

CONTENTS

The Only Bridge for Endangered Sinners	2
Fellowship News	3
Notice for the 2018 Salisbury Conference	4
A Statement from Simon Green	5
Truths Experimentally Taught by the Holy Spirit	6
Great Sayings of John Wycliffe	9
Profiting more from Good Books	10
The Stranger in the Pulpit	14
Twelve Rules for promoting Harmony among Church members	15
The Errors of Rome Analysed	16
Epilogue	24

THE ONLY BRIDGE FOR ENDANGERED SINNERS

In Switzerland, a moving story is told about two brothers, the Agassiz brothers. Their home was on the shore of a lake and one winter's day their father was on the other side of that lake and the two boys wanted to join him. However, the lake at that time was covered with thick ice. The boys' mother watched from her window as the two of them set out. They proceeded well until they came to a wide crack in the ice. Then they stopped, and their mother looked on anxiously, fearing that they would fall into the icy waters and be drowned.

The older boy succeeded in getting safely across, but the younger became very afraid and dared not venture further. Then, as the mother looked on, she saw Louis, the older brother, lie down on his face, his body stretched over the dreadful crack, making a bridge of himself, and then she saw his little brother creep somewhat nervously over him to safety. It was a moving sight, since it was by no means pleasant to lie down on the ice, indeed, it was terribly dangerous; but young Louis, out of great love for his brother, willingly exposed himself to harm and possible death.

This beautifully illustrates what the Lord Jesus Christ did for His people. Seeing us separated from God the Father and imperiled by reason of our sin and the divine judgment, He graciously intervened on our behalf and, on the cross, He laid down His own life over the awful chasm of death and despair, that through Him and His saving work, we might pass over into the Father's presence and into peace and joy and heaven.

By faith, we must take the Lord Jesus as our very own Saviour – the Way by which we may be saved and brought to God – and we must rest on Him alone for salvation and rely altogether upon His sufferings on our behalf

As Joseph Hart once wrote most helpfully:

“Venture on Him, venture wholly,
Let no other trust intrude;
None but Jesus
Can do helpless sinners good.”

FELLOWSHIP NEWS

Our Pastor travelled to Scotland to the Larbert School in Theology from 4-7 September, where, on the Thursday evening, he addressed a number of ministers on *The Role of Faith in Justification*. From there he travelled to Dores, Inverness, to preach at the Dores' Communion Season throughout the weekend of 9-10 September. We are grateful to God for the strength given to Pastor for a very demanding week.

In our Pastor's absence, we were blessed with ministry from Pastor Richard Turner of Hyde Street Chapel, Winchester. We regularly remember the work there; and we pray that Mr. Turner, with the members and friends in that city will be encouraged with many tokens for good from the Lord.

Our 21st Salisbury Conference was held at Emmanuel over the weekend of 22-24 September, taking *The Protestant Reformation* as this year's theme. We were very pleased to welcome as our guest speaker, Rev. Timothy Nelson, who came to us from Ballynahinch Free Presbyterian Church, N.I. On Friday evening Mr. Nelson opened the conference by speaking on *The Reformation: an extraordinary work of God*. We saw how, in God's providence, the way was being prepared in the years preceding 1517. Then God chose weak men to fulfil his purposes in this great work of reformation. Finally, God's power was manifestly seen at this time as he worked irresistibly by his Spirit, changing the course of history. On Saturday, we were given three very uplifting and instructive messages: *Great Biblical Truths rediscovered in the Reformation*, *Spiritual Effects of the Reformation then and now* and *Maintaining a Reformed Stance in the 21st century*. On the Lord's Day we were much blessed through the powerful preaching of Mr. Nelson at both services. Finally, at an After Church Fellowship, we were treated to a brief exposition of Ecclesiastes 7:10 when we were exhorted not to yearn for God's past mercies, but to live, serve and witness in the present day. Once again, we were encouraged to receive many visitors over the weekend from churches near and far. We pray that the blessing we received from Mr. Nelson's ministry may also have been his experience throughout the weekend, coming as he did, as a stranger, but departing as a dear friend. And may he see God at work among his people there in the church in Northern Ireland.

An "Open Day" was held at Grove House on Saturday 30 September, from 10.30 to 4pm. Hundreds of postcards were distributed widely throughout the surrounding roads, inviting people to come and see the alterations which have been made recently to what was once the Doctor's Surgery. In answer to much prayer, we were thrilled to see so many local residents come through the door. They were given guided tours and informed of the various ways in which the building is being used now, in particular, the commencement next year of a seminary for the training of Pastors in Bible ministry. "Before and after" photos were displayed, as well as large posters on the walls with information on the various church ministries. Free tea, coffee and cakes were served throughout the day. Encouraging conversations were held with many people who showed great interest in how we are making use of this building. Our prayer is that this initial contact with many local people will encourage some to come again and hear the gospel.

When our Pastor and Jill took a week's holiday in October, we were glad to welcome Rev. Richard Brooks to our pulpit on the Lord's Day October 8th. Mr. Brooks came to us from Bromsgrove, Birmingham and his faithful ministry was a means of much blessing to us all. The following weekend, our Pastor was preaching at the anniversary services for Maryport Street Baptist Chapel, Devizes. From our pulpit on the Lord's Day 15 October, we received challenging ministry from Rev. John Woollam who came to us from Newhouse Baptist Church, Devon. Once again we were much encouraged through the preaching of God's Word through his servant.

"Behold, the eye of the LORD is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy." Psalm 33:18

NOTICE FOR THE 2018 SALISBURY CONFERENCE

This will take place on the **28-30 September 2018, God willing**. The Guest Speaker is **Dr Michael A. G. Haykin**, Professor of Church History and Biblical Spirituality at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky, U.S.A. The Theme is **The Triumph of Christ and His Church**.

From Friday at 7.30pm and on Saturday beginning at 10.30am, Dr Haykin will take the subjects of *The Triumph of Christ and his Church in the Teaching of the Puritans*, *The Triumph of Christ and His Church in the Thought and Experience of Jonathan Edwards*, *The Triumph of Christ and His Church in the Era of New Missionary Endeavour, with Andrew Fuller and William Carey* and *The Triumph of Christ and His Church: the Great Challenges of the 19th and 20th Centuries*. Dr Haykin will be preaching at the Sabbath Services on 30 September, and speaking afterwards at an After Church Meeting. More information can be found at www.salisburyemmanuel.org.uk.

A STATEMENT FROM SIMON GREEN, ASSOCIATE MINISTER

Anneke and I would like to express our sincere gratitude to the members of the church and congregation here at Emmanuel for the warmth of your welcome, as well as the love and many kindnesses that have been extended to us. We have been genuinely touched and are delighted to be among you; we feel that “the Lord hath done great things for us, whence joy to us is brought.”

On a personal note it is an immense honour to be working with my esteemed brother and friend who is the Minister of this church. I say sincerely, and with no sense of flattery at all, that there is no-one in this country I esteem more highly in the gospel than your Pastor. Both of us sense something divinely special in how close we are theologically and how well we relate as personalities.

It may help some of you to know exactly what I will be doing, now that I am here. At the Wednesday evening Bible Study I have already begun a series on “The Teaching of our Lord on Prayer”, and that will continue for several weeks yet, the Lord willing.

Also a pattern for the Sabbath services will emerge soon, whereby, for the coming months, Pastor will lead morning worship and I will do so in the evening.

Besides preaching ministry, I will be aiming to visit regularly those members who are generally unable to attend the services. Additionally, over the course of the next few months, Anneke and I are planning to invite you all into our home so that we can get to know you better.

Then there is also a great deal of work to be completed for the Seminary, in order for it to commence in January.

So there is much to be done for the Lord. We covet your prayers as we labour with you in the gospel and we trust that, as we have already seen real evidence of the Lord's presence amongst us, we will continue to see Him blessing this church for the glory of His Son, the salvation of many lost sinners, and the real spiritual growth of us all.

"The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build." (Nehemiah 2:20)

* * * * *

God willing, Simon's Ordination and Installation Services will take place on Saturday, 11 November, at 2pm. and 5.30pm. (A Tea will be provided between the services at approximately 4pm.) The preachers will be: Rev. Maarten Kuivenhoven (Grand Rapids, USA) and Dr. David Allen (Walsham-le-Willows, Suffolk). All are warmly invited to these two services and we pray the Lord will be present richly to bless.

TRUTHS EXPERIMENTALLY TAUGHT BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

Thomas Moor

The most prominent truths, with their effects in experience and practice, which the Holy Spirit usually teaches out of His word to the soul that, notwithstanding every hindrance, really follows on to know the Lord, are as follows:-

1. By the quickening and enlightening influence of the Holy Spirit, the soul is made conscious of its condition as guilty before God (Rom. 3:19, 20, 23). This consciousness produces a condition of unrest and anxiety in view of eternity and the judgment to come, accompanied with an earnest desire for salvation and peace with God. At the same time there is a consciousness of utter helplessness and hopelessness in self and self-doings, although this latter consciousness is frequently not attained until after many unsuccessful endeavours to procure rest and peace by doing many things of a religious character.

2. The soul becomes conscious of the all-sufficiency of the death of Christ to satisfy the claims of justice, and that in no other way can peace with God be obtained but through the atoning death of Him who died as the substitute for the guilty. The soul is led to acquiesce in this, and to look to the death of Christ as its only hope of salvation from everlasting misery. The soul is now a saved soul - saved simply through resting for salvation on the death of Christ, who in dying bore the curse instead of the guilty (Rom. 5:6-10; Gal. 3:13; Eph. 2:13, 17; Rom. 4:25).

3. After this the soul becomes conscious that Christ is something more to it than a Saviour who redeems from the curse of the law, precious though that redemption be, for it becomes conscious of its perfect and changeless standing in righteousness before God through the perfect obedience of the Lord Jesus. Resting already on the atoning death of Christ for salvation, it had probably thought that fitness for heaven was to be the result of its own attainments in holiness and righteousness; but now it sees that by the one great work of Christ in its twofold aspect, it is at one and the same time delivered from the wrath to come, and for ever made fit for heaven itself. Not only redeemed in Christ, but accepted in Christ (Eph. 1:6). By His obedience made righteous, as well as by His shed blood fully justified from all sin and condemnation (Rom. 5:9, 19; Rom. 10:4; 2 Cor. 5:21). The desire of the soul now is not to make itself fit for heaven, but to live as becometh one already made fit, as well as already delivered from guilt and condemnation.

4. And now the soul progressing in Divine knowledge becomes conscious of its position as one of the family of God: not only a saved sinner, but a child of

God (Gal. 3:26; 4:6, 7); and it learns that God's purposes and doings in salvation are the purposes and doings of a wise and gracious Father on behalf of His much-loved children for whom He has provided a home of everlasting blessedness. The soul now takes its place as a child, calling God "Father" with a deeper meaning than it ever did or could before.

5. The soul, still taught by the Holy Spirit, becomes conscious that the work of Christ as the Saviour is a definite work with a certain and assured result; the effect of a covenant between the Father and the Son for the full perfection of a family in the eternal blessedness provided for them hereafter; and that such covenant contained every needful arrangement in order that their fall into sin and resulting unfitness for that blessedness, and their consequent liability to eternal punishment, should not hinder His purposes of love: and that the Lord Jesus freely and voluntarily undertook to be the first-born among the many brethren of this family that He might be its Surety – its covenant Head - to fulfil every responsibility necessary for the final home-gathering of the chosen family. Hence the proclamation concerning Him (Isa. 40:1, 21; 53:11, 12). Hence the charge given Him (John 6:38, 39). The body provided (Heb. 10:5-7). Judgement work finished (John 17:4). Power given to gather in the family (John 17:2). The certainty of their standing before the Father in glory (John 10:27, 29; 14:1-3; 17:24; 1 Thess. 4:16, 17). Hence also the covenant and sure work of the Holy Spirit (John 16:13, 15; 1 Cor. 2:9-16 ; Rom. 8:11; 1 Peter 1:2; 2 Thess. 2:13).

6. The soul, guided by the Holy Spirit, becomes gradually conscious of its most marvellous oneness with Christ. Oneness with Him in the Father's love (John 17:23). Oneness with Him in the election of grace (Eph. 1:4, 5). Oneness with Him as He stood in the presence of the Father before the world was (2 Tim. 1:9). Oneness with Him judicially (Rom. 6:6, 9). Oneness with Him vitally (1 Cor. 12:27; Rom. 8:10). Oneness with him experimentally (Gal. 2:20). Oneness with Him in beauty and glory (John 17:22; Eph. 2:6; I John 3:1, 2). This causes the soul greatly to rejoice in the Lord in the full assurance of knowledge, and of faith and hope.

7. The Holy Spirit, still leading the soul in His heavenly teachings, brings it into a happy consciousness of the constant presence of the Lord Jesus and of the

Father in the daily walk of life; and causes it to realise more vividly and more familiarly, and with a more childlike trust and affection, the presence and love of God in His relationship as a Father, and the presence and love of Jesus as real man at the right hand of God (one with the Father and the Holy Spirit as God ; yet as real now as a man, in His glorified humanity, as when upon earth), the friend, the guide, the strength, the joy of the soul every day; and thus it realises communion more intimate and influential than can possibly result from any earthly friendship or relationship whatever (John 14:21, 23).

This is probably the highest experience attainable on earth. The next step being to drop the veil of the mortal body, and see face to face, with a glorified vision, Him whom having not seen, we love, and in whom, though now we see Him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

GREAT SAYINGS OF JOHN WYCLIFFE

(1322-1384)

"Heal us, Lord, for nought: not for our merits but for Thy Mercy... give us Grace to know that all Thy gifts be of Thy goodness."

(James' "Apology for Wicklif," c. vi.)

"We cannot do so much as think a good thought unless Jesu, the Angel of Great Counsel, send it: nor perform a good work unless it be properly His good work."

(James' "Apology for Wicklif," c. vi.)

"O, marvellous power of the Divine Seed! which overpowers strong warriors, softens hard hearts and renews and makes Divine men brutalised by sin and departed infinitely from God."

(Sermon on Luke 8, 11. Vienna MS., 3928.)

"The Priests learn and teach Holy Scripture for this purpose, that the Church may learn to know the walk of Christ and may be led to love Christ Himself."

(Sermons for Saints' Days, fol. 202, col. 4, Sermon 6.)

"Christ Himself is the Scripture which it behoves us to know: and to be ignorant of the Scripture is the same thing as to be ignorant of Christ."

(De Veritate Scrip. Sac., c. 21, fol. 70, col. 2.)

"If the soul is not in tune with the words, how can the words have power. If thou hast no love, thou art sounding brass and tinkling cymbal."

(XL. Miscell. Sermons, No. 8, fol. 206, col. 2.)

"God's Word is the Life of the World, and every Word of God is the life of the human soul."

(Tract "Wycket," Oxford, 1828, p. 5.)

"If we had Christ alone before our eyes and if we served Him continually in teaching and learning, in prayer, work, and rest, then should we all be brothers, sisters, and mothers of our Lord Jesus Christ."

(De Civili Dominio II., 13, fol. 212, col. 1.)

"Christ says to each one, 'Follow Me,' and every man who desires to be saved must follow Him either in suffering or at least in moral conduct."

(Sermons for Saints' Days, No. III., fol. 4, col. 2.)

"The nearer the life of a Christian comes to Christ, the more rich it is in virtue."

(De Veritate Scrip. Sac., c. 29, fol. 101, col. 4.)

PROFITING MORE FROM GOOD BOOKS

John. J. Murray

How many pastors today have to acknowledge that their people are not readers of good books? In the same way as there is not a great desire for sound preaching, so likewise there is not a hunger for good books. There was a time in the 1960s and 1970s when congregations seemed eager to have bookstalls, and publishers readily complied. It was not unusual even to see a queue forming when a newly published title reached a Christian bookshop. What has gone wrong? The spiritual appetite seems to have decayed. Judging by the front window displays in many Christian bookshops, the literature in

popular demand is of a very light character. We are also living in a visual age. The PowerPoint projector is taking over in our churches. Items of praise and Scripture passages are projected onto a screen in front of us. Bibles are being set aside. The 'download' is being used more and more. It is a rare sight to see a Christian home with bookshelf of Christian classics.

The Testimony of History

We have only to look back in history to see the important place that books have played in the progress of the Christian church. There are many instances of books being used in the conversion of sinners, who subsequently became mighty instruments in God's hands. There is one oft-quoted chain of effect in this area. The 'heavenly' Richard Sibbes published *The Bruised Reed* in 1630 and that book was used in the conversion of Richard Baxter. The 'saintly' Baxter wrote *A Call to the Unconverted* (1657). Many years later, Baxter's book was blessed to the conversion of Philip Doddridge. His *Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul* (1745) was used to bring light into the soul of William Wilberforce. Then years later Wilberforce's *Practical View of Christianity* (1797) helped to bring from death into light and life the soul of the 'Moderate' churchman, Thomas Chalmers, who became the instrument under God of the Revival of 1839-42. We could also think of Henry Scougal's *The Life of God in the Soul of Man* being the means of the conversion of George Whitefield.

There are also instances of books that have had an influence in producing a new era in spiritual life. At the time of the Great Awakening in New England, Jonathan Edwards gave an account of it in *A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God* (1737). Iain Murray notes: 'Edwards' *Faithful Narrative* was possibly the most significant book to precede the great evangelical Awakening on both sides of the Atlantic.' Think too of the effect that Edwards' *An Humble Attempt to Promote Extraordinary Prayer* had on the Baptists in England and the subsequent rise of the worldwide missionary movement. Dr John MacLeod gives an interesting example of the power of a book when he tells us of what happened in Kilbrandon (Argyll). The minister, Rev John Smith, was invited by Lady Glenorchy to translate Joseph Alleine's *Alarm to the Unconverted* into Gaelic. 'As he advanced with the work he used what he translated as pulpit matter, and when the people of Kilbrandon came thus in

touch with the bones of the Puritan prophet, an awakening began, the memory of which has not yet passed away.'

We should also recall the way in which good books shaped the lives of generations of Christians in, for example, Puritan England and Presbyterian Scotland. Family religion encompassed regular family worship, the keeping of the Sabbath, and the reading of good books. Most Christian homes would have a shelf or more of books some of which were 'thumbed out of existence'. There were the classic writings of such men as Samuel Rutherford, William Guthrie, John Bunyan, Thomas Boston, John Brown, Matthew Henry, Robert Murray M'Cheyne, and C. H. Spurgeon. Such books were passed on down through the generations. Of Boston's *Human Nature in Its Fourfold State* it could be said, 'It did more to mould the thought of a generation than anything except the Westminster Shorter Catechism.' The farm labourer had more knowledge of Scripture and a greater grasp of doctrine than many a learned scholar.

The Need of the Present Hour

The effect of a renewed hunger for reading would do much to rectify some of the failings of modern evangelicalism:

Ignorance of doctrine, 'children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine' (Eph. 4:14). In the words of Dr Robert Reymond, 'a theological illiteracy which invites the rise of wholesale heresy pervades the church'. The great lack of discernment, even among leaders in the church, is alarming.

Lack of depth in Christian experience, 'even as unto babes in Christ' (1 Cor. 3:1). We have an anaemic version of faith that signs unto the benefits purchased by Christ with no evidence of a radical change in relationship and lifestyle.

Neglect of Church history, 'There arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD nor yet the works which he had done for Israel' (Judg. 2:10). As Dr Lloyd-Jones observed, many modern evangelicals think that evangelism began with D. L. Moody. Others think the blessings of Pentecost were only re-discovered in the twentieth century.

The love and promotion of good books could provide an antidote to these ills. The Reformers knew that ignorance, not learning, was the breeding ground for heresy and superstition. Luther, Calvin, and Knox flooded the market with instruction in the Christian faith. They saw the need for producing catechisms, confessions, and manuals of doctrine. A solid foundation was laid in the minds of the young. How desperately our generation stands in need of that foundation!

The more genuine and deep the conversion-experience the more likely our people are to go back to the books that came out of 'white hot' soul-experience and that have an unction attending them. George Whitefield, writing of the Puritans, said: 'Though dead, by their writings they yet speak, a peculiar unction attends them to this hour, and for these thirty years past I have remarked, that the more true and vital religion hath revived either at home or abroad, the more the good old Puritanical writings have been called for.' A modern preacher presents a vivid picture of what we mean: 'As furnaces burn with ancient coal and not with leaves that fall from today's trees so my heart is kindled with the fiery substance I find in the old Scripture-steeped sermons of Puritan pastors.'

It is by reading the history of the church and the biographies of men and women of God in the great eras of the Christian church that we come to be convicted of what we are lacking in our day, individually and corporately. It gives the longing in our hearts to identify with the spirituality of those days and to recapture something of it for ourselves. C. H. Spurgeon speaks of his discovery of Puritan classics in a room in his grandfather's old manse at Stamboume, Essex. 'Out of that darkened room I fetched those old authors when I was yet a youth, and never was I happier than when in their company.' Happily, those old Puritan books had the effect of producing a God-centred, Christ exalting, Spirit-empowered ministry, the effects of which continue with us to this day.

May we respond with Augustine to the voice which cried: *'Take up and read!'*

THE STRANGER IN THE PULPIT

Many years ago a remarkable thing happened in a town in the West of England. One Lord's Day a minister was engaged to preach; the people of the town did not know him; he was a stranger there; but he was known to be a very excellent and faithful minister. Many people gathered to hear him preach, and at last the time came for this man to conduct worship and preach the Word of God. As he entered the pulpit, the congregation noticed that he appeared to be overcome with emotion – for he was silent for some time, and when it was time for the sermon, he could not begin, but hid his face in his hands, almost as if he was unwell; but that was not the case.

At last he gave out his text, and spoke as follows: "I want to say something. Fifteen years ago I was in this town, and I was in this church. I was then quite young – and I came to here to listen to the sermon. In fact, there were three young men present that night. All three of these youths were very wicked, for they came not only to laugh, but they actually came to throw stones at the preacher. They had filled their pockets with stones, determined to throw them at him as soon as he began to preach.

They were sitting together when the sermon began, and the preacher had not said very much, before one said to the others, "Now, throw! Now, throw!" But the second said, "No wait, I want to hear the end of what he is saying, to see what he makes of it." They therefore waited. But presently this lad said, "Now you can throw: I heard the end of it, there was nothing in it." Then the third said, "No, no, don't throw, what the preacher says is right and it is very good, don't hurt this godly old man."

Soon after that, the two others left the church saying very wicked things. They swore at the preacher; and they left the church very angry, because someone had spoiled their fun, in not letting them throw their stones.

Returning now to the minister who, years later, was about to preach from the same pulpit, this man went on to say, "the first of those three young men was some years later hanged for forgery; the second became a poor, wretched man, brought to poverty and rags, miserable in mind, and miserable in body;

and the third is now about to preach to you – Listen!” So it was that the Lord had convicted him of sin, drawn him to Himself, and saved him by matchless grace. Then He called him into the holy Ministry and so he was now the minister in the pulpit of that church.

And it all began years before when, as a young sinner, the Word of God came to his heart with power; and as a result, the Lord mercifully and graciously began to work in him, until such time as he earnestly sought the Lord and His salvation – and what he sought, at last he found. He became a true Christian believer and an eminent servant of Jesus Christ.

TWELVE RULES FOR PROMOTING HARMONY AMONG CHURCH MEMBERS

Dr. Thomas Smyth

Thomas Smyth, pastor of Second Presbyterian Church in Charleston, S.C., from 1832-1873, gave several practical directions for the members of his own congregation which are found in Volume 5 of his *Complete Works*, but these appear to be taken from Dr. William Plumer's "*Manual for Church Members*."

- (1)** To remember that we are all subject to failings and infirmities, of one kind or another. (Matt. 7:1-5. Rom. 2:21-23)
- (2)** To bear with and not magnify each other's infirmities. (Gal. 6:1)
- (3)** To pray one for another in our social meetings, and particularly in private. (James 5:16)
- (4)** To avoid going from house to house, for the purpose of hearing news, and interfering with other people's business. (Lev. 19:16)
- (5)** Always to turn a deaf ear to any slanderous report, and to allow no charge to be brought against any person until well founded and proved. (Prov. 25:23)
- (6)** If a member be in fault, to tell him of it in private, before it is mentioned to others. (Matt. 18:15)
- (7)** To watch against shyness of each other, and put the best construction on any action that has the appearance of opposition or resentment. (Prov. 10:12)

(8) To observe the just rule of Solomon, that is, to leave off contention before it he meddled with. (Prov. 17:14)

(9) If a member has offended, to consider how glorious, how God-like it is to forgive, and how unlike a Christian it is to revenge. (Eph. 4:2)

(10) To remember that it is always a grand artifice of the Devil, to promote distance and animosity among members of Churches, and we should, therefore, watch against every thing that furthers his end. (James 3:16)

(11) To consider how much more good we can do in the world at large, and in the Church in particular, when we are all united in love, than we could do when acting alone, and indulging a contrary spirit. (John 13:35)

(12) Lastly, to consider the express injunction of Scripture, and the beautiful example of Christ, as to these important things. (Eph. 4:32; 1 Peter 2:21; John 13:5, 35)

THE ERRORS OF ROME ANALYSED: A SERMON AGAINST ROMAN CATHOLICISM

Thomas Watson (1620-1686)

[Lightly edited]

“Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.” (1 Corinthians 10:14)

When I consider that saying of the blessed Apostle Paul, “I am pure from the blood of all men” (Acts 20:26), that which made him say so was because he had “not shunned to declare” (to his hearers then committed to his charge) “the whole counsel of God.” Paul had been faithful to the souls of people; he had preached up truth, and preached down error. The consideration of which has put me at this time on this Scripture, from whence I shall (by divine permission and assistance) assert the truth of the Protestant religion, against Roman Catholicism; and amongst all the errors that are levelled against the Gospel, none is more gross, dishonourable, or dangerous, than those broached and set a-running in the Roman Church: and therefore there was good reason why the Apostle should say: “Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.”

Idolatry buds and blossoms in Roman Catholicism. It should be the earnest prayer and endeavour of every good Christian that none of these poisonous streams that flow from the See of Rome may ever infest this British Island.

My main and principal design at this time is to show unto you some of those many grand errors that are in Romanism, or in the Popish religion, and likewise to fortify you against them. Among many others there are these twelve grand errors which every good Christian must take heed of, and flee from:

(1) The Papists do hold that **the Pope is the head of the Church**. This is diametrically, and point-blank opposite to the Scripture, for Christ is there called “the head” (Col. 2:19). Now to make the Pope the head of the Church is to make the Church monstrous, by having two heads. This is to make the spouse of Christ an harlot. I read of a beast rising out of the sea (Rev 13:1). By the “beast” interpreters understand the mystical antichrist, i.e. the Papacy. Now, if the Pope be the “beast” there, and elsewhere spoken of, how ridiculous, yea, how impious is it to make him the head of Christ’s Church.

(2) The Papists hold that **the Pope is above Scripture**, and that his laws, decrees and canons bind more than the Scriptures, the Word of God. Well may he have that “name of blasphemy” written upon his mitre, which is mentioned in this Scripture.

(3) Their third error is **the Mass**, which indeed is gross idolatry; there are in it these two errors: – (a) **Transubstantiation**. Bellarmine, and other Popish writers, say that **the bread, the host after consecration, is turned into the very body of Christ**. Now, this is against philosophy, as well as Scripture and divinity. `Tis against philosophy, for this is clear: if Christ’s body is in heaven, then it cannot possibly be in the bread; but Christ’s body is in heaven (Acts 3:21). Moreover, that the bread in the Sacrament is not turned into the body of Christ, I prove thus: the wicked there do not receive Christ (1 Cor. 2:14), but if the bread be the very body of Christ, then the wicked when they eat of the bread, do eat the very body of Christ. This is so gross an opinion that most of the ancient Church Fathers wrote against it, as Cyprian, Origen, Tertullian, Augustine, Ambrose, with many others. (b) The second error in the Mass is that **they do daily offer up Christ**. I grant there are priests in Gospel times, and sacrifices too, but they are such as are *spiritual*: as the sacrifice of prayer, of praise, of a broken and contrite heart; but that there should be any external

offering of Christ, by way of sacrifice, is a *blasphemy against Christ's priestly office, for it supposes that Christ's offering on the cross was not perfect*. That is notoriously contrary to the very letter of Scripture. "This man," i.e. Christ, the God-man, "after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God... for by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Heb. 10:12,14). This Scripture shows the completeness of Christ's sufferings and sacrifice, and that now there needs no offering up any more sacrifices.

(4) A fourth error is **the doctrine of Popish satisfaction**: they hold that we do, in our own persons, satisfy God's justice by our penance, fasting, alms-deeds, and so on. Thus reads the Council of Trent, and the Popish Rheims [i.e. the translation of the New Testament made at Rheims in 1582]. But where is anything of this in Scripture? Alas! what is our confession of sin? That is no satisfaction for sin. If a traitor confesses his guilt, this is no satisfaction for, but rather an aggravation of, his treason. Alas! our repentance, fasting, humiliation, the best of our actions are be-spotted and mixed with very much sin; our humiliation is mixed with very much pride, our repentance and confession with much hypocrisy and dissimulation. There is much of sin in the cream of our services, and *sin cannot satisfy for sin*. This is a sure rule, and I pray you mark it, that whatever offerings we bring to God for acceptance, we must lay them on the altar of Jesus Christ, for *God's justice accepts of no satisfaction, but by, and through, the Lord Jesus*.

(5) A fifth error is in **distinguishing between sins mortal and sins venial**. Mortal sins are murder, perjury, adultery, and such like; these, say they, deserve death and damnation; but venial sins, such as vain thoughts, rash anger, concupiscence, these, say they, do not deserve death. But we say and affirm that there are no such sins as they call venial. It is true, *the greatest sins being repented of, are pardonable through the blood of Christ; but there is no sin, of which we can say, that it doth not deserve death and damnation*. And this I will prove by a double argument. (a) *If the very least sin is (as indeed it is) a breach and violation of God's Law, then it is no more venial than a greater*. But the least sin is a violation of God's Law; therefore the least sin is no more venial than a greater. The minor is clearly proved from Matthew 5.28: "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." In which place our Saviour makes a lascivious look,

an impure glance of the eye, to be a breach and violation of God's Law. (b) If the least sin exposes men to a curse, then it is no more venial than greater; but *the least sin exposes men to a curse*, "for it is written: Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them" (Gal 3:10). He that fails in the least iota or punctilio, it exposes himself to a curse. And remember this, my brethren, that without repentance *God has prepared a great hell for "little" sins*.

(6) A sixth error in Popery is their asserting **the doctrine of free-will**. That Goliath of the Romanists, Bellarmine, says that man's will is inclinable unto good, and that a man has an innate power to do that which is good; *but man's will being corrupted and depraved, is not inclinable to that which is good, but quite the contrary*; and this is evident from our own experience, had we no Bible to confirm it.

When the rudder of a ship is broke, the ship is carried up and down, to and fro, which way the wind will: even so is it with man's will, being corrupted. Augustine, in his *Confessions* (2.6), says that before his conversion, he did accustom himself to fruit-stealing; not so much out of a love to the fruit, as to stealing. Hence is it men are said to "love the evil" (Micah 3:2). Again, the will being depraved and corrupt, has no innate power to do that which is good. Indeed the Papists say that man has some seed of good in him, but the Scripture doth not say so. Man, as Ambrose well says, has a free-will to sin, but how to perform that which is good he finds not. Sin has cut the locks where our strength lay. Therefore are we said to be "without strength" (Rom 5:6). Sinners are said to be in the bond of iniquity, and so not in a posture to run heaven's race. A man by nature cannot do that which has the least bent and tendency to that which is good; he is so far from performing a good act, as that he cannot so much as think a good thought. Hence it is, man is said to have a heart of stone: he can no more prepare himself for his conversion than a stone can prepare itself for the superstructure: men naturally are dead spiritually. In man's will there is not only impotency, but obstinacy. Hence it is men are said to "resist the Holy Ghost" (Acts 7:51).

(7) A seventh error is their **indulgences**. They say the Pope hath a power to give a pardon and indulgence; by virtue of which men are freed from their sins in God's sight. Besides the blasphemy of this assertion, what else is it but a cunning trick and sly artifice to get money by? This it is indeed that brings grist

(i.e. corn to grind) to the Pope's mill. How contrary is this to Scripture which asks: "Who can forgive sins but God only?" (Mk. 2:7) This doctrine of Popish indulgence is a key that unlocks and opens a door to all manner of licentiousness and uncleanness; for what need persons care what they do if they (for their money) can obtain a pardon? Mr. Foxe in his *Book of Martyrs*, mentions one that at first was a Papist, and being brought before Bonner (Bishop of London) said: "Sir, at the first I was of your religion, and then I cared not how I lived, because I could with my money obtain a pardon. But now I am otherwise persuaded, and do believe that none can forgive sin but God only."

(8) An eighth error is **the doctrine of merits**. They say that good works do expiate sin, and merit glory. Bellarmine says, a man hath a double right to glory: one by Christ's merits, and the other by his own, and for this he urges 2 Timothy 4:8: "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge shall give me, at that day." Now Bellarmine says that God in justice rewards our works; and if He do it of right and in justice, then certainly they merit blessing. This I answer two ways: (a) God giving us in justice a reward, it is not for the worthiness of our works, but *for the worthiness of our Saviour*. (b) God as a just Judge rewards our works, not because we have merited a reward, but because *He hath promised a reward*, and so is just in giving what He hath promised.

Objection – "God crowns our works, therefore they merit blessing."

Answer – God (to speak after the manner of men) keeps two courts, a court of justice, and a court of mercy. In His court of justice nothing may come but Christ's merits; but in the court of mercy our works *may* come: "may," let me tell you: God in free grace crowns those works in the court of mercy which He condemned in the court of justice. Now that we do not, nor can merit by our good works, I will prove by a threefold argument, and this threefold cord will not easily be broken.

(1) That which merits at God's hand, must be a gift we give to Him, and not a debt we owe to Him. Now whatever we can do for, or give unto God, it is but a just and true debt. (2) He who would merit at God's hand must give God something overplus (i.e. more); but alas! if we cannot give God the principal, how shall we give Him the interest? If we cannot give Him His due, how can we give Him overplus? (3) He who would merit anything at God's hand must

offer that to Him that is perfect. But alas! can we give God anything that is perfect? Are not our best offerings fly-blown (i.e. tainted by flies) with pride and corruption?

Beloved, woe to the holiest man alive if God weighs him in the balance of the sanctuary, and does not allow him some grains. Ambrose said: "Good works are the way to, but not the cause of, salvation; therefore when you have done all, say you are unprofitable servants." No angel can merit (for He charges them with folly), much less vile and sinful man. Therefore, count all your own righteousness but as dung and dogs-meat. In a word, rely not on your own merits; *put the crown on the head of free-grace.*

(9) The ninth error in the Popish religion is **the doctrine of purgatory**. Now, what is this but a subtle artifice and trick to get money? For when they (especially those that are rich) are about to die, and make wills, if so be they will give large sums of money, the priest will pray for them that they go not into purgatory; or if they do, that they may be quickly delivered out of it. How contrary and repugnant is this to Scripture that holds forth no middle place! The wicked when they die, their souls go immediately to hell: "The rich man also died, and was buried, and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments" (Lk. 16:23). It is true there is a purgatory in this life, but that is the blood of Christ (Heb. 1:3; 1 Jn. 1.7). If we are not purged by this blood while we live, we shall never be purged after by fire. Wicked men, when they die, do not go into a fire of purgation, but into damnation. And on the other hand, believers when they die, pass immediately to heaven. "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Lk. 23.43). Christ Jesus was then on the cross, and was instantly to be in heaven, and the penitent thief was immediately to be with Christ. Here is no mention of any such place as purgatory. The ancient and orthodox fathers were all against purgatory; as Chrysostom, Cyprian, Augustine and Fulgentius.

(10) A tenth error is **the invocation of angels**, a praying unto them. This is a certain rule, that *angel-worship is will-worship, expressly forbidden in Scripture* (Col. 2:18). Their distinction of mediators of redemption, and of intercession, doth not help them. Though we pray, say they, to angels as mediators of intercession, yet we pray to Christ as Mediator of redemption.

Answer – Jesus Christ in Scripture is not only called a Redeemer, but also an Advocate; and as it is a sin to make any our Redeemer but Jesus Christ, so it

is as great a sin to make any our Intercessor but Jesus Christ. That it is sinful to pray to angels, is clear from many Scriptures. "How then shall they call on him *in* whom they have not believed?" (Rom. 10:14). Mark, we may not pray to any but them in whom we believe; but we cannot believe *in* an angel, therefore we must not pray to an angel. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus" (Heb. 10:19). *He only is to be prayed unto, by whom we have entrance into the holiest*; but it is by Jesus Christ that we enter into the holiest; therefore it is only Jesus Christ that we must pray unto.

(11) An eleventh error is their **worshipping of images**; they burn incense before the image, which is a divine worship to the image. Now this is directly contrary to the very letter of the command (Exod. 20:4, 5). Image-worship and idol-worship are terms synonymous. God says of idols that they "have spoken vanity" (Zech. 10:2). And is it not a vain thing to worship those things that are vain and that speak vanity? None can draw the picture of a spirit; who then can draw the picture of Him who is the Father of spirits? This opinion of image-worship has been condemned and exploded by several Councils and Synods.

(12) Another error in Roman Catholicism is, **they deny Jesus Christ suffered the pains of hell in His soul**. Indeed, to give them their due, they do aggravate the pains of Christ's body, but they deny He felt the pains and torments of hell in His soul. This opinion much lessens the sufferings of Christ. And mark this, whatsoever would or does lessen the sufferings of Christ for us, the same lessens the love of Christ to us. But it is clear Christ felt the pains of hell in His soul.

But when we say Christ suffered the pains of hell in His soul, we do not mean that He felt horror of conscience, as the damned do; but we mean that He felt that that was equivalent to it; He felt the burden and pain of God's wrath. Christ Jesus suffered equivalently the pains of hell, that so He might free us really from the torments of hell.

I will now wind up all in a word or two of application, and it shall be in the words of my text: "Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry;" flee from Romanism, take heed of that religion that brings forth so many monsters. And besides these thirteen errors consider briefly these seven particulars: –

(1) *The Roman religion is an impure filthy religion*; they allow of stews and brothel-houses for money; nay, some of the Popes themselves have been guilty of sodomy and simony.

(2) *It is a superstitious religion*, that appears in their christening of bells, in their using of salt, spittle and the cross in baptism. Indeed Paul gloried and rejoiced in the cross of Christ; Paul had the power of the cross in his heart, not the sign of the cross in his forehead. It is an unspeakable indignity and dishonour to Jesus Christ, to use that in His worship which He never instituted.

(3) *It is upheld by deceit and lying*. How have they belied both Calvin and Luther. They say of Luther that when he died the devils were seen to dance about him, and that he died with much horror and despair; whereas he went serenely and sweetly out of the world, his last words being these of our blessed Saviour's: "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit."

(4) *It is an outside, carnal religion*. It consists in external carnal things, as scourging, fasting, cringing. There is nothing of life and spirit in their worship; it is but a skeleton and carcass; there is nothing of soul and spirit in it.

(5) *It is an unedifying religion*; It does not build men up in their most holy faith; it does not carry on the work of sanctification; there is more of pomp than purity in it.

(6) *It is a cruel religion*; It is maintained and propagated by blood and cruelty. The Pope will have Peter's sword as well as Peter's keys; and what he cannot maintain by dint and force of argument, that will he endeavour to maintain by force of arms. In a word, the Romish Church is a purple whore, dyed with blood of saints and martyrs.

(7) *Lastly, it is a self-contradicting religion*. One of their canons says a man (in some cases) may take the Sacrament at the hand of an heretic; another canon says he may not. A learned and judicious writer observes more than a hundred contradictions in their religion. Thus, I press the words of my text: "Wherefore my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry." To conclude, let me exhort you to two or three things.

First, **hold the doctrine of the true orthodox Protestant religion**: the very filings of this gold are precious. Keep all the articles of the Christian faith; if you let one fundamental article of your faith go, you hazard your salvation. When

Samson pulled down but one pillar, immediately the whole fabric tumbled. So, if you destroy one pillar, if you let go one fundamental of truth, you endanger all.

Secondly, **hold forth the profession of the Protestant religion**: do not only hold fast the doctrines of the Protestant religion, but hold further the profession of the Protestant religion. Be not ashamed to wear Christ's colours. Christians, remember this one thing, those persons that are ashamed of Christ, are a very shame unto Christ. The religion I exhort you to flee from is a novelty; that which I press you to stand to is a verity, consonant to the Scripture, built on the foundation of the prophets and apostles, and sealed by the blood of many saints and martyrs.

Lastly, do not only hold fast, and hold forth, but also **adorn the Protestant religion**; this is holy Paul's exhortation to Titus, a holy behaviour and conduct (Titus 2:10). There is nothing hardens Romanists so much as the looseness of Protestants. Therefore adorn your holy religion with a holy living. Let me assure you I can hardly think they do truly believe in Christ that do not really conform unto Christ. The primitive Christians' sanctity did much to propagate Christianity.

And this is that which I beseech you to carry home with you: hold fast and hold forth the Protestant religion, and adorn it with a holy and biblical life; and when you do not hear me preaching to you, yet let me beseech you to hear this good word speaking in you: "Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry."

Consider what has been said, and the Lord make it advantageous to all your souls.

EPILOGUE

"Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory," John 17 v 24

This is the touching conclusion of Christ's final prayer for his disciples prior to leaving the upper room for the Garden of Gethsemane. He knew what awaited him, the physical and mental pain and suffering, and even more importantly, the wrath of God He had to endure for the sins of His elect people. But He saw

beyond that to eternity. Despite the enormity of His immediate trial He was still so concerned for his people, praying for them and seeking to comfort them.

Here Christ, God the Son, prays to God the Father, for all those that the Father has given to Him, that they might be with Him in heaven for eternity. In Hebrews 7 v 25 we read "seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" - for His elect people. The Father and the Son are as one in their desires for their chosen people and therefore we can be absolutely certain that the Father heard the prayer of His Beloved Son and is answering that prayer even now.

We have never seen Christ with our eyes; we have never heard His voice; we have never felt His physical presence; but here we walk by faith. If faith has been pleasant, and our hope been sweet how much more will sight and certainty be! Christ has prayed and even now is interceding on our behalf that we will spend eternity with Him in His glory. We shall see Christ as He is (not through a glass darkly but face to face) and will praise and worship Him as we should and as He deserves.

Our knowledge of what Heaven will be like is very limited. In some respects, we know more about what it will not be, than what it will be. However, we must rest content to know that we shall be with the Lord in all His glory, with all the saints and all the holy angels and that this blessed state will last for all eternity.

Let us seek to encourage one another with these thoughts.

Bill Norton