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# LOST PROPERTY

Most railways have their Lost Property Department where a large collection of coats, bags, umbrellas, and other things may be seen.

Everything taken to such a Department is an article of some value. No old newspapers or empty boxes are taken there. Such things are of no value to anybody and therefore not spoken of as “lost.”

To say something is “lost” implies that it is important and of worth to someone. This should be remembered when we read in the Bible that men and women are “lost”, as, for instance: “The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Lk. 19:10) and “If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost” (2 Cor. 4:3).

In our sin, we have wandered from God and we now find ourselves separated from Him and, in fact, lost to Him. But God still loves us, cares for us, and desires to have us back with Himself.

This is why He sent his Son to seek for us. It is because He wants to recover us from our sad state. The Son of God was sent to save us.

In some countries, the railways call the place which contains the articles left on trains, not the “*Lost Property Bureau*”, but the “*Found Property Bureau*”, naming it, not from the view-point of those who have *lost* the articles but from the view-point of those who have *found* those things.

We may say that God has His “*Found Property Department*”, where those once “lost” to Him are regarded as “found.”

There is an illustration of this in that beautiful parable taught by our Lord – the Prodigal Son. When, at last, this wanderer, who left his father’s house and came to be at a dreadful distance from him, returned home, his father expressed his great joy by saying, “This my son was dead and is alive again; he was LOST and is FOUND” (Lk 15:24). In this father, we are meant to see God, who is so glad to see us back where we belong.

Occasionally a notice appears informing people that someone is missing and sadly lost. When that notice is read, it shows that someone dearly loves that

person and regards them as very precious, and so much wants to see them again, and, because of this, he (or she) has gone to the trouble and expense of advertising the person as “lost”.

In like manner, God declares in the Gospel that we are lost, but, at that same time, He shows that He has gone to great expense, giving and sending His Son to die for our sins, that poor lost sinners may be recovered and be His for evermore.

Reader, have you realized that you are lost and in a desperate condition, unable to find your way back to God? Unless Someone – the Lord Jesus Christ – finds you and saves you, there is worse to come – you will be lost finally and for ever – hopelessly lost.

The message we call the “Gospel” tells that the lost may be saved, for “God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be SAVED” (Jn. 3:17). “We believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved” (Acts 15:11). “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved” (16:31).

There you have it. Salvation may be yours through personal faith in the Saviour. Are you still among the LOST, or have you been FOUND – and SAVED?

## **FELLOWSHIP NEWS**

As a church and congregation, we continue to be richly blessed under the ministry of Pastor John Thackway. We thank our gracious God for him and also for his dear wife, Margaret, and for the way they have been able to settle so well among us. And we are also encouraged by new people regularly meeting with us and by the strong unity in the church as we enter the New Year.

After much thought and prayer, the Elders, supported by the Deacons, have recommended to the church that Daniel Tribe be offered the position among us of “Ministerial Assistant”. Daniel, who strongly feels called to the Ministry, and who has completed the three-year course at Salisbury Reformed Seminary, will be authorized to take services and to preach, as well as to

engage in pastoral work. It is hoped that Pastor Thackway and Pastor Watts will meet regularly with Daniel, and that Daniel will be able to attend Officers' Meetings. The recommendation was warmly approved by the Church at the Church Meeting on 15 December. We pray very much for Daniel and Jenni as they begin this service to the Lord and to His people.

The numbers of children attending the Sunday School have declined of late. This matter was raised at the Church Prayer Meeting and we are thankful for the answer to our prayers in that numbers have now increased.

An Open Lecture Day was held on 5 November, when twelve men with an interest in the Seminary, joined the students to hear lectures on: Good Works, the Evidence of Grace (Malcolm Watts), the Huguenots or Early French Protestants (Roland Burrows), Christ-Centred Care (Christopher Buss), and the Preaching of Past Worthies (John Saunders). During the day, time was also found for conversation and fellowship.

On Friday & Saturday, 2 & 3 December, the monthly Seminary Weekend took place, with lectures delivered on: the Perseverance of the Saints (Malcolm Watts), Studies in 1 Timothy (John Thackway), the use of Scripture in Ethical Matters, Mental Health Problems, and Biblical Counselling (David Kay), and Worship Battlegrounds of the Old Testament (Jonathan Northern). The lectures were blessed to those attending, with both former students and future students being present on this occasion.

The Trustees of the Salisbury Reformed Seminary met online (via Zoom) on 5 December, and they were encouraged to learn that five men had applied to start the course in January, 2023: since then, due to employment issues, one of these men has decided to begin the course at a later date, possibly next year. So there are now four men beginning study at the Seminary in the New Year. They come from Crowborough, Bittenden, Salisbury, and the USA. Please remember them in your prayers.

On Monday, 2 January, 2023, at 11am, the Seminary will hold its third Graduation Meeting in the church building of Emmanuel Church (Salisbury SP2 7EE). We hope that friends who pray for and support the work of the Seminary will be able to join us for this occasion. God willing, the two men graduating will be James Buss (Ashford) and Justin Beach (Cheltenham). Our

Guest Preacher on that occasion will be Pastor Philip Hopkins from Biddenden.

We all sense that God is wonderfully blessing the work of the Seminary, and we join together in the prayer that He will bless it more and more to the enlargement of Christ's Kingdom in this country and elsewhere in the world.

Some friends have been quite poorly of late, but we are thankful that Chloe S and Helen M are now much improved in health.

We pray very much for Jenni T and Esther D, both of whom are expecting children in the very near future.

Peter and Sue B's new grandson, Harry, was born prematurely and he is still receiving medical treatment and help. We have this little boy very much in our hearts and in our prayers.

We were pleased to hear that George T has begun an apprenticeship here in Salisbury. May the Lord undertake for him in the coming days.

On 7 December, the church welcomed to its Wednesday meeting Pastor Jonathan Munday of Exeter, as a Deputation Speaker for the Trinitarian Bible Society. Mr. Munday reported on the Society's work and spoke most helpfully from Luke 4:32 – "And they were astonished at his doctrine: for his word was with power." Those gathered were greatly blessed by the ministry given on that occasion.

The Wessex Ministers' Fraternal met on Thursday 8 December. We listened to a most edifying paper delivered by John Saunders of Chichester, on Question 38 of the Westminster Shorter Catechism:

Q. "What benefits do believers receive from Christ at the Resurrection?"

A. "At the resurrection believers being raised up in glory, shall be openly acknowledged and acquitted in the day of judgment, and made perfectly blessed in the full enjoying of God to all eternity."

On 17 December, at 8am, 13 of the brethren in the church met together for an hour of prayer. It was a most encouraging and edifying time.

# Notice of Upcoming Meetings

## Church Anniversary — 18 February 2023

Guest Preacher: Dr David Allen. Saturday 18 February at 3.30pm with tea to follow, and the Lord's Day, 19 February 11.00am and 6.30pm, followed by an After Church Fellowship.

## Salisbury Conference — 22-24 September 2023

General Title: "Experiencing Christ." Visiting Minister: Rev Dafydd Morris.

### Friday 22 Sep

7.30pm — A Biographical Address on William Gadsby

### Saturday 23 Sep

10.30am — *The Manifestation of Christ*

Lunch Break

1.00pm — *The Entertainment of Christ*

2.30pm — *Our Communion with Christ*

Tea at approximately 4pm

### Lord's Day 24 Sep

11.00am — Morning Worship Service led by Rev Malcolm Watts

6.30pm — Evening Worship Service led by Rev Malcolm Watts

After Church Fellowship — Dafydd Morris (a Testimony)

## HUMOUR IN THE SCOTTISH KIRK

The story is told of a preacher who accepted a challenge to preach extempore (on the spur of the moment, without preparation) on any text which he should find in the pulpit. To confuse him, the challenger placed there a blank sheet of paper. The preacher accepted it without demur, and presently delivered an eloquent sermon on 1 Kings 18:43, "And he went up, and looked, and said, There is nothing."

There was a general aversion to ministers reading their sermons from a manuscript or from very detailed notes. In the view of many church-going people, *reading* was not the preaching of the Word. The pith of the matter was well expressed by Peter, one of the characters in the book entitled *Stronbury*. Peter, in expressing his opinion of ministers in his locality, said, "There's some uses the paper terrible (terribly), and I canna thole (suffer) them at a' (all)." Pressed to state his reasons, Peter replied, "Och, if the ministers canna (cannot) remember their ain (own) sermons, how can they expect us to remember them."

One woman, well-known for her sharp wit, gave three good reasons for her objection to a visiting minister. "In the first place", she said, "he read his sermon; in the second place, he did not read it well; and in the third place, it was not worth reading."

A farm-hand was asked by his boss one Sabbath afternoon, "What was the minister's text today, John?"

"I dinna ken (I don't know), I was an hour late gaun in (going in)."

"What was the end of o't (of it), then?"

"I dina ken; I cam out before it was dune (done)."

"What did the minister say about the middle o't, then?"

"I dinna ken, for I sleepit (slept) all the time."

Mr. Bonar of Auchtermuchty, preaching one day at Kettle, Fife, observed that a great many of the congregation were sleeping while he was speaking. Unable to endure this trial any longer, Mr. Bonar paused, and then said, "My friends, some of you may not understand the hyperbole (exaggeration) which I have had occasion to use more than once in this discourse. Let me explain its meaning before I go any further. Suppose I were to say that this congregation were all asleep at the present moment, I would be using a hyperbole, or speaking hyperbolically; because, on look round, I don't believe that more than the one-half of you are sleeping."

In Udny Church one Lord's Day, perhaps owing to the soporific nature of the sermon, or from some cause or causes not known, the congregation's disposition to sleep was unusually great. There was only one member who

seemed to be listening to the minister, and that was Jamie Fleeman, someone known to be not too bright. Stopping his sermon, the minister exclaimed, "This sleepings perfectly dreadful. There is only one man awake, and he's a fool!" "Ay, ay, minister, ye're right there", said Jamie in reply. "But if I hadna (had not) been a fool, I wad (would) be sleepin' tae (too)."

Scottish literature is full of stories and anecdotes about the reprehensible pastime of sleeping in the church. Dr. Guthrie having stated on a public occasion that he once saw six hundred persons sleeping in church at Thurso, a Carnoustie poet, Andrew Scott, was so much taken with the Doctor's statement that he set to work and composed, not a poem, but a parody to commemorate the event. The following verses are a sample from "The Sleep of the Heavy Brigade":

Half a nod, half a nod,  
Half a nod downwards,  
All through the House of God  
Nod the Six Hundred.  
Down went the hoary head,  
So the great Guthrie said;  
Soundly all through the kirk  
Slept the Six Hundred.

Vainly the preacher roared,  
Snugly they slept and snored,  
Within the corded pew;  
Heads on the Bible board,  
Dozed the Six Hundred.

Then the Precentor rose,  
Right through the line he goes;  
Sleeper and slumberer,  
Roused by old Bangor's notes,  
Looked up dumbfounded,  
All that awoke – but not,  
Not the Six Hundred.

It must have been of this sleepy period in the church that the story is told of a minister who stopped in the middle of his sermon, and addressing personally one of his hearers, asked, "Are ye hearin', John?" "Ay, I'm hearin', minister; but to very little purpose", was the unexpected reply.

Different ministers had different ways of tackling the problem. Dr. Lawson tried mild remonstrance, and found it wonderfully effective. No angry rebuke did he administer; he simply ceased speaking for a minute, and when the bowed heads were raised and the wondering eyes were "attention", he quietly said, "Are you not a strange people? When I speak ye sleep; and when I cease to speak, ye wake up!"

## **TAKING HOLD OF GOD:**

### **Reformed and Puritan Perspectives on Prayer, edited by Joel R. Beeke & Brian G. Najapfour**

Be encouraged to strive for sincerity in prayer by these words of Thomas Brooks, the Puritan:

"God looks not at the elegancy of your prayers. To see how neat they are; nor yet at the geometry of your prayers, to see how long they are; nor yet at the arithmetic of your prayers, to see how many they are: nor yet at the music of your prayers, nor yet at the sweetness of your voice, nor yet at the logic of your prayers; but at the sincerity of your prayers, how hearty they are. There is no prayer acknowledged, approved, accepted, recorded or rewarded by God, but that wherein the heart is sincerely and wholly. The true mother would not have her child divided. As God loves a broken and a contrite heart, so He loathes a divided heart."

*Submitted by Caty O*

# TRACTING

Every Lord's Day afternoon, after the morning service at the church, the Pastor and his eleven-year old son would go out into their town and hand out Gospel Tracts.

One particular Lord's Day afternoon, as it came time for the Pastor and his son to go to the streets with their tracts, it was very cold outside, as well as pouring down with rain. The young boy, bundled up in his warmest and driest clothes, said, 'OK, dad, I'm ready.' His father asked, 'Ready for what?' 'Dad', the boy replied, 'it's time to go out with tracts.' The father responded, 'Son, it's very cold outside and it's raining.' The boy gives his dad a rather surprised look, saying, 'But Dad, aren't people still lost and going to Hell, even though it's raining?' Dad answered, 'Son, I am not going out in this weather.'

Somewhat despondently, the boy asked, 'Dad, can I go, please?' His father hesitated, then said, 'Yes, son, you can go. Here are the tracts. Take care.' 'Thanks Dad', the boy replied; and with that, he was off and out into the rain.

The boy walked the streets of the town going door to door, handing a Gospel Tract to everyone he met. After two hours, he was soaked, bone-chilled wet and he was down to his very last tract. He stopped on a corner and looked for someone to give this tract to, but the streets were totally deserted. Then he turned toward the first home he saw and started up the sidewalk to the front door and rang the door-bell... But nobody answered. Again he rang it and still no-one answered. He waited but there was still no answer at all. Finally, he began reluctantly to leave but something stopped him. He turned to the door and knocked loudly, something holding him there in the front porch. Then, the door slowly opened and standing in the doorway was a very sad-looking elderly lady, who quietly said, 'What can I do for you, son?' With radiant eyes and a smile that lit up her world, the boy said, 'Ma'am, I'm sorry if I disturbed you, but I just want to tell you of the love of the Lord Jesus, and I am here to give you my very last Gospel Tract.' And, with that, he handed her the tract and turned to leave. As he was departing, the old lady said, 'Thank you, son! And God bless you!'

The following Lord's Day morning his father was in the pulpit and, as the service began, an elderly lady in the back pew stood to her feet. As she began to speak, a radiance shone from her face: 'No-one in this church knows me. I've never been here before. But last Sunday I was feeling very low and depressed. My husband passed away some time ago, leaving me totally alone. And it had been a particularly cold and rainy day and, feeling terribly sad, I felt I no longer had any hope nor will to live any longer, so I ascended the stairway into the attic and I decided to end it all. Then, all of a sudden, I heard the loud ringing of my doorbell and a loud knocking. It startled me. I thought to myself, "Who on earth could this be? No-one ever comes to see me." When I came downstairs, I opened the door and there in the porch was a sweet little boy whom I had never seen in my life. He smiled. Oh, I could never describe that smile to you! He told me of the love of Jesus and gave me this Gospel Tract which I now hold in my hand. As he disappeared back into the cold and rain, I closed my door and began to read the tract. I am now a Christian, a happy child of the King. And since the address of your church was on the back of this tract, I have come here personally to thank that little boy for his kindness in passing on to me that tract with its Christian message."

There was not a dry eye in the church. The Minister descended from the pulpit to the front pew where his son was seated...He held the boy in his arms and he wept. Yet his heart was filled with respect and love for his little boy.

"Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 10:32).

*Submitted by Helen M*

## **CHURCH SUPPORT FELLOWSHIP**

### **Helping Smaller Churches - A Modern-day Macedonian Call**

In the book of Acts, we read of the Apostle Paul's Three Missionary Journeys:

The First Missionary Journey, Acts 13:1–14:28, reports how Paul journeyed from Syrian Antioch to the seaport of Seleucia, there embarking for the island

of Cyprus. Then, sailing to Pamphylia in Asia Minor, he preached in various places before sailing home to Syrian Antioch. This First Missionary Journey was evangelistic in nature, the Apostle preaching the Good News to those who had never before heard that Good News.

The Second Missionary Journey, Acts 15:36-18:22, took place because the Apostle came to hear of false teaching affecting some of the newly-founded churches which, along with various resultant troubles, were undermining both faith and peace. Travelling therefore to Galatia, the Apostle, along with Silas, revisited some of the churches; and, directed by the Holy Spirit, they eventually arrived at Troas, one of the most important towns in Asia, and while there Paul had a vision in which a Macedonian man appeared, urging him to cross the Aegean Sea to render them help which they very much needed. Thus, led into Europe, they preached in a number of cities and then returned to Antioch.

The Third Missionary Journey, Acts 18:23-21:16, took the Apostle to no new areas, but it saw the Apostle on a teaching, confirming and assisting mission. After preaching in Ephesus, Paul travelled to Macedonia and Achaia, and, after ministering once again in Troas, he set out on his homeward journey to Palestine and to Jerusalem.

The Second and Third Missionary Journeys had this in common: they were not really pioneering ventures, but they were mainly - although not exclusively - efforts to assist churches, organizing, directing, and supporting them in their important work. It was all movingly illustrated by the Macedonian whom Paul saw in the vision, saying, "*Come over into Macedonia, and help us.*" (Acts 16:9)

As then, so now: there are numerous churches in this country, some founded many years ago, others more recently, and some believers long to see a church established in their area, if only there was help available to them.

It was in response to this urgent, pressing need that *The Church Support Fellowship* was set up in 2019. Dewi Higham of Cardiff first conceived the idea, sharing it with various ministerial friends. A Steering Committee was formed which included Malcolm Watts (Chairman), Roland Burrows, Richard Clarke, Dewi Higham, Jonathan Northern, Neil Pfeiffer and John Thackway.

Subsequently, Roland Burrows was asked, on behalf of *The Church Support Fellowship* to be the contact with the churches. This he kindly agreed to do.

The deep concern held in common was for the spiritual state of churches. The desire was to provide help and encouragement for those churches which were in evident need and to support believers seeking under God to establish new churches. The Committee was united in its resolve to support churches believing the Bible to be the inspired (God-breathed), infallible and inerrant Word of God and the supreme authority as the rule of faith and practice, which also uphold the great biblical doctrines of the Evangelical and Reformed Faith (as set forth in the Westminster Confession of Faith [1647], the Savoy Declaration of Faith and Order [1658], and the Baptist Confession of Faith [1689]), and which seek to preserve the worship prescribed in Holy Scripture, characterized by reverence, the centrality of God's Word, emphasis upon true, spiritual experience, leading to holiness of heart and life, devotion to Christ and His service, and the spreading of the Gospel of full and free salvation, received by faith alone.

The need was then - and is still - perceived to be very great. All over the country, there are small but sound churches in real need of help. With some, the problem is reduced numbers in the congregation; in others, it is the urgent and continuing need for orthodox, gifted preachers; and in others still, it is the lack of dedicated people to help organize Sunday School, Youth Work and other outreach activities, and, perhaps, someone to manage and handle the church's finances, to set up a useful website, or to give legal advice, or to recommend improvements to chapel buildings. The needs are many, various, and often very pressing.

Some of these churches are located in good positions, surrounded by houses and estates, presenting real opportunities for evangelism; others are found in country districts where there are few Gospel-preaching churches, and therefore it is vital that they be preserved for future generations. In the majority of such churches, there are concerned, warm-hearted, and sound Christian believers: but the problem is, they are generally few in number, and, in many cases, they are elderly and infirm, and unable to offer practical help and fulfil their own hopes. They may have good chapel buildings, well-equipped and

well-maintained, but, for reasons already given, they are unable to use their facilities for the advance of the Gospel and the spiritual benefit of their communities. In short, they need help, and surely the onus is upon those of us who may be able, with God's help, to do something for them, thus ensuring a continuing witness at this present time and in the future years.

Recent years have witnessed the closing of many churches and chapels which have been sold for conversion into flats, warehouses, temples, mosques, sports-halls, nightclubs, and so on. Seeing this, we cannot but recall that these places had once been centres of Gospel witness and activity, established with prayer and sacrifice, some being willing even to mortgage their own homes in order to see them built and preserved. Can we stand by, unmoved and undisturbed by such calamitous developments? Should we not rather consider in our hearts what may and what should be done to prevent further decline and terrible, irretrievable loss?

There is a Macedonian cry from many struggling causes today and we surely must listen to that cry and respond to it in a way which is bold and courageous. Listen to this cry - 'Come over and help us.' In this critical and perhaps decisive time, let us devote thought and effort to the noble and worthy task of strengthening the things that remain until, by divine grace, we see the churches of Christ flourishing and prospering once again, to His greater glory.

Such a recovery is in the power and will of God. We believe that with all our hearts. Yet are we called to be 'labourers together with God.' (1 Corinthians 3:9); and we must not, even in the worst of times, lose heart, because our Lord has said, 'I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.' (Matthew 16:18) 'When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory.' (Psalm 102:16)

We believe there is much that can be done at this time – and it must be done.

- make the cause of God and Truth the great burden of your prayers;
- enquire concerning the state of the churches;
- support, as you are able, struggling fellowships of the Lord's people;
- encourage your church to look beyond itself to the needs of other, perhaps smaller churches;

- maybe you could encourage such churches by occasionally visiting them on special occasions;
- ask if there is any way that you might be able to help them;
- consider making a financial gift to support their good work;
- mention to others, gifted and called to preach, the need to minister in these smaller churches;
- if required and requested, be willing to allow your minister, in addition to his own pastoral work, to take some oversight and care of a weak and needy church;
- do whatever lies in your power to show them spiritual interest and concern.
- if you share our vision, please consider supporting Church Support Fellowship prayerfully and perhaps financially.

In Sunday School, we may have once sung the following words:

*Are you sitting idly, still there's work to do,  
In the Master's vineyard there's a place for you.*

Today, these words, although perhaps familiar, need to be recalled and given more serious thought, because 'there's a work to do.'

*The Church Support Fellowship* is absolutely committed to this work. Through God's enabling grace, we have already been able to show spiritual concern, help with Gospel outreach, arrange for the setting-up of websites, advise on matters relating to property, help with financial gifts, and provide biblical and pastoral counsel. God with us, we hope to do more - and still more - for the good of our churches and for the honour and glory of our God's blessed and glorious name.

Our Lord was moved by the action of the woman in Bethany, who anointed Him with 'spikenard very precious', saying of her '*she hath done what she could.*' (Mark 14:8) We pray He will observe and approve our efforts today and graciously say, '*they have done what they could.*'

*'Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.'* (Ephesians 3:21)

# OLIVER CROMWELL

Malcolm H. Watts

## Part 5

### Lord Protector – Continued

Cromwell was now able to concentrate on the establishment of the Commonwealth. This was not to be without its problems:

A. At Home: The Parliament, known as the *Long Parliament* (or Rump Parliament), had become unpopular, largely due to its apparent self-interest and its failure to carry out necessary reforms. On April 20th 1653, Cromwell entered the House and, after listening to members debating, he felt the more convinced of the need for a new, more representative Parliament, which would grapple with existing problems, and establish the nation according to right principles. He rose and proceeded to accuse that Parliament of various corruptions, and then, evidently greatly agitated in his spirit, he cried, 'Come! Come! We have had enough of this. I will put an end to your prating... It is not fit you should sit here any longer!'<sup>1</sup> Parliament was thereupon dissolved. The House was cleared, and Cromwell locked the door and took away the key!

A new assembly was called – 'an assembly of saints', with its members (140 Puritans, 'fearing God, and of approved Fidelity and Honesty'), nominated by a Council of Officers. Cromwell and his officers gathered an assembly of their nominees, which was called *Barebone's Parliament*, so-called because one of its members was called Praise God Barebone. It met for the first time on 4th July, 1653.

Sadly, it too failed to accomplish anything of significance, and what it proposed was generally far too radical (for example, the complete abolition of tithes, without providing means for the support of ministers). And, failing to agree a scheme of Church Government, the attempt was made to enforce 'uniformity'. On 10th December of that year, after sitting for only five months, the Assembly 'moved' and 'carried,' 'that the sitting of this Parliament any longer, as now

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<sup>1</sup> *Letters*, vol.2, p.250

constituted, will not be for the good of the Commonwealth; and that therefore it is requisite to deliver-up unto the Lord General Cromwell the Powers which we have received from him.'

A new Constitution was now drawn up - The Instrument of Government – which made Cromwell '*Lord Protector of the Commonwealth*'. It also required Parliament to be summoned every three years and to sit for not less than five months. On 16th December, 1653, Cromwell, now just over 54 years old, was solemnly installed at Westminster as 'Lord Protector'; but it was not until 4th September, 1654, that the next Parliament was to meet.

The intervening nine months has been called 'the creative period of his government.' During those months, Cromwell issued no fewer than eighty-two ordinances, which included one on the Union of the three kingdoms, England, Scotland and Ireland. Another was the reform of the criminal Law, making the laws 'conformable to the just and righteous laws of God', and yet another was for 'the approbation of public speakers' which required thirty-eight commissioners, clerical and lay, to examine the qualifications of all candidates for livings (a further ordinance allowed for local commissioners to eject ministers for Popish and blasphemous opinions and the use of the Prayer Book). There were also ordinances for the proper observance of the Sabbath (no shops or inns were to be opened, and no manufacturing carried on), and for the punishment of adultery, duelling and swearing. All in all, these were very wise ordinances regulating the affairs of the nation.

Yet soon tensions arose between the Protector and the *First Protectorate Parliament*. This time it was over the powers of the Protector. Certain members, notably John Bradshaw, Arthur Hazlerigg and Thomas Scott, raised the question of whether government should be in a single person, or in the Parliament. Cromwell was profoundly disturbed, believing that he stood between England and anarchy. After trying (but failing) to persuade Parliament to confirm the government as established, Cromwell declared, 'The government called you hither; the constitution thereof being limited so, - a Single Person and a Parliament'. Then, with the authority vested in him, he uttered the words, 'I think it my duty to tell you that it is not for the profit of these nations, nor for the common and public good, for you to continue here any

longer. And therefore I do declare unto you, that I do dissolve this Parliament.'<sup>2</sup> He dissolved it on 22nd January, 1655.

For some time, Cromwell ruled without a Parliament, but partly as a result of an expensive war with Spain, Cromwell called the *Second Protectorate Parliament*, which met on 17th September 1656. Those likely to be troublesome were excluded and so this Parliament was more supportive of Cromwell. Indeed, its members drew up a document, known as *The Humble Petition and Advice*, in which Cromwell was to take the title of King, with the power to name his successor. The Protector refused to take the title of King, but he did accept other proposals. When, on 20th January, 1658, Parliament met for its second session, one hundred or so excluded members, highly critical of Cromwell, had to be received back. This meant that the Commons no longer had a majority in support of the Protector. On 4th February, Cromwell summoned Parliament and, in a strongly worded speech, he accused them of undermining the Constitution and of 'not assenting to what you did invite me to, by your Petition and Advice, as that which might prove the Settlement of the Nation.' Then, in climax, he declared: 'If this be the end of your sitting, and this be your carriage, I think it high time that an end be put to your sitting. And I do dissolve this Parliament! And let God be judge between you and me.'

After this, he ruled almost with the power of a monarch, but he remained subject to the terms of *The Humble Petition and Advice, 1657*, a document containing important amendments to the Constitution which had been drawn up by Cromwell's Second Parliament.

Undoubtedly, these were difficult times. England was still in a state of considerable instability, with threats of resurgent Romanism, and the Radicalism of the Levellers, the Fifth Monarchists, and the Diggers. Cromwell did what he did for public safety and with a view to securing the future prosperity of the kingdom.

Cromwell's vision was to see 'union and right understanding between godly people'. Although leaning himself towards Independency (according to Dr.

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<sup>2</sup> *Letters*, vol. 3, p.55

Bates), he desired the fundamentals of Christianity to be defined, and then for there to be 'liberty of conscience' ('a natural right'), that different believers may worship 'in that way they are satisfied in their consciences by the Word of God.' True it is that Popery and Prelacy (or Episcopacy) were officially outlawed, the former because of its hostility to Protestantism and the latter because of its alliance to the Stuart monarchy; but Cromwell, although he did agree in 1647 to the establishment of Presbyterianism for a limited period, really wanted the establishment of an ecclesiastical system in which Presbyterians, Independents and Baptists could all be appointed to the ministry.

B. Abroad: Under two Stuart kings (James I and Charles I), England had lost the respect of foreign powers, but Cromwell had said that he would 'make the name of Englishman terrible abroad.' It cannot be disputed that England's status internationally was greatly improved.

For many years there had been trade disputes with Holland, but with the passing of the Navigation Act (1651) which forbade Dutch commerce with the English colonies, the long running dispute finally broke out into war on 12th May 1652. Under Admirals Blake and Monck, the English navy defeated the Dutch fleet both on 2nd June, 1653 and on 31st July of that year. Cromwell had brought the war to an end - and on excellent terms for England.

Cromwell was well aware of Spain's cruel intolerance to Protestantism, evidenced in the tortures of the Inquisition. When Spain showed she would not permit free trade to British merchants and liberty of worship for them in the Spanish dominions (i.e. exemption from the jurisdiction of the Inquisition), Cromwell, in 1654, sent out a fleet 'to assault the Spaniard in the West Indies'. The initial expedition sent to the Caribbean suffered a severe setback but England was successful in taking Jamaica.

A treaty was to be made with France, but then news reached England in 1655 that the Duke of Savoy, influenced by his mother, had begun persecuting the Vaudois or Waldensians, who had always kept separate from the Church of Rome and whose Faith was similar to that of the Reformers. John Milton raised his voice against this terrible injustice:

'Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughtered saints, whose bones  
Lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold;  
Even them who kept thy truth so pure of old,  
When all our fathers worshipped stocks and stones,  
Forget not: in thy book record their groans  
Who were thy sheep, and in their ancient fold  
Slain by the bloody Piedmontese, that rolled  
Mother with infant down the rocks. Their moans  
The vales redoubled to the hills, and they  
To heaven. Their martyred blood and ashes sow  
O'er all the Italian fields, where still doth sway  
The triple Tyrant; that from these may grow  
A hundredfold, who having learnt thy way,  
Early may fly the Babylonian woe.'<sup>3</sup>

Cromwell sent to the French Court demanding that they put immediate pressure on the Duke to stop this outrage and to restore to these people their former privileges - or he would break with France and sign no treaty with them. In fear of him, the Pope, Louis XIV and Cardinal Mazarin did as he instructed them and all persecution against these believers ceased.

Cromwell's general foreign policy was based on the idea that, as head of Protestant Europe, he would support the noble cause of Truth in all the world.

It should not be omitted here that it was Cromwell who allowed the Jews to resettle in England. On 12th November, 1655, he presented the Petition of Manasseh Ben Israel to the Council of State. In June of 1656, permission was granted for the Jews to hold private services in England. His efforts on their behalf were made on account of biblical prophecy. 'Since there is a promise in Holy Scripture of the conversion of the Jews,' Cromwell said, 'I do not know, but the preaching of the Christian religion, as it is now in England, without idolatry or superstition, may not conduce to it.'<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> John Milton, *Sonnet on the Late Massacre in Piedmont*, included in Masson's Edition of *The Poetical Works*, vol. 2, p.485

<sup>4</sup> D'Aubigne, p.197

## 6. His Death

Suffering some kind of illness (due, it is thought, to malaria picked up in the Irish bogs), Cromwell's powers began to fail in the latter years of his life. At the age of 59 he seemed already to be an old man. His daughter, Elizabeth Claypole, aged 29, died of cancer on 10th August of 1658, and her death left the Protector heart-broken and no doubt was a major factor in hastening his death.

About that time, perhaps 17th August, 1658, George Fox, the Quaker, met him riding in Hampton Court Park. He later said, 'I saw and felt a waft (i.e. a whiff) of death go forth against him.'

At Whitehall, Cromwell became very sick. Public and private prayers were made for him throughout the land. He himself called for his Bible and he had a godly person read to him Philippians, chapter 4 – 'I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.' He made the comment that 'he that was Paul's Christ is my Christ too!'

His thoughts turned to the Covenants, the Covenants of Works and Grace. His understanding was that of a true Puritan. 'They are two' he said. 'Two, but put into one before the foundation of the world. It is holy and true - it is holy and true! Who made it holy and true? The Mediator of the Covenant!...The Covenant is but one. Faith in the Covenant is my only support...' Then, turning to his family, he said, 'Children live like Christians: I leave you the Covenant to feed upon.'

'The Lord hath filled me', he said, 'with as much assurance of his pardon and his love as my soul can hold.' 'I think I am the poorest wretch that lives: but I love God; or rather am beloved of God.'

On Monday, 30th August, John Thurloe, a devoted friend, asked him who should be his successor. Cromwell told him that the name was on a sealed Paper at Hampton Court. Sadly, it was never found. Had he written down Richard's name? Or was it Henry's name? We shall never know.

That night Cromwell prayed, and his prayer was recorded:

‘Lord, though I am a miserable and wretched creature, I am in Covenant with Thee through grace. And I may, I will, come to Thee, for Thy people. Thou hast made me, though very unworthy, a mean instrument to do them some good, and Thee service; and many of them have set too high a value upon me, though others wish and would be glad of my death. Lord, however Thou do dispose of me, continue and go on to do good for them. Give them consistency of judgment, one heart and mutual love; and go on to deliver them, and with the work of reformation; and make the Name of Christ glorious in the world. Teach those who look too much on Thy instruments, to depend more upon Thyself. Pardon such as desire to trample upon the dust of a poor worm, for they are Thy people too. And pardon the folly of this short prayer, even for Jesus Christ’s sake. And give us a good night if it be Thy pleasure. Amen.’

His speech began to fail on Thursday, 2nd September, but nevertheless he was heard to say, ‘I would be willing to live to be further serviceable to God and His people: but my work is done. Yet God will be with His people.’

The next day, 3rd September, 1658, the anniversary of the victories won at Dunbar and Worcester, between three and four o’clock in the afternoon, Cromwell yielded up his spirit in death. He was later interred in the Henry VII chapel at Westminster Abbey.

## 7. Some Assessment

A. Strengths: Oliver Cromwell’s strengths were many and various, but some of these deserve special mention.

- *Vital Christianity*. There can be no doubt that spiritually Cromwell had ‘the root of the matter’ in him. Certainly he had low views of himself, writing in a letter to John Bradshaw, Lord President of the Council of State, ‘I am a poor creature; and have been a dry bone; and am still an unprofitable servant to my Master and you.’<sup>5</sup> But he had high views of the Saviour, as evidenced in another letter, this one to Lord Fleetwood, Lord Deputy of

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<sup>5</sup> *Letters*, vol. 2, p.187

Ireland and Cromwell's son-in-law: 'We, under all our sins and infirmities, can daily offer a perfect Christ; and thus we have peace and safety, and apprehension of love, from a Father in Covenant, - who cannot deny Himself.'<sup>6</sup>

- *True Protestantism*. In his famous 'Declaration' as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, he declared to the Roman Prelates and Clergy, 'You are a part of Antichrist, whose Kingdom the Scriptures so expressly speaks should be "laid in blood;" yea, "in the blood of Saints."<sup>7</sup> (January, 1649) He had a particular and justified abhorrence of the idolatrous Roman Mass, and while always a champion for 'liberty of conscience', this liberty was for Cromwell not without limits in respect to Romanism. To the Governor of Ross, in October 1659, he made this very clear: 'If by liberty of conscience, you mean a liberty to exercise the Mass, I judge it best to use plain dealing, and to let you know, Where the Parliament of England have power, that will not be allowed of.'<sup>8</sup> That said, Cromwell did persuade the Council of State to revoke some severe penalties against Romanists and he was not in favour of persecution against them.
- *Calvinistic doctrine*. There can be no doubt that Cromwell was a convinced Calvinist. He felt God's sovereign purpose being worked out in his own life. 'I do feel myself lifted on by a strange force, I cannot tell why. By night and by day I am urged forward on the great Work...'<sup>9</sup> His belief in the divine sovereignty was expressed time and again in his reports to Parliament during the Civil War. To cite just one example, he wrote to the Speaker after the Battle of Naseby (1645), "Sir, this is none other but the hand of God; and to Him alone belongs the glory, wherein none are to share with Him."<sup>10</sup> (14th June 1645)
- *The Covenant of Grace*. Cromwell had a keen insight into the doctrine of the Divine Covenant. In the winter of 1652, he wrote to Charles Fleetwood, 'What a Nature hath my Father: He is LOVE: free in it, unchangeable, infinite! What a Covenant between Him and Christ, - for all the Seed, for every one: wherein He undertakes all, and the poor Soul nothing. The New Covenant is *Grace*, - to or upon the Soul; to which it, "the Soul", is passive and receptive: *I'll do away their sins; I'll write my Law, &c.; I'll put it in their*

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<sup>6</sup> *Letters*, vol. 3, p.72

<sup>7</sup> *Letters*, vol.2, p.37

<sup>8</sup> *Letters*, vol. 2, p.6

<sup>9</sup> *Squire Papers*, included in *Letters*, vol.2, p 340

<sup>10</sup> *Letters*, vol.1, p.192

*hearts: they shall never depart from me, &c.*"<sup>11</sup> In another letter to Fleetwood, dated 22nd June, 1655, Cromwell sends a word of comfort to his daughter. 'Bid her be cheerful, and rejoice in the Lord once and again: if she knows the Covenant, she cannot but do so. For that Transaction is without her, sure and stedfast, between the Father and the Mediator in His blood: therefore, leaning upon the Son, or looking to Him, thirsting after Him, and embracing Him, we are His Seed - and the Covenant is sure to all the Seed. The Compact is for the Seed: God is bound in faithfulness to Christ, and in Him to us; the Covenant is without us; a Transaction between God and Christ. Look up to it. God engageth in it to pardon us; to write His Law in our heart; to plant His fear so that we shall never depart from Him.'<sup>12</sup> This is Puritan divinity at its very best.

- *Christian experience.* Cromwell was not a 'dead letter' Calvinist. He believed, in the words of a later poet, that 'True religion's more than notion, Something must be known and felt.' His actual words to Richard, his son, on 2nd April, 1650, were as follows: 'True knowledge is not literal or speculative; "no", but inward; transforming the mind to it. It's uniting to, and *participating of*, the Divine nature...' <sup>13</sup> To Harry, another son, he wrote on 21st April, 1656, 'Take heed... of a professing religion without the power...' <sup>14</sup> It is apparent that Cromwell knew by experience that of which he so movingly wrote. These were his words to Richard Mayor: "O how good it is to close with Christ betimes; - there is nothing else worth the looking after."<sup>15</sup> Just a few days before his death, after Philippians, chapter 4, was read to him, and commenting of the 13th verse - 'I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me' - Cromwell uttered those significant and memorable words, 'He that was Paul's Christ is my Christ too!' <sup>16</sup> Who can doubt that he knew in experience the sweetness of communion with the Saviour?
- *Brotherly love.* Cromwell was no 'party man'. He loved all who loved Christ. In his report to Parliament after the taking of Bristol, he wrote: 'Presbyterians, Independents, all have here the same spirit of faith and prayer; the same presence and answer; they agree here, have no names of difference, pity it is it should be otherwise anywhere! All that believe

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<sup>11</sup> *Letters*, vol.2, p.246

<sup>12</sup> *Letters*, vol.3, p.72

<sup>13</sup> *Letters*, vol.2, p.72

<sup>14</sup> *Letters*, vol.3, p.99

<sup>15</sup> *Letters*, vol.2, p.88

<sup>16</sup> *Letters*, vol.3, p.314

have the real unity, which is most glorious; because inward and spiritual, in the Body, and to the Head.<sup>17</sup> 'I find this only good', he wrote to Sir Thomas Fairfax, 'To love the Lord and His poor despised people, to do for them, and to be ready to suffer with them: - and he that is found worthy of this hath obtained great favour from the Lord; and he that is established in this shall (being conformed to Christ and the rest of the Body) participate in the glory of the Resurrection which will answer all.'<sup>18</sup> Again, he wrote laying bare his heart, to Lord Fleetwood: 'My heart is for the People of God: that the Lord knows, and will in due time manifest...'<sup>19</sup> That heart of his often expressed the grace of love, as when he wrote a letter in July, 1644, to Colonel Valentine Walton informing him of the death of his son. 'He was', wrote Cromwell, 'a gallant young man, exceedingly gracious. God give you His comfort... Truly he was exceedingly beloved in the Army, of all that knew him. But few knew him; for he was a precious young man, fit for God. You have cause to bless the Lord. He is a glorious Saint in Heaven; wherein ye ought exceedingly to rejoice.'<sup>20</sup>

- *Evangelistic zeal.* Cromwell's great burden was for men's souls. An indication of this can be found as early as 1635 when he wrote, from St Ives, to a certain Mr. Storie. 'Amongst the catalogue of those good works which your fellow-citizens and our countrymen have done, this will not be reckoned for the least, That they have provided for the feeding of souls. Building of hospitals provides for men's bodies; to build material temples is judged a work of piety; but they that procure spiritual food, they that build-up spiritual temples, they are the men truly charitable, truly pious.'<sup>21</sup> With the needs of men's souls in his mind, Cromwell appointed chaplains for his Army, men like Hugh Peter, William Erbury and William Sedgwick, who not only preached the Gospel to the soldiers but also preached it in the towns to which the soldiers went. In his 'Declaration' (1649), he told the Irish that 'the Word of God' was 'able to convert' and that his desire was to use 'that means' among the 'poor People', providing, of course, that 'you, by your wicked counsel, make them not incapable to receive it, by putting them into blood.'<sup>22</sup> His concern, later expressed, for 'the conversion of the Jews' has already been noted.

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<sup>17</sup> *Letters*, vol.1, p.203

<sup>18</sup> *Letters*, vol.1, p.266

<sup>19</sup> *Letters*, vol.3, p,71

<sup>20</sup> *Letters*, vol.1, p.167,168

<sup>21</sup> *Letters*, vol.1, p.80

<sup>22</sup> *Letters*, vol.2, p.43

B. Weaknesses: Although it is not my purpose to dwell on these, truth compels me to say that there were some weaknesses in his person and service:

- *Cromwell sometimes acted impulsively.* For example, his dissolution in 1653 of the Long Parliament was not planned, nor did he give the slightest indication that it was to take place. Afterwards, he reflected upon his action: 'Perceiving the spirit of God so strong in me, I would no longer consult flesh and blood.'<sup>23</sup>
- *He could be quite undiscerning.* During the Civil War, he showed himself none too wise in making chaplains of William Dell, William Erbury, and John Saltmarsh, men well known for their religious radicalism. He also showed himself much taken with George Fox, the Quaker leader. In 1654, when they met together, Cromwell said to Fox, 'If thou and I were but an hour of the day together, we should be nearer one to the other.'<sup>24</sup> (This is not to overlook the fact that Cromwell associated with eminent orthodox ministers such as John Owen and Thomas Goodwin).
- *He appeared sometimes rather despotic.* Certainly, his record with Parliaments was none too impressive. Although other factors were involved, he dissolved the Long Parliament in 1653, the Little Parliament (the Barebones Parliament) in 1653, the first Protectorate Parliament in 1655, and the second Protectorate Parliament in 1658. He thereby showed that he found it difficult, if not impossible, to work with any Parliament.
- *He was not always sure of the way forward.* Without doubt, he opposed Prelacy and, to a lesser extent, Presbyterianism, but on one occasion he confessed, 'I can tell you, sirs, what I would not have, though I cannot what I would.'<sup>25</sup>
- *He was quick-tempered.* This was no doubt observed when he was dissolving the Long Parliament. Cromwell cried, 'Depart, I say!' Then looking at the mace, the emblem of authority, he shouted out, 'Take away that bauble.' Again, at the dissolving of the Second Protectorate Parliament in 1658, Charles Fleetwood tried to dissuade him, only to be told, 'You are a milksop, by the living God I will dissolve this parliament.'
- *He acted inconsistently on occasions.* Cromwell fought in the Civil War for 'our civil liberties as men, our spiritual liberties as Christians', but he spoke

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<sup>23</sup> *Letters*, vol.2, p.251

<sup>24</sup> *Letters*, vol.3, p.82

<sup>25</sup> Quoted by Christopher Hill in *Oliver Cromwell, 1658-1958* (Historical Association Pamphlet, 1958), p.27)

as if he was really an Erastian, believing that the State exercises dominion over the Church. In his 'Army Manifesto' (1647), he wrote, 'When once the State has made a Settlement, we have nothing to say but to submit or suffer.'<sup>26</sup> It could also be said that Cromwell used the State to enforce toleration and liberty.

- *He made little or no provision for the future.* It is true that Cromwell – perhaps inadvertently - tied Puritanism to Republicanism; and this made for great problems after his death, for Puritanism was seen by many as irreconcilable to Monarchy.

Cromwell wrote in 1651, 'I am a poor weak creature, and not worthy of the name of a worm; yet accepted to serve the Lord and His people.'<sup>27</sup> And what is life if not lived to serve the Lord and His people? What are all our endeavours and achievements if, at the end of life's day, we have failed in these areas? 'Accepted to serve the Lord and His people.' May that be true of each and every one of us! Surely, God had mercy upon Cromwell's imperfections, but He was glorified by his graces and by his good works. Let us then resolve, as poor, wretched, but believing sinners, to live all our days for Christ and His Church.

Remember the life of Oliver Cromwell and reflect upon this scripture, 'The people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits.' (Daniel 11:32)

*Concluded*

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<sup>26</sup> *Letters*, vol.1, p.244

<sup>27</sup> *Letters*, vol.2, p.231

## EPILOGUE

*“So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.” Psalm 90 v. 12*

Have you got a new calendar? Most of us by now will have a new calendar and it will be set up in its place ready for frequent reference throughout another year. We have so many dates to remember and so many events not to forget! History records that in September 1752 there really was a **new** calendar!! In September of that year we, along with a number of other countries, abandoned the Julian Calendar in favour of the Gregorian one. You may care to read up on this most fascinating subject. In order to adopt the new calendar, the authorities had to make a one-off adjustment by losing 11 days! This meant that after the 2nd September the next day was the 14th September. People were understandably confused and some say that there were protests in the streets as people demanded: “Give us back our 11 days!”

However, in our lives we cannot lose or gain days but we can waste them so we should consider what the Lord says through Moses in Psalm 90 and verse 12. We are told to number our days for a purpose - that we may apply our hearts to wisdom. The Psalm reminds us of the power of the Lord and our sinful ways in the light of the fleeting span of our lives.

Many people keep a diary and also, at this time of year, consider making resolutions. Each of us may review how things have gone in the past and entertain hopes for the new year. So, as we begin this year, let us take stock of our lives in relation to the Lord. We may take note of our age and wonder where the time has gone. Let us, as urged by the Psalmist, apply our hearts to wisdom.

Cruden’s Concordance states that the word ‘heart’, is sometimes used in Scripture for the soul - the seat of our life, hence it can mean, depending on the context, the mind as the source of our understanding; the heart -in the more specific sense – as the source of our emotions, and particularly of our affections; and the will, as the power to choose and determine. This being so, let us ask the Lord to help us to be wise in heart, ever thinking, desiring, and deciding in accordance with God’s Word. Let us resolve to keep close to the Lord. This is the one important resolution that will rightly and greatly influence all God-pleasing resolutions.

O that we may all be able to say and mean the last verse of this Psalm: “And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.”

*Ron Morris*