds us that without the Bible we are open to all kinds of superstition. Even Christians can be credulous and follow men and women making false claims. Charismatic “miracles” of today are another example of such gullibility. This is nothing new. Paul complained of this to the Corinthians: “For if he that

cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him” (2 Corinthians 11:4).

What about Mother Shipton’s last one prophecy concerning the end of the world? Obviously, she got it wrong. The world will end when Jesus Christ returns: “When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory, and before Him shall be gathered all nations...” (Matthew 25:31,32). All of us, including Mother Shipton, will be summoned to His Judgement Seat on that Day.

Knaresborough town bridge will fall down then because everything will collapse and be renewed when the Lord comes again: “the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up” (2 Peter 3:10).

If we have trusted this Saviour, and have followed Him, we shall inherit “new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness” (2 Peter 3:13). We know, and are assured of this, because it is promised by One who is called “the Amen, the faithful and true witness” (Revelation 3:14).

It is expensive to go into Mother Shipton’s Cave and learn about her “prophecies” – how much easier to open our Bible and read about what will definitely happen in the future!

John P. Thackway

FELLOWSHIP NEWS

Daniel Tribe

We give thanks to the Lord for bringing us safely into 2024. And as the New Year dawns, we’re mindful of those of our number who have returned to their studies both at school and university. May the Lord graciously keep them and enable them to continue to work hard for His glory.

On Saturday 20th January the annual Jude Conference took place. The conference aims to deal with issues which the Church and individual believers face in our current culture. This year our Pastor gave an address on 'A New Downgrade': other subjects included 'Authentic Christianity or Cultural Suicide?' (Darren Cadapen), 'Christ's Approach to Culture' (Ferguson Kcofie), 'The Necessity of Truth' (Oliver Wyncoll), 'Children and Education' (David Kay), and 'The New Downgrade – Its Impact' (Jonathan Northern). We are much encouraged that the numbers of people profiting from such ministry at the Jude Conference are increasing each year, with many attending in person and many more listening in online. May the Lord be pleased to use His preached Word to revive and reform His Church. All recordings from this year's conference are freely available on the Jude Conference YouTube channel.

We continue to uphold several of our number in prayer who are unwell at this present time, trusting the Lord to provide grace to sustain them and to restore them in His time.

Our prayers are following our friends Tom and Pauline W as they and their children have travelled to Australia to be with Tom's sister, Esther, on the occasion of her wedding. We pray that Esther and her fiancé will be greatly blessed as they begin their married life together, and that all the family would thoroughly enjoy this special time of fellowship together.

We continue to give thanks to God for the wonderful measure of recovery that our brother Bob R is experiencing following his recent surgery. He is now discharged from the hospital and gaining more and more strength each week. *"Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful"* (Psalm 116:5).

Sadly, some of our members and friends have experienced bereavements in recent weeks. Jo B's father and Abi G's mother. We thank God that both these friends were true believers in our Lord Jesus Christ and therefore we rejoice to know that they are now safe, happy, and blessed in His immediate presence. Aware of the sadness so keenly felt at this time, we commend both families to our merciful and ever-gracious God, who has said, *"I, even I, am he that comforteth you"* (Isaiah 51:12).

We also heard this last month that Henry, a former member of our church, had died, after a lengthy illness. We remember Henry and Olive with real affection, and we pray that Olive will know much of the Saviour's presence and love, and

that the whole family will find consolation in Him and in the sure promise of the Gospel. “*And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life*” (1 John 2:25).

The Lord was evidently present with us on the afternoon of our Church Anniversary on Saturday 24th February. We welcomed the Rev Colin Mercer from Omagh, Northern Ireland who brought God’s Word to us, reminding us of the tremendous spiritual blessings in our union with Christ. Truly “*the Lord hath been mindful of us*” (Ps. 115:12).

For our midweek meeting on Wednesday 28th February, we welcomed Philip Bell of Creation Ministries International, who spoke to us on the subject ‘Theistic Evolution: The Bible & Science Say No’. We pray that the Lord will bring honour to Christ and guard His Truth from the errors that are commonplace in our society today.

A Word of Thanks

To our Church Family:

Carol and I would like to thank you all for your many prayers, well-wishes, cards, encouragements and many offers of help, that you have given us during my recent surgery and recovery.

We cannot express our feelings enough for your kindnesses and the love you have towards us.

Truly, we realise and experience the love of our Lord through His people.

May the Lord grant you all His blessings as we all go forward in His name.

Bob and Carol R

[James 1:17]

IMPORTANT MEETINGS

The Ordination of Daniel Tribe to the Christian Ministry

took place on Saturday 2nd March 2024

Recording can be accessed at

salisburyemmauel.org.uk/ordination-of-daniel-tribe

25th Annual Salisbury Conference

Friday 4th – Lord's Day 6th October 2024

Guest Speaker: Rev Jeff Riddle (USA)

Please note the change of date

THE DANGERS OF SANDEMANIANISM

Maurice Roberts (Stornaway, Isle of Lewis)

Part 1

The error of Sandemanianism came into the churches in the period after 1720. It is one of those errors which took its rise in a time when there were many problems and much deadness coming into the church in Scotland.

Some errors come into the church after a time of blessing and of revival. The Pentecostal Movement might be put into this class. But the error of Sandemanianism took its rise in the Scottish church at a time when there were difficulties and theological problems emerging.

ITS HISTORY

A time of deadness and of declension is always dangerous and that for various reasons. In a time when the Gospel seems to lose its power, there is always a temptation for men to try to change the old methods and the old outlook. There is no blessing. Therefore, we must get rid of the old traditions which were held

by the forefathers. We must throw overboard the old lumber. When men develop a state of mind like this they, of course, want to seek for fresh light. They are inspired with the thought of going right back to primitive Christianity as distinct from those traditions and ruts which our forefathers are supposed to have made for themselves. This is exactly the spirit which animated the first founders of the Sandemanian movement in Scotland and Britain following 1720.

Three men are of particular importance to the rise of the Sandemanian Movement in the 18th Century. They are John Glas, Robert Sandeman and Archibald Maclean. Sandemanianism is referred to in Scotland as the Glasite Movement but in England and Wales it is normally referred to as Sandemanianism. A little must be said of these three men.

John Glas

Sandemanianism began through the teaching of John Glas. He was born in Auchtermuchty in 1695 and became a minister of the Church of Scotland, being ordained in 1719. His parish was called Tealing in the Presbytery of Dundee.

He was a gifted and able man and we must never forget that errors and dangers often come into the Church through its most gifted and able men. He was a great preacher and became very popular.

The difficulty which arose was this. He began to grow uneasy about the Church of Scotland's whole position and he started to ask certain questions. Why should we impose on the consciences of Christian people a lumber of tradition which the Church has developed? Why, for instance, should we burden men with the question of the Solemn League and Covenant? Indeed, he came to ask the question: was it right to impose the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Catechism on Christian ministers and office-bearers? Surely God's Word is enough. He then went a step further and came to feel that there ought to be an entire separation between Church and State. In other words, he is one of the earliest men in Scotland to believe in Voluntaryism or the complete separation of Church and State.

We must be clear, however, that Glas had no intention of altering the accepted theology of the Scottish Church. He himself, interestingly enough, was a profound student of Calvin and, although he came to differ in many respects from Calvin, he did so rather unconsciously, then deliberately, and it is this which is one of the sad lessons from his life. He veered away from the Gospel while all the time believing that he was only recovering the Gospel and becoming more biblical.

The case came before the ecclesiastical courts of the Church of Scotland at the time and he was eventually deposed from the ministry of the Church and founded an Independent Church of his own. He was, in fact, the father of Scottish Independency.

Robert Sandeman

Robert Sandeman was the son-in-law of Glas. He came across Glas in the city of Perth and joined the church when he was only 20 years of age. He endorsed the views of Glas entirely and, as usually happens in an ardent disciple, he carried Glas' views farther than Glas himself had done. He was less able than his father-in-law but made up for the deficiency by being more aggressive, and more confident that he was right. He has been well described as a born controversialist and he had the gift of making himself clear. He came into prominence like this:

James Hervey, a noted theologian of the 18th Century, had written a famous book entitled *Theron and Aspasio*. That appeared in 1755. It was an orthodox book dealing with experimental Calvinism and handling the doctrine of justification by faith alone in Christ.

However, Robert Sandeman disliked it and set himself to refute it. The reason was this: He said James Hervey's book makes faith a work of man which earns salvation and he argued that the Scriptures teach otherwise. Sandeman was wrong in his assessment of Hervey's book, but what is of importance to us is to note that the Sandemanian view of faith was significantly different from the Westminster Confession's view of faith.

The book which Sandeman wrote received the title *Letters of Theron and Aspasio*, and this book became infamous overnight and brought the Christian world to see how different was the Sandemanian view of faith from that generally received at the time. We shall return to this subject a little later.

Archibald Maclean

The third member of the trio was Archibald Maclean. He came a little later and took up the cudgels on behalf of the whole school of thought.

He was a man of great ability with theological gifts but came to feel that the discipline in Glas' church in Edinburgh was too strict and rigorous and so he left to form a church of his own in Edinburgh in 1765.

Eventually he became a Baptist and may be called the father of the Baptists in Scotland. In Wales when the movement reached there, they were known as the Little Baptists or Scotch Baptists.

ITS TEACHINGS

We come now to consider some of the significant teachings of Glas, Sandeman and Maclean.

As we have seen, the first man of the three to develop new views was Glas. He came to think that Christ's kingdom was entirely spiritual and absolutely not of this world. He wrote a book entitled *The Testimony of the King of Martyrs*. Here he asserts that Christ's Church is spiritual and also that it is the Universal Church. There are only two kinds of church, he maintained, in the New Testament. They are the Universal Church and the Local Church. It is clear, then, that he did not believe in Presbyterianism. He also rejected, as we have seen, the view that there should be a connection between Church and State.

In an endeavour to get back to simple New Testament religion, Glas thought that we must bring back lost practices which the early Christians had used. These were: insistence on weekly Communion, foot-washing, the love feast, the holy kiss and control over how church members used their money. The

Church, he says, must have strict conditions of membership. All these views were held in common by Sandemanians.

However, the most significant change was in the theory which they taught concerning the nature of saving faith.

What Faith Is

There is an element involving the will, an element involving the mind or intellect and an emotional element which rests upon Christ. It is clear that the Westminster divines held that there is an emotional aspect to true faith. This is made clear by the term “embrace” which they use. The sinner is said to “embrace Christ” as he is offered in the Gospel. You do not, of course, embrace a person unless there is devotion in your heart. These three elements according to the Westminster definition of faith are present whenever faith is true and saving faith.

But this view of faith was rejected by the Sandemanians. Their view was that there is only one element present and that is the intellect or the mind. The fruit, therefore, of Sandemanian teaching on the subject of faith was to produce a cold orthodoxy.

Finding Assurance

This also came out in their attitude to Christian assurance. The Westminster Confession of Faith refers to two main forms of assurance. A Christian may attain to assurance through “the practical syllogism”, by which it meant a process of reasoning like this. A Christian may say to himself: “I know I have faith because I see the fruits of the Spirit in my life”. Or again: “I know I have faith because I see the promises of Scripture and I accept them for what they are”.

There is a form of assurance which men have at that level, but the Westminster divines regarded that as a low form of assurance. They speak also of an “infallible assurance”. By that they mean the rich experience of the love of God shed upon the heart of the believer. This is that direct witness of God’s Spirit with our spirit which is a very heaven on earth.

But the Sandemanians did not like this second type of assurance. They went even further and disliked the assurance which the Christian has when he examines his own heart for marks of grace. The Sandemanian view was that men should not be encouraged to search themselves for evidences of grace for that is too subjective and is not necessary.

As to the emotional enjoyment of God which is reflected in many New Testament expressions of assurance, they said that it was not appropriate for Christians to use such language. They admitted that the Apostles might have had such high experiences of the Spirit of God giving them direct assurance of salvation. But they did not believe that men were warranted to take and apply these phrases to themselves today.

“Simple” Faith

So they taught that faith is simply an act of the mind by which a man assents to what God has said. Faith, to them, was simply a receiving of the testimony of the Apostles.

In addition, they disliked many of the great orthodox writers of that time and of the previous generation. They made much of Calvin but did not like the Puritans. They did not, of course, understand Calvin as they should have done but that was the way they used to think. For instance, they disliked Thomas Boston, the outstanding Scottish writer of the early 18th Century. They also disliked John Flavel, Philip Doddridge, Isaac Watts and the Erskine brothers. They would refer to such men as the “popular preachers”. And they meant that in a derogatory sense.

To summarise their view of faith we must say that the Sandemanians defined it as merely a “simple faith”, a “persuasion” simply based upon evidence. It is a “bare” belief. A person, they said, becomes a Christian when they see that Christ has come, has died, has risen and has ascended and then puts their amen to these statements of the Scriptures. That, they argued, was what justified men and brought peace with God.

They used to say that in the first act of faith man is purely passive. There is nothing active in the mind. The first saving act of faith, they argued, has no

active element in it but is purely receptive. It is understandable therefore that they regarded it as a bad and an unhealthy thing for a man to look inwardly into his heart for signs of being converted.

What are we to think of their view of faith and of their religion generally? In the next article we will make our appraisal and evaluation.

WISE WORDS FROM AUGUSTUS TOPLADY (1740 – 1778)

Unbelievers:

Unbeliever, whilst thou art unconverted, thy body is but the living coffin of a dead soul.

Spiritual pride and spiritual poverty go together.

The difference between a regenerate and an unregenerate man, in point of sanctification, is this: the regenerate man does not live in sin, though sin lives in him; whereas, in the other, sin both lives in him and he lives in sin.

Only that Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world can take away that world of sin which is in the heart of every one of His people.

We do not think it strange or preposterous to wear clothes, the materials of which we borrow from other creatures; and why should it be deemed absurd, that we should hide our spiritual shame, by appearing before God in the garment of another – even the righteousness of Christ.

Holiness is not the way to Christ, but Christ is the way to holiness.

The Germans have a proverb – When the bricks are doubled, then comes Moses; that is, man's extremity is God's opportunity.

Believers:

A good man says, I never trusted God but that I found Him faithful, nor my own heart but I found it false.

Let none be discouraged because of the weakness of their faith; for there are infants, as well as fathers, in Christ's family; lambs as well as sheep in His fold; and shrubs as well as cedars in God's Lebanon.

As a skilful physician, from a variety of herbs and plants (some of which are, in their own nature, poisonous) by a judicious mixture of them together, compounds medicines for the use of man – so God causes all things, even those which are seemingly harmful, to conspire for the good of His elect.

The hypocrite's rising is the means of his fall, but the believer's fall is the means of his rising.

A Christian lives by faith, just as Esau lived by the sword. He did not live *upon* his sword – that would have been hard living indeed; but he lived on what his sword brought him. So the believer does not live *upon* his faith, but by it; that is, he lives upon what faith brings home to him, even the love, the righteousness, the atonement, and the intercession of Christ.

A man can be out of Christ today, and in Him tomorrow; but he cannot be in Him today, and out of Him tomorrow.

The Christian is in a poor state who grows colder as he grows older.

A child of God is like a person in a beautiful palace; if there is light in it, he sees the splendid objects around him, and enjoys them; but if the light is removed, he is nevertheless in the palace still, and surrounded with the same splendid objects as before, though he cannot see them. So, no matter how the believer's feelings and sensible comforts may have their ebbs and flows, his state before God is invariably the same.

HELPS WHEN TROUBLED WITH FEARS

John Flavel (1630-1691)

(lightly edited and abridged - MW)

Fears are troubles of the mind resulting from the apprehension of some approaching difficulty or danger.

There are natural fears, common to men and women, and believers are certainly not immune from them: David speaks of a time in his own experience when “fear was on every side” and, in another place, he refers to a time when the Lord came in for him and delivered him from “all my fears”. In later times, Paul recalls his experience of “fear”, evidenced in “much trembling”; and on another occasion he vividly remembers a time when he was greatly troubled, when “without were fightings” and “within were fears.”

What are we to do when buffeted with such fears? It is at this point that John Flavel mentions precious helps available to us:

1. Look upon all the creatures as in the hand of God, who manages them all in all their motions, limiting, restraining, and determining them all at His pleasure (Job 23:14; Ps. 57:2; Eph. 1:11);
2. Remember that this God, in whose hand all the creatures are, is your Father, and is much more tender over you, than you are, or can be, over yourselves (Isa. 54:5; Zech. 2:8);
3. Urge upon your hearts the express prohibitions of Christ in this case; and let your hearts stand in awe of the violations of them (Isa. 41:13; Matt. 10:26,28,31; Lk. 21:9);
4. Remember how much needless trouble your vain fears have brought upon you formerly, and how you have disquieted yourselves to no purpose (Isa. 51:13);

5. Consider that though the things you fear should really fall out, yet there is more evil in your own fear, than in the thing feared (Isa. 43:1-3; 1 Cor. 10:13);
6. Consult the many promises which are written for your support and comfort in all dangers (Gen. 32:12; 2 Chron. 20:29; Eccl. 8:12);
7. Quieten your trembling hearts by recording and consulting your past experiences of the care and faithfulness of God in former distresses (1 Sam. 17:37; Ps. 74:14; 2 Cor. 1:10);
8. Be well satisfied that you are in the way of your duty, and that will beget holy courage in times of danger (1 Pet. 3:13; 4:19);
9. Get your consciences sprinkled with the blood of Christ from all guilt, and that will set your hearts above all fear (Heb. 10:22; 1 Pet. 1:2);
10. Exercise holy truth in times of great distress (Ps. 57:3; 112:7; Isa. 12:3);
11. Consult the honour of religion more, and your personal safety less (Neh. 6:11);
12. Secure the eternal interest of the soul in the hands of Jesus Christ (2 Tim. 1:12);
13. Learn to quench all creature-fears, in the reverential fear of God (Isa. 8:12,13; Matt. 10:28);
14. Pour out those fears to God in prayer, which the devil and your own unbelief pour in upon you in times of danger (Mk. 14:32; Heb. 5:7).

My brethren, these things ought not to be so. Saints should be of a more raised spirit: so was David when his heart was kept in a good frame, Psalm 27:1 – “The Lord is my light, and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?”

THE GREATNESS OF JOHN CALVIN, BELIEVER, REFORMER, AND PREACHER (1509-1564)

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.

JOHN CALVIN'S FAREWELL TO WILLIAM FAREL, HIS DEAR AND FAITHFUL FRIEND

2nd May 1564

Farewell, my most excellent and upright brother; since it is the will of God that you should survive me in the world, live mindful of our intimacy, which, as it

was useful to the church of God, so the fruits of it await us in heaven. I am unwilling that you should fatigue yourself for my sake (in journeying from Neuchatel to Geneva to see him). I draw my breath with difficulty, and every moment I am in expectation of breathing my last. It is enough that I live and die for Christ who is to all His followers a gain both in life and death.

Again, I bid you and your brethren, farewell.

THE DEATH OF JOHN CALVIN

24th May 1564

As recorded by Theodore Beza, his close friend and his successor, who was with him at the end.

He was incessantly employed in prayer to God. It was indeed in a low voice, interrupted by shortness of breath, with which he was oppressed; but his sparkling eyes, constantly directed towards heaven, and the serenity of his countenance, discovered the ardour of his petitions and his confidence in the mercy of God.

He frequently repeated those words of David, "I was dumb, Lord, because thou didst it." And sometimes those of Isaiah, "I mourn like the dove." And frequently, lifting up his heart to God, he would exclaim, "Lord, thou bruise me, but I suffer with patience, since it is thy hand that hath done it."

About eight o'clock in the evening...he appeared rather to fall asleep than die.

Thus on this day, with the setting sun, the brightest light in the world, and he who had been the strength of the church, was taken back to heaven.

LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT OF JOHN CALVIN

25th April 1564

In the name of God, I John Calvin, minister of the word of God in the Church of Geneva, feeling myself reduced so low by diverse maladies, that I cannot but think that it is the will of God to withdraw me shortly from this world, have

been advised to make and set down in writing my testament and declaration of my last will in form, as follows:

In the first place, I render thanks to God, not only because he has had compassion on me, his poor creature, to draw me out of the abyss of idolatry in which I was plunged, in order to bring me to the light of his gospel and make me a partaker of the doctrine of salvation, of which I was altogether unworthy, and continuing his mercy he has supported me amid so many sins and short comings, which were such that I well deserved to be rejected by him a hundred thousand times – but what is more, he has so far extended his mercy towards me to make use of me and of my labour, to convey and announce the truth of his gospel; protesting that it is my wish to live and die in this faith which he has bestowed on me, having no other hope nor refuge except in his gratuitous adoption, upon which all my salvation is founded; embracing the grace which he has given me in our Lord Jesus Christ, and accepting the merits of his death and passion, in order that by this means all my sins may be buried; and praying him to wash and cleanse me by the blood of this great Redeemer, which has been shed for us poor sinners, that I may appear before his face, bearing as it were his image.

I protest also that I have endeavoured, according to the measure of grace he has given me, to teach his word in purity, both in my sermons and writings, and to expound faithfully the Holy Scriptures; and moreover, in the disputes I have had with the enemies of the truth, I have never made use of subtle craft nor sophistry, but have gone to work straight-forwardly in maintaining his quarrel. But alas! the desire which I have had, and the zeal, if so it must be called, has been so cold and sluggish that I feel myself a debtor in everything and everywhere, and that, were it not for his infinite goodness, all the affection I have had would be but as smoke, nay, that even the favours which he has accorded me would but render me so much the more guilty; so that my recourse is this, that being the Father of mercies he will show himself the Father of so miserable a sinner.

Moreover, I desire that my body after my decease be interred in the usual manner, to wait for the day of the blessed resurrection.

[There follows here various instructions regarding his earthly goods to be given to named persons after his death]

Witness my hand, John Calvin

THE SAINTS' EVERLASTING REST

Richard Baxter (1615-1691)

Edited and abridged

"There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God" (Hebrews 4:19)

The saints' rest is the most happy state of a Christian; or it is the most perfect, endless enjoyment of God by the perfected saints, to which their souls arrive at death, and both soul and body most fully arrive after the resurrection.

Let us see the peculiar excellencies this rest affords:

1. It is a most singular honour of the saints' rest, to be called 'the purchased possession': that is, the fruit of the blood of the Son of God. With what astonishing apprehensions will redeemed saints everlastingly behold their blessed Redeemer! The purchaser and the price, together with the possession! Will not the death of our Lord everlastingly sweeten our possessed glory?

2. Another pearl in the saints' diadem is that this rest is a free gift. These two, purchased and free, are the chains of gold which make up the wreaths for the tops of the pillars in the temple of God. It was dear (or costly) to Christ, but free to us, 'without money and without price' (Isa. 55:1). Oh, the everlasting admiration that must needs surprise the saints to think of this freeness! We know to whom the praise is due, and must be given for ever. Indeed, to this very end it was that infinite wisdom cast the whole design of man's salvation into this mould of purchase and freeness, that the love and joy of man might be perfected, and the honour of grace most highly advanced; that the thought of merit might neither cloud the one, nor obstruct the other; and that on these two hinges the gate of heaven might turn.

3. This rest is peculiar to saints, belonging to no other of all the sons of men. If all Israel had been light, the Israelites would have had the same; but to enjoy that light alone, while their neighbours lived in thick darkness, made them more sensible of their privilege. It makes the saints cry out, 'Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us, and not unto the world?' (Jn. 14:22).

4. Although peculiar to the saints, yet it is common to all the saints; for in glory there is an association of perfected spirits, whereof Christ is the Head. The communion of saints is completed. If the forethought of sitting down with Abraham and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 8:11), how much more the real sight and actual experience! There we shall be with not only our old acquaintances, but all the saints, whose faces in the flesh we never saw, we shall there both know and comfortably enjoy.

5. As another feature of our rest, we shall derive our joys immediately from God. 'Fulness of joy' is in God's immediate presence (Ps. 16:11). We shall then have light without a candle, and perpetual day without the sun; for 'the city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God lightens it, and the Lamb is the light thereof' (Rev. 21:23; 22:5).

6. A further excellence of this rest is that it will be seasonable. He that expects 'the fruit of the vineyard at the season' (Mk. 12:2), and makes His people 'like a tree planted by rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season' (Ps. 1:3), will also give them the crown in his season. When we have had in this world a long night of darkness, will not the day-breaking and the rising of the Sun of righteousness be then seasonable? When we have passed a long and tedious journey, through no small dangers, is not home then seasonable? When we have had a long and perilous war, and received many a wound, would not peace, with victory, be seasonable?

7. As our rest will be seasonable, so it will be suitable. God will provide for us a spiritual rest, suitable to our spiritual natures. The knowledge of God and His Christ, a delightful complacency (or delight) in mutual love, an everlasting rejoicing in the enjoyment of our God, with a perpetual singing of His high praises; this is a heaven for a saint. Christian, this is the rest after thy own heart; it contains all thy heart can wish; and that which thou longest, prayest, and labourest for, *there* thou shalt find it all. Desire what thou canst, and ask what thou wilt, as a Christian, and it shall be given thee, not only to half of the kingdom, but to the enjoyment both of kingdom and King.

8. Still more, this rest will be absolutely perfect. We shall then have joy without sorrow, and rest without weariness. There will be no mixture of corruption with our graces, nor of suffering with our comfort. There are none of the waves in that harbour which now so toss us up and down. There is no inconsistency in heaven. If 'perfect love casteth out fear' (1 Jn. 4:18), then perfect joy must

needs cast out sorrow, and perfect happiness exclude all the relics of misery. We shall there rest from all the evil of sin and of suffering.

9. We shall then rest from all our sad divisions and unchristian quarrels with one another. How lovingly do thousands live together in heaven, who lived at variance upon earth! There is no contention, because there is no pride, ignorance, or other corruption. There is no plotting to strengthen our party, nor deep designing against our brethren. O happy day of the saints' rest in glory, when, as there is one God, one Christ, one Spirit, so we shall have one heart, one church, and one employment for ever!

10. The last jewel of our crown is that it will be an everlasting rest. Without this, all were comparatively nothing. But O blessed eternity! Our earthly Paradise in Eden had a way out, but none, that ever we could find, in again; but this eternal Paradise hath a way in, but no way out again (Lk. 16:26). And shall I, Lord, thus live for ever? Then will I also love for ever. Shall my joys be immortal? And shall not also my thanks be immortal? Surely, if I shall never lose my glory, I will never cease Thy praises. If Thou wilt both perfect and preserve me and my glory; so I shall be Thine, and not my own; so shall my glory be Thy glory. And as Thy glory was Thy ultimate end in my glory, so shall it also be my end, when Thou hast crowned me with that glory which hath no end. 'Unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever' (1 Tim. 1:17).

EPILOGUE

"For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations." (Isaiah 61, verse 11)

As we move from Winter to Spring, we are aware that things in the garden are beginning to bud and even to bloom. Here in this chapter of Isaiah the Lord is granting to his people the prophecy of the forthcoming Saviour and triumph of the gospel age. Indeed, our Lord Jesus Christ quoted from this chapter of Isaiah in the Synagogue at Nazareth (Luke 4, verses 16-21).

Some people find Winter-time difficult to cope with: it's gloomy, with bad weather and associated illnesses. But Spring heralds the beginning of brighter, warmer, and happier days, so a certain relaxation of feelings is often felt.

There are times in life when we may feel downhearted and depressed, unable perhaps to rejoice in the Lord's gift of Salvation. We may have gone through a period of feeling unwell and one result may be that we lose the confidence which formerly we had. Now, the Lord knows and cares about each one of us. We recall the words of the Apostle Peter (1 Peter 5, verses 6 & 7) "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you."

So as we see the signs of Spring and the return of better days, let us remember to rejoice and to bless the Lord God for giving us to know Jesus Christ as our Saviour and Friend.

Every day is 'a day's march nearer home'- our heavenly home. Every day is an opportunity to pray for the extension of Christ's Kingdom - in our family, our Church, our Country, and, across the seas, in all the World.

So let us look to the 'buds':

- a faithful Teaching and Pastoral Ministry;
- the gospel outreach to the young and old;
- the open-air proclamation and the giving out of 'tracts';
- the teaching of men called to preach (in the Seminary); and
- the blessed fellowship of kindred hearts and minds, evidenced in praying and caring for one another.

And, of course, we are so thankful for all the work taking place in so many other churches known to us.

At this present time, let us heed the divine exhortation:

"Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks." (1 Thes. 5, verses 16, 17, & 18).

Ron Morris