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# WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?

*“Jesus asked them, saying, What think ye of Christ?”*

*Matthew 22:41,42*

What think ye of Christ? Is the test  
To try both your state and your scheme;  
You cannot be right in the rest,  
Unless you think rightly of him.  
As Jesus appears in your view,  
As he is beloved or not;  
So God is disposed to you,  
And mercy or wrath is your lot.

Some take him a creature to be,  
A man, or an angel at most:  
Sure these have not feelings like me,  
Nor know themselves wretched and lost.  
So guilty, so helpless am I,  
I durst not confide in his blood,  
Nor on his protection rely,  
Unless I were sure he is God.

Some call him Saviour, in word,  
But mix their own works with his plan;  
And hope he his help will afford,  
When they have done all that they can:  
If doings prove rather too light,  
(A little, they own, they may fail),  
They purpose to make up full weight,  
By casting his name in the scale.

Some style him the pearl of great price,  
And say he's the fountain of joys;  
Yet feed upon folly and vice,  
And cleave to the world and its toys;  
Like Judas, the Saviour they kiss,  
And while they salute him, betray;  
Ah! What will profession like this  
Avail in his terrible day?

If ask'd, what of Jesus I think,  
Though still my best thoughts are but poor,  
I say, he's my meat and my drink,  
My life, and my strength, and my store;  
My Shepherd, my Husband, my Friend,  
My Saviour from sin and from thrall;  
My hope from beginning to end,  
My portion, my Lord, and my All.

— *John Newton (1725 – 1807)*  
*In Olney Hymns, Hymn 89*

This question, “What think ye of Christ?” is put, because, without right thoughts of Christ, there can be no religion, and consequently no salvation. There is no coming to God but in Christ.

*Right thoughts of Christ are preferring and superlative thoughts:* Christ is beyond comparison. The language of such a thought is this, O what can he be compared unto! If you compare him to a rose, he is the Rose of Sharon; if you compare him to a lily, he is the Lily of the Valley; if you compare him to a sun, he is the Sun of Righteousness; and if you compare him to a star, he is the Bright and Morning Star. He is to be preferred to all things in heaven and earth: "Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon the earth whom I desire besides thee", Psalm 73:25.

*Right thoughts of Christ are admiring and adoring thoughts, exalting and extolling thoughts.* If you have due thoughts of him in your heart, you will find in your heart to bless him, saying, as in Psalm 118:26, "Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord: we have blessed you out of the house of the Lord." And, "O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together", Psalm 34:3.

*Right thoughts of Christ are spiritual and sublimating thoughts.* Natural thoughts can rise no higher than nature, 1 Corinthians 2:14; but spiritual thoughts are managed by the conduct and influence of the Spirit of God: "The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God", 1 Corinthians 2:10. Indeed, the Spirit of God is the all in all of these thoughts; for he comes, according to the promise, and glorifies Christ, by receiving the things of Christ, and showing them unto the soul, John 16:14.

*Right thoughts are applying and appropriating thoughts;* insomuch that Christ is taken into the soul, as meat and drink are taken into the body: "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life", John 6:54. This is that believing thought, without which a man receives no benefit. But he takes in Christ to himself for his own good. A bare thinking of Christ is good in so far as it is a taking of Christ into your hand, in order to take him into your heart, and that for your own soul's refreshment, life, health, and everlasting salvation.

*Right thoughts of Christ are deep and serious thoughts,* in opposition to roving and indifferent thoughts which do not deeply ponder who he is, and how they shall come by him, for they were never touched with a sense of their sin, misery, and undone state without him. Such cry out, "Christ have mercy on us"; but the thought which sinks deep is like that of the publican smiting on his breast, and crying, "Lord, have mercy on me a sinner."

*Right thoughts of Christ are trading and trafficking thoughts;* a man has them for his constant trade, in which respect his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord. "The desire of our soul is to thy name", says the church," and to the remembrance of thee." "With my soul have I desired thee in the night, and with my spirit within me will I seek thee early", Isaiah 26:8,9. This is not only his business, but his pleasure; and that makes him go on. If a man thrive at his trade, he takes pleasure in it. O sweet trading! "My meditation of him shall be sweet", Psalm 104:34.

*Right thoughts of Christ are humbling thoughts, and yet emboldening thoughts.* Those that think highly of Christ cannot but think meanly of themselves, saying with Job, "Now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself in dust and ashes", Job 42:6. Yet this humility doth not hinder him from boldness; for he hath "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus", Hebrews 10:19. It is a bold humility, and a humble boldness; hence, when he is worshipping God in the Spirit, two other things concur, namely, a rejoicing in Christ Jesus, and a having no confidence in the flesh, Philippians 3:3. Oh, says the soul, I have no ground of confidence in myself, but I have all ground of confidence in Christ!

*Right thoughts of Christ are assimilating thoughts, sanctifying and transforming thoughts,* 2 Corinthians 3:18, "But we all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." They that see Christ, cannot but love him, and desire to be like him, for there is a fascinating and infatuating favour in his face. They that are in heaven are like him, because they see him as he is: that beautiful vision brings in full conformity to him. The thought that endears Christ, embitters sin: a man cannot think duly of the loveliness of Christ, without thinking of the loathsomeness of sin. As Christ comes into the heart, sin must go out, according to the measure and degree of his coming. All right thoughts of Christ are sanctifying thoughts.

*Rights thoughts of Christ are new thoughts.* They that suppose they have thought well enough of Christ all their days, and have no better thoughts, no higher thoughts, no weightier thoughts, no clearer thoughts of him than ever they had, surely they are strangers to this esteem of Christ that we are presently inquiring into: "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are done away, and all things are become new", and new thoughts among the rest, 2 Corinthians 5:17.

*Right thoughts of Christ will bring in new words and new actions.* Words follow the thoughts, “Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh”, Matthew 12:34. Actions also follow the thoughts, for can you think highly of Christ, and yet do nothing for him? Nay, new and precious thoughts of Christ bring in new gospel obedience from a principle of love to him.

Thus you may try yourselves now on this question, “What think ye of Christ?” by *the quality of your thoughts*. Examination is the very design of the question, namely, to discover what our thoughts of Christ are.

*Ralph Erskine (1685-1752),  
an extract, edited and abridged, from his sermons.*

## FELLOWSHIP NEWS

As a Church we've been greatly encouraged by a number of visitors who have been consistently attending our services over the last few months. We pray that they will enjoy a warm welcome and that, we together, would be blessed as we gather to worship the Lord.

Lately, we've been praying for Chloe H's Nan. We give thanks to the Lord that, after a prolonged stay in hospital, she has been able to return home. We're grateful too for the grace that Chloe has been enabled to show in caring so faithfully for her Nan.

We rejoice in the Lord's goodness to the family of Peter and Sue B, after their prematurely born grandson, Harry, has been able to return home from the hospital. We praise God for hearing and answering our prayers.

On Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> April, we received the sad news that our sister Jill T's father had passed away. We commit Jill, her mother and brother, to the God of all grace, praying that all the family will be Divinely comforted at this time.

We thank the Lord for the gospel opportunities that He has afforded us recently:

On Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> April, we held our Evangelistic Supper. This was the first supper that we've been able to have since before the days of Covid. We were

pleased to welcome a number of guests and enjoyed sharing a meal with them. After the meal, Daniel Tribe gave a short gospel message which we pray will be seed in the hearts of all who came, that we trust will bear fruit in God's perfect time.

As well as the supper, we were able to conduct a Holiday Bible Club, during the Easter half term (12-14<sup>th</sup> April). The theme for the three days was 'People Jesus Met', with teaching on Zacchaeus, the woman with the issue of blood, and the thief on the cross. The Lord wonderfully went before us, and we saw a good number of children join, many of whom had not previously been to the youth work. It is our sincere prayer that, following the Holiday Bible Club, these children would be encouraged to begin attending the Sunday School. We're grateful to those who poured in so much prayer and effort to make this happen.

It's no small mercy that the Local Council continue to grant us permission to conduct our Open-Air ministry in the city centre. The first Open-Air of this year was held on Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> April. Please join us in praying that the Lord Jesus Christ will be glorified in the salvation of lost souls in Salisbury.

On 24 & 25<sup>th</sup> of March, the annual Birmingham Conference was held. Our Pastor, along with John Saunders and Colin Mercer, spoke at the conference. The weekend was one of great blessing with heartfelt worship, rich ministry, and warm fellowship.

On Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> March, our Midweek Meeting took the form of a Deputation Meeting. On behalf of the Christian Institute, Nigel Kenny and James Kennedy, spoke to us about Conversion Therapy, the Online Safety Bill, and Assisted Suicide, under the title of 'Loving our Neighbour'. This incredibly informative evening gave us important matter for prayer and provided wise counsel as to the things we can do, under God, to encourage gospel freedoms in our land.

Tim Burden, representing MERF, Middle East Reformed Fellowship, visited us on 26<sup>th</sup> April. After an opening exhortation based on Luke 24:13-35, Mr. Burden introduced his presentation with a reminder of MERF's origins: a book published by the Banner of Truth in the early 1970's called *The Grace of God in the Gospel* (current title – *Saving Grace*) became the catalyst to reach out to those who were predominantly in Muslim lands: since then the mission has grown remarkably, reaching many lands. The main part of the presentation concerned the work in Indonesia. a country consisting of over 1700 islands

with a population of approximately 240 million. MERF ministers in various mountain locations, among them Ngaduman village, the highest village on the slopes of Mount Merbabu, Central Java, with an altitude of 1800m(5905ft) above sea-level. By receiving radios, the villagers, who are 99% Christian, continue to enjoy God's Word even while working in the fields; and Muslims in this village also want to listen to the radio broadcasts. There is good work going on with young people, with a recent Bible Camp having 220 children in attendance. To help Indonesian churches train evangelists and lay-workers to reach more Muslims, two Biblical Training Centres have been established in West Sulawesi and Makassar and a third one (in Jakarta) is presently underway. These Centres currently train 800 students from all over Indonesia, who are potential future church-leaders. Further afield, Mr Burden informed us of the *Augustine Program*. This is essentially intensive biblical training for MERF workers to help them in their respective fields. Tim Burden acts as the Program Co-ordinator, with its teaching-centre situated in Lokichoggio, Kenya. Gathering here are men from Tanzania, Kenya, Ethiopia and South-Sudan to study the doctrines of God's Word. It was a most informative and encouraging meeting.

## **DANIEL TRIBE'S APPOINTMENT**

Daniel Tribe was set aside for service in the role of Ministerial Assistant during the Lord's Day morning service of 19<sup>th</sup> March. As Pastor, I read from Acts 27:23, "*God, whose I am, and whom I serve.*" In applying these words, I noted that they speak of *Relationship*: "God, whose I am;" *Priority*: "whose I am and whom I serve;" and *Faithfulness*: "God ... whom I serve."

We rejoice at the way the Lord has led Daniel, in his graduating from the Salisbury Reformed Seminary, and now in this opportunity to serve among us and gain experience in pastoral ministry.

May the Lord's good hand rest upon him and may his service in the church be richly blessed.

*John P. Thackway*

# **SALISBURY CONFERENCE 2023**

**22nd – 24th September**

General Title: "*Experiencing Christ*"

Visiting Minister: Dafydd Morris

## **Friday 22nd September**

7.30pm — A biographical address on William Gadsby

## **Saturday 23rd September**

10.30am — *The Manifestation of Christ*

Lunch break

1.00pm — *The Entertainment of Christ*

2.30pm — *Our Communion with Christ*

Tea at 4pm

## **Lord's Day 24th September**

Services led by Malcolm Watts

After-Church Fellowship — Dafydd Morris (a Testimony)

God willing, the conference addresses will also be available via live stream.

For further information visit:

[salisburyemmanuel.org.uk/conference](http://salisburyemmanuel.org.uk/conference)

## **SEEK THE LORD**

Dr. W. Y. Fullerton, who was once the Baptist Missionary Secretary, said, 'I remember speaking to a group of young men who were trifling on a very solemn occasion. I ventured to say to one of them – I was younger in those days, and ventured more than I would now – "I know when you will find God." "Do you?" The young man said, "I wish you would tell me." "Well," I said, "I can tell you to the odd half-minute." They listened, and I believe the Word of God had effect. "Then shall ye find me, saith the Lord, when ye search for me with all your heart." (Deuteronomy 4:29)'



## ONLY ONE DOOR

Charles Haddon Spurgeon told of a man who had two dogs. He liked them to go in and out of the house freely, therefore he had two holes cut in the door. He was asked the reason for this, and he answered, "The *little* hole is for the little dog, and the *big* hole is for the big dog." Then said one, "But the little dog might have gone through the same hole as the big dog, surely!" There", said he, "I never thought of that!"

The dying thief, a *big* sinner; and the good Nicodemus, a *little* sinner (as men might say), both entered heaven by the same "door". The Lord Jesus said, "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved." (John 10:9)

## LOVE FOR THE SAVIOUR

Dr. Philip Doddridge, when a minister in Northampton, became interested in an Irishman who was convicted of sheep-stealing, and condemned to death, according to the law of that day. Doddridge did everything he could to save him, but, sadly, it proved in vain. When the man was being driven in the death-cart to the place of execution, he asked that they should stop at Dr. Doddridge's house. This was done, and when Dr. Doddridge came out, the man said to him: "Dr. Doddridge, every drop of my blood loves you, every vein of my heart loves you, because you tried to save me."

The Lord Jesus Christ, the very best of friends, took pity on us in our dreadful state; and He died for us that we might be delivered from the misery and wretchedness of an everlasting death. It is no wonder that believers love Him so much and that they ever will love Him.

# THE MARROW CONTROVERSY

Malcolm H. Watts

## Part 2

The General Assembly met in May, 1719, and, although no specific mention was made of the "Marrow", the Assembly's Commission was asked to inquire if any books or pamphlets had been published in support of the Auchterarder Proposition. When it met, the Commission appointed "a Committee for Preserving the Purity of Doctrine." The Committee met at Edinburgh but it appointed a Sub-committee to meet at St Andrews. The committee proper summoned and questioned a number of men suspected of holding "Marrow" doctrine, including James Hog of Carnock, who wrote the Preface to the new edition of the book. Hog declared that many had been greatly blessed in reading the book and that he himself "had received more light about some important concerns of the glorious gospel, by perusing that book, than by any other human writings which providence had brought into his hands." The sub-committee subjected the book to detailed examination, and prepared a report for the next Assembly.

### The Fateful Assembly of 1720

The Committee for Preserving the Purity of Doctrine presented its Report at the 1720 Assembly, identifying five doctrines in the "Marrow" which it judged to be at variance with Scripture. These were:

1) that faith includes an assurance that Christ is ours (the "Marrow" did affirm this but only in respect to the truth of the Gospel's declaration: *God has given His Son as a gift to sinners of mankind, promising that whoever trusts in Him shall certainly have everlasting life* – Jn. 3:16; 1 Jn. 5:10);

2) that Christ's atonement was universal (the "Marrow" nowhere taught this, but it did assert that *in the Gospel, Christ and pardon are held out, or made available, to all sinners, in all places, and at all times* – Matt. 22:1-4; Lk. 24:46,47);

3) that holiness is not necessary to salvation (the "Marrow" rather insisted that

*Christ's righteousness – not the sinner's righteousness or holiness – constitutes the sole meritorious ground of salvation – Rom. 3:23-26);*

4) that fear of punishment and hope of reward are not motives of a believer's obedience (the "Marrow" doctrine stated that the believer is *motivated by Christ's love to sinners, not by mercenary desires for heaven nor by slavish fears of hell* – Lk. 1:70-75);

5) that the believer is not under the law as a rule of life (the "Marrow" actually - and only - taught that the believer is *no longer under the Law as a covenant, to be justified or to be condemned by it* – Rom. 6:14; Gal. 3:10,13).

The Committee also drew attention to six "Antinomian" paradoxes:

(i) a believer is not 'under the Law', but is *altogether delivered from its commanding and condemning* (see above, under 5 – Rom. 6:14; 7:4);

(ii) a believer does not commit sin (*sin being considered as sin under a covenant of works, incurring such awful guilt as renders him liable to eternal judgement* – Jn. 3:18);

(iii) the Lord can see no sin in a believer (which is *true in the sense that all our sins are pardoned freely for Christ's sake and therefore they are covered from the sight of God* – Num. 23:21; Is 43:25; Jer. 50:20);

(iv) the Lord is not angry with a believer for his sins (that is, *not angry as a provoked Judge, ready to consign to damnation and perdition* – Ps. 89:30-33; Jn. 3:18; Rom. 5:10; 1 Jn. 1:9; 2:1,2);

(v) the Lord does not punish a believer for his sins (*not punishing him in the way of judicial, vindictive punishment, since that punishment has been borne by Christ in our room and place: however, the Lord, in His love, and as a Father, does chasten and correct His people* – Heb. 12:6,7; Rev. 3:19);

(vi) a believer has no cause either to confess his sins or to crave pardon at the hand of God for them (*as if God is still the God of avenging justice; but the*

*believer does confess and ask for pardon, that God's fatherly displeasure might be removed and that the joy of his salvation might be restored – Ps. 51:12; Matt. 6:9,12; 1 Jn. 1:9).*

In addition to all this, the report mentioned several other “exceptionable positions contained in that book.”

After some debate, the Assembly (wrongly) declared that the "Marrow" contained teaching contrary to Scripture and the Church's Subordinate Standards, and it sanctioned an Act in which “all the ministers of the church were strictly prohibited and discharged, either by printing, writing, or preaching, to recommend the Marrow, or in discourse to say anything in favour of it; but, on the contrary, they were enjoined and required to warn and exhort their people, in whose hand the said book is, or may come, not to read or use the same.”

As Donald Beaton later wrote, “this Act gave a severe blow to the friends of evangelical truth in the Church of Scotland, for in their estimation the General Assembly had condemned a ‘bundle of sweet and pleasant gospel truths’.”

## **Representation and Protest**

A number of Scotland's evangelical Ministers met together to see what could be done to get this Act repealed. It was decided to prepare a *Representation*, explaining their position and requesting that the Act be repealed. This representation was signed by twelve men, thereafter called "the Representers", "the Marrow Men", or "the twelve apostles of the Modern Divinity." They were: James Hog, Thomas Boston, John Bonar, John Williamson, James Kidd, Gabriel Wilson, Ebenezer Erskine, Ralph Erskine, James Wardlaw, Henry Davidson, James Bathgate, and William Hunter.

The *Representation* carefully stated the doctrines which the Assembly had wrongly judged to be unsound and dangerous. Here are some extracts taken from it:

"We acknowledge and profess, we look upon our freedom, as believers in Christ, from the covenant of works, or the law as that covenant, to be the chief

branch of that precious liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and in which the eternal salvation of our souls is wrapt up."

"Believers are not under the law, as it is the law of works, though under the law as it is the law of Christ."

"We conceive, that believers being united to Christ,..their plea is sustained in the court of heaven, as the plea of the Surety's having paid the debt for them, whereby the demand which the law makes upon them for works, if they will obtain salvation, is cut off, they being appointed to salvation another way, namely, by our Lord Jesus Christ."

"Faith (is that) by which a person appropriates to himself what before lay in common in the gospel-offer, and without (this)...there can be no receiving and closing with Christ for salvation."

"That deed of gift and grant, by which we understand no more but the revelation of the divine will in the Word,...(affords) a warrant to offer Christ to all, and a warrant unto all to receive him."

When this *Representation* was tabled at the Assembly of 1721, it was referred to the Commission without even being read. In the November of that year, the Commission called upon the Marrow Men to answer certain queries. Their answers were prepared by Ebenezer Erskine and Gabriel Wilson and presented to the Commission in March, 1722. In an abbreviated and simplified form, the queries and answers were as follows:

**Q:** Are there any precepts in the Gospel which belong only to the Gospel?

**A:** In the Gospel, strictly understood, there are no precepts (Gen. 3:15; Lk. 2:10,11; 4:16-19). Precepts, including those of faith and repentance, really belong to the Law which commands us to acknowledge God by faith and perform, through repentance, those duties which may previously have been omitted (Exod. 20:3 ff. See: Larger Catechism, Questions 104, 105).

**Q:** Is the justified believer bound, by the authority of the Creator, to engender personal obedience to the Moral Law?

**A:** The authority which binds the believer to obedience proceeds from Jesus Christ, who is not only Creator but also Redeemer (1 Cor. 9:21; Gal. 6:2).

**Q:** When a promise of life and a threatening of death is attached to a precept, does that make it a covenant of works?

**A:** Adam was, from the beginning, under a law enforced by God's authority, but a promise and a threatening made that law a 'covenant of works' (Gen. 2:16,17; Gal. 3:12).

**Q:** Before it assumed a covenant form, did the law have attached to it a threatening of hell?

**A:** "We are at a loss to discover the real usefulness of this query." It cannot be proved that the threatening of hell belonged to the law of creation, since it was first mentioned in connection with the covenant (Gen 2:17). In any case, Christ in bearing the curse of the law, has redeemed us from all such threatenings of hell (Gal. 3:13,14; 1 Thess. 1:10).

**Q:** Are believers free from the commanding power of the Law as a covenant of works?

**A:** Believers are not subject to the commanding power of the law, as a *covenant* (Gal. 4:5,21; 5:18): that is, the law no longer binds us, with awful authority, to perfect obedience, threatening fearful damnation to each and every transgression (Rom. 8:2; Gal 2:19,20).

**Q:** When a sinner is justified, does he immediately have everything necessary to salvation?

**A:** A justified sinner is passed from death to life, translated from the power of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son, and blessed with all spiritual blessings, so that in Christ he has everything, and in him he is complete (Jn.5:24; Eph. 1:3; Col. 1:13; 2:10).

**Q:** Is it dangerous to the doctrine of free grace to preach that a holy life is necessary to eternal life?

**A:** Eternal life comes to us in the way of a free gift. God gives us Christ and, with him, all the blessings of grace and glory (Rom 6:23; 8:32). So, although Christians ought to live holily, they are not saved by their holiness, but to it, as the fruit and effect of saving grace (Eph. 2:10). Holiness is not therefore a

means to the end, but a part of the end itself (Eph. 1:4,5; Titus 2:14; 2 Pet. 1:3).

**Q:** Is the persuasion that Christ died for me, and that he is mine, a vital part of justifying faith?

**A:** By the gospel offer, which presents Christ to all men as Saviour, he and his saving benefits are ours by virtue of the free promise, even before they are ours in actual possession (Isa. 9:6; 46:12,13; Rom. 10:8,9).

**Q:** What is the act of faith by which a sinner appropriates Christ and his saving benefits?

**A:** This query was reckoned answered in what was said in response to Query 8.

**Q:** Does the gospel contain a deed of gift and grant of Christ to all mankind, and is this grant entirely gracious and absolute?

**A:** The purchase and application of redemption is peculiar to the elect, but in God's revealed will there is a deed of gift or grant to all mankind, in so far as God has directly and solemnly given him to sinners that they may be saved (Isa. 55:1; Jn. 6:31,32; 1 Tim. 1:15). This grant is made by sovereign grace to lost sinners, and therefore it is absolutely free (Eph. 1:7; Rev. 22:17).

**Q:** Is it valid to distinguish between the law of works and the law of Christ?

**A:** This distinction is to be carefully maintained, since the terms are scriptural (Rom. 3:27; Gal. 6:2). The law of works is another way of describing the covenant of works, from which believers are completely delivered (Rom. 8:2; Gal. 5:18; cf. 4:24): the law of Christ is the law delivered through the hands of a Mediator to believers already justified that it may be for them a rule of life, and all believers are to follow after that law (Matt. 11:28,29; 1 Cor. 9:21).

**Q:** Should believers be motivated in their obedience by the hope of heaven and the fear of hell?

**A:** Heaven, understood as the enjoyment of God in Christ, is, next to the glory of God, the chief end of man (Ps. 73:25); but we are to conceive of it as an inheritance freely given, and not as wages for our service of obedience (Rom. 4:4,5,16; 6:23). Neither is the slavish fear of hell a motive of the believer's obedience, for we who have trusted in Christ ought never to fear that one day

we might be cast into hell (Rom. 8:1, 15; 11:29; 2 Tim. 1:7).

### **The Final Act in the Drama**

In May, 1722, when the matter was again raised in the Church's Supreme Judicatory, the Commission recommended that the Assembly should adhere to their Act of 1720 and formally rebuke the *Representers* for their conduct. The Assembly voted by 134 to 5 in favour of the recommendation. The brethren were therefore called to the bar of the Assembly where they were rebuked by the Moderator.

Immediately afterwards, James Kidd presented a *Protest* in the name of himself and his brethren, but once again the Assembly evidenced great prejudice in refusing to read it.

Thomas Boston, of course, was one of those who had to suffer the censure. In his Memoirs, he wrote: "I received the rebuke and admonition as an ornament put upon me, being for the cause of truth."

He continued; "The affair was brought to the issue foresaid in the afternoon session of that day; and their meeting for that black work being appointed to be at three o'clock that day, there came on a little before the hour a most dreadful storm of thunder and hail, by means whereof their meeting was for a considerable time hindered...I well remember with what serenity of mind and comfort of heart I heard the thunder of that day, the most terrible thunderclap being just about three o'clock. It made impression on many as heaven's testimony against their deed they were then about to do...Thus ended that weighty affair."

The controversy in the Church Court may have ceased, but the truth was destined to break forth from the controversy. In 1727, Boston, under the name of "Philaethes Irenaeus", published a new edition of the "Marrow" with his own very full and comprehensive "Notes".

Concerning the latter, James Hervey wrote: "Mr. Boston's notes on the 'Marrow' are, in my opinion, some of the most judicious and valuable that ever were penned."



In some ways, it was very sad that the controversy ever broke out; but God overruled it to the spreading of sound doctrine in Scotland and beyond. As a result of the controversy and the literature it produced, Ministers became more convinced of Gospel truths, and among the Lord's people there developed a greater desire to hear true evangelical preaching. In 1733, the Church of Scotland experienced its first major Secession; and although the Marrow Controversy was not the direct cause, Ebenezer Erskine (distinguished among the Marrow Men) led that Secession and it is an indisputable fact that Marrow Theology became the Theology of the Secession.

**Concluded**

*"The Marrow of Modern Divinity" deserves to be read and carefully studied. The book is evangelical and most instructive, being recommended by a number of eminent Puritans, such as Joseph Caryl, Jeremiah Burroughs, and William Strong; and, somewhat later, by such godly men as James Hervey and Henry Belfrage.*

*The book, with Thomas Boston's invaluable Notes, is presently available, in fine hardback, from Christian Focus Publications, 388 pages.*

## **TO WILL AND TO DO**

### **Thomas Manton (1620-1677)**

**[edited and adapted]**

It is the Lord who both makes us willing and gives us help to do things which are pleasing in his sight. Therefore we ask Him, 'Thy will be done', that is, we ask him for a heart, skill, and strength to do His holy will.

1. I mean that in the work of conversion God does all. 'I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of their flesh, and I will give them an heart of flesh' (Ezek. 11:19). The benefit of a tender sanctified heart is God's gift: 'A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take the stony heart out of your flesh,

and I will give you an heart of flesh and I will cause you to walk in my statutes' (Ezek. 36: 26, 27). Mark, a *new* that is, *another* heart, a heart to understand, a heart to love, a heart to do the will of God, he *gives* it. He does not only offer it, or prepare it, make way for it, but He says, 'I will give you a heart of flesh'.

2. This is what I mean, that after conversion God still works upon us. He does not only give the habit of grace, but actual help in the work of obedience. 'He worketh all our works in us' (Isa. 26:12). His actual help is necessary to direct, quicken, strengthen, protect, and defend us. To direct us: 'Thou shalt guide me by thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory' (Ps. 73:24). In our way to heaven, we need not only a rule and path, but a guide. The rule is the law of God, but the guide is the Spirit of God. To make us alert and excite us by powerful actions: a drowsiness and a deadness is apt to creep upon our hearts, and we see in the same duty it is a hard matter to keep the same condition of spirit, the same vigour of affection, life, and warmth; and therefore, we need to go to God often, as David: 'Quicken thou me in thy way' (Ps. 119:37). It is God who renews the vigour of the life of grace upon all occasions, when it begins to languish and droop. To support and strengthen what we have received: Paul prays that we 'would be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man' (Eph. 3:16), and Peter prays that God would 'Make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you' (1 Pet. 5:10). Here are many words heaped up to show how God is interested in keeping and maintaining the progress of that which he has planted in the soul; in protecting and defending us against the incursions and assaults of the devil, who always lies in wait to surprise the soul, to draw us away from God. The regenerate have not only escaped out of his clutches, but are advanced and appointed to be Satan's judges, which an envious and proud spirit cannot endure; therefore he maligns, assaults, and besieges them with temptations daily. Now, it is God that defends: 'Keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me' (John 17:11); by Thy name, that is, by Thy power.

3. God must not only help us in general, and upon weighty occasions, but in every act, from the beginning of the spiritual life to the end. It is not enough to say that the first principles and motions are from God, but also the flowing forth of all motions and actions, according to those principles: 'It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure' (Phil. 2:13). God not only

gives the desire and purpose, but he gives grace to the good which we will and purpose to do. These two are distinct; and we may have assistance in one and not in the other; willing and doing, I mean, are different. Paul writes, 'To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not' (Rom. 7:18). To *will* is more than to *think*. To *exert*, and put forth our will into action, is more than both, and in all we need God's help. We cannot think a good thought, or conceive a holy purpose, much less perform a good action, without God, so that every moment we need renewed strength. As long as the work of grace is powerful and renewed in us, so long we are kept in a warm and healthy condition; but we grow vain, loose, earthly, carnal again, and off from God, when this heat and warmth of grace is withdrawn; and therefore God still works in the whole business of our obedience to Him.

*Submitted by Richard W*

## **OUR GREAT NEED IS TO HUMBLE OURSELVES**

*"Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 18:4)*

The well-known and highly esteemed Dr. Franklin of America once received a very solemn lesson from the excellent Dr. Cotton Mather, to which he refers in a letter to his son, Dr Samuel Mather, dated, 12 May, 1781:

"The last time I saw your father was in 1724. On taking my leave, he showed me a shorter way out of the house, through a narrow passage, which was crossed by a beam over-head. We were still talking as I withdrew, he accompanying me behind, and then he said hastily: "Stoop! Stoop!" I did not understand him till I felt my head hit against the beam.

He was a man who never missed an occasion of giving instruction; and upon this he said to me, 'You are young, and have the world before you. STOOP as you go through it, and you will miss many hard thumps.'

This advice, thus beaten into my head has frequently been of use to me: I often think of it when I see pride mortified, and misfortunes brought upon people by

carrying their heads too high.”

## UNBELIEF

John Cooke, of Maidenhead, once, when travelling, came across a rich farmer who was very unwilling to listen to any serious conversation about spiritual things. At length, the man said with a sneer, “I don’t like religion; and I told you so.”

“You are not singular or unique in this respect”, replied Mr. Cooke. I have read of one whom you very much resemble. The farmer to whom I allude, finding his ground very productive, and his barns too small, resolved on building larger barns and filling them; and said to his soul, “Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat drink and be merry. But God said unto him, “Thou fool! this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be which thou has provided?” (Luke’s Gospel 12:19,20)

“Now, sir”, continued Mr. Cooke, “I think you must see yourself in this picture. Here is a farmer, very rich, living to himself in health, ease, and pleasure, ‘without God in this world.’ No doubt his neighbours envied and flattered him; but no-one dared to reprove so rich a man. And if no-one reproved his sins, and many flattered them as virtues, he never heard the truth. This accounts for our Lord’s words, ‘How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! But although he thought himself wise, and others wished to be like him, God addresses him differently – “Thou fool!”

“Why, sir, do you suppose the only wise God called him a fool?” The man was silent. “But, honestly, do you think he was a fool?” The man said, “I shall not say, sir.”

“Well, my good man”, said Mr Cooke, “if you will allow me to hazard an opinion, he appears a fool –

1. Because he preferred his body to his soul: “I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up...”

2. Because he preferred the world to God: 'eat, drink, and be merry', was the extent of his aim;
3. Because he preferred time to eternity: 'thou hast goods laid up for many years';
4. Because he lived as if he would never die, presuming on 'many years'; and
5. Because he exposed his soul to all the horrors of sudden death, without faith, without repentance, without forgiveness, and without hope."

## **FAITH**

John Holland the Puritan, the day before he died, called for the Bible, saying, "Come, O come; death approached, let us gather some flowers to comfort this hour." And turning with his own hand to the 8<sup>th</sup> chapter of Romans, he gave the book to Mr. Leigh, and bid him read: at the end of every verse he paused, and then gave the sense to his own comfort, but more to the joy and wonder of his friends.

Having continued his meditations in this chapter thus read to him for two hours or more, he suddenly said, "O stay your reading. What brightness is this I see? Have you lit some candles?" Mr Leigh answered, "No, it is the sunshine"; for it was about five o'clock on a clear, summer evening. "Sunshine!" Mr Holland said, "Nay, it is my Saviour's shine."

He continued, "Now farewell world; welcome heaven. The daystar from on high hath visited my heart. Ah speak it when I am gone, and preach it at my funeral; God dealeth familiarly with man. I feel His mercy; I see his majesty; whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell, God knoweth; but I see things that are unutterable."

Thus ravished in spirit, he roamed towards heaven with a cheerful look, and soft sweet voice. So died, this man of God.

## BEULAH LAND

John Bunyan writes in *The Pilgrim's Progress*: "Now I saw in my dream, that by this time the pilgrims were got over the Enchanted Ground, and entering into the country of Beulah, whose air was very sweet and pleasant, the way lying directly through it, they solaced themselves there for a season (Isaiah 62:4). Yea, here they heard continually the singing of birds, and saw every day the flowers appear in the earth, and heard the voice of the turtle-dove in the land (Song of Solomon 2:10-12). In this country the sun shineth night and day...Here they were within sight of the city they were going to,...because it was on the borders of heaven."

Dr. Edward Payson, a minister of eminent piety in New England, once spoke of the experience and he observed: "Dr. Clarke, in his travels, speaking of the companies that were travelling from the East to Jerusalem, represents the procession as being very long; and after climbing over the extended and heavy ranges of hills that abounded in the way, some of the foremost at length reached the top of the last hill, and stretching up their hands in gestures of joy, cried out, 'The Holy City! The Holy City! – and fell down and worshipped; while those who were behind, pressed forward to see – So, he said, the dying Christian, when he gets on the last summit of life, and stretches his vision to catch a glimpse of the heavenly city, may cry out at its glories, and incite those who are behind to press forward to the sight."

Near to the end of his life, Dr. Payson said, "When I read Bunyan's description of the land of Beulah, where the sun shines and the birds sing day and night, I used to doubt whether there were such a place; but now my own experience has convinced me of it, and it infinitely transcends all my previous conceptions."

In a letter dictated to his sister on September 19, 1827, shortly before his death, Dr. Payson wrote: "*Were I to adopt the figurative language of Bunyan, I might date this letter from the land of Beulah, of which I have been for some weeks a happy inhabitant. The celestial city is full in my view. Its glories beam upon me, its breezes fan me, its odours are wafted to me, its sounds strike upon my ears, and its spirit is breathed into my heart. Nothing separates me*

*from it but the river of death, which now appears but as an insignificant rill, that may be crossed at a single step, whenever God shall give permission. The Sun of Righteousness has been gradually drawing nearer and nearer, appearing larger and brighter as he approached; and now He fills the whole hemisphere, pouring forth a flood of glory, in which I seem to float like an insect in the beams of the sun, exalting, yet almost trembling, while I gaze on this excessive brightness, and wondering, with unutterable wonder, why God should deign thus to shine upon a sinful worm. A single heart, and a single tongue seem altogether inadequate to my wants: I want a whole heart for every separate emotion, and a whole tongue to express that emotion.*

*O my sister, my sister! Could you but know what awaits the Christian; could you know only so much as I know, you could not refrain from rejoicing, and even leaping for joy...You have known a little of my trials and conflicts, and you know that they have been neither few nor small; and I hope this glorious termination of them, will serve to strengthen your faith, and elevate your hope.*

*And now my dear, dear sister, farewell. Hold on your Christian course but a few days longer, and we will meet in heaven,*

*Your happy and affectionate brother,*

*Edward Payson”*

## EPILOGUE

*"I am the Rose of Sharon." (Song of Solomon 2:1).*

*"The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose." (Isaiah 35:1)*

The months of May and June are particularly considered to be a time for beautiful flowers. Take the Rose, for example. Some National Trust properties have to restrict the number of visitors because of their Rose displays. They may even stay open later so that visitors can appreciate the Rose fragrance in the evening air.

There are a number of Bible references to flowers, and the ones set out above have particular reference to a Rose and the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us therefore consider how the Rose can remind us of our blessed Saviour:

*Perfection* - We look at a Rose and admire its beauty and perfection. "Yea, He is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend....." (Song of Solomon 5:16). Our Lord Jesus is our perfect friend. By God's grace may we seek to draw nearer to Him, appreciating Him more and more.

*Fragrance* - Some roses are fragrant, which reminds us of our Saviour's ability to bring peace, joy, and satisfaction to our hearts. As the poet writes, "How sweet the name of Jesus sounds in a believer's ear! It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds, and drives away his fear."

*Thorns!* - Some Roses have thorns on their stems which can hurt when scratched or pricked. The thorns remind us that Jesus came to be the Saviour of those who will repent of sin and believe in him. "They plaited a crown of thorns, and put it about his head" (Mk. 15:17) and then, a little later, they drove nails through his hands and feet, fulfilling the prophetic scripture which said, "they pierced my hands and my feet." (Ps. 22:16)

"Rose." The very word, in English, reminds us that Jesus' substitutionary death was accepted by God the Father when He rose up from the grave. It also confirms that believers, in a coming day, will also be raised up by God.

"Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you." (2 Cor. 4:14). I hope you enjoy the summer blooms; but do remember the Lord Jesus Christ whenever you admire the roses.

*Ron Morris*