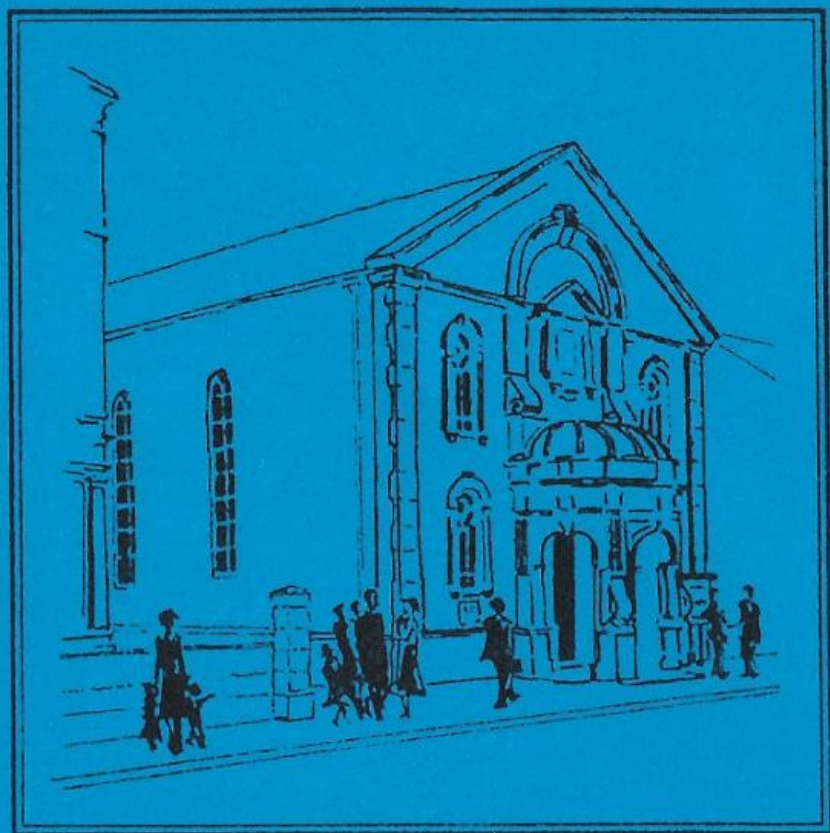


THE MESSENGER



MAGAZINE OF
EMMANUEL CHURCH
(EVANGELICAL & REFORMED)

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ABSENCE FROM THE SANCTUARY REGRETTED

Robert Bond (1839)

“When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday” (Psalm 42:4)

This is a state of mind which is too seldom realized by professing Christians when deprived of God’s house. Yet we are never so likely to know the value of religious means as when we are deprived of them. This was the case with the royal Psalmist when exiled from the sanctuary, and deprived of its sacred solaces and rich enjoyments. “My soul longeth, yea even fainteth for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.”

Why does a Christian set so high a value on the House of God and mourn so greatly when deprived of its services? Because –

It is the *place of spiritual refreshment and consolation*. It is his Bethlehem, the house of bread; yea it is the “banqueting house” of the church, where the great feast is provided, the table of mercy spread, and the blessings of salvation are dispensed. There he purifies his affections, renews his strength, and receives large accessions of grace from above. God, who comforts those who are cast down, comforts him by the promises of His Word and the ministry of His servants. “There is a river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God; the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High.”

There his toils are lightened, his sorrows are alleviated, his pains become sweetened; and he cries out, “Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time when their corn and wine increased. How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!”

The House of God is also *the School of Instruction*, where the Christian sits at the feet of the Great Teacher, and learns the lessons of his grace. Religious instruction has always been associated with the institution of divine worship.

Thus under the Mosaic economy, the reading and exposition of the law were connected with the exercises of praise and supplication. The book of Nehemiah contains the following interesting specimen of Jewish worship: “And

all the people gathered themselves together as one man, and Ezra bought the law before the congregation, and he read therein; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law. And Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose, and beside him stood the Levites. And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people: and when he opened it, all the people stood up: and Ezra blessed the Lord the great God: and all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands; and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the Lord, with their faces to the ground. So they read in the book, in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense; and caused them to understand the reading.” Neh. 8:1-8.

And this it is probably has been the usual method ever since. Christians, therefore, go to the sanctuary for instruction in the ways of righteousness; they go to have their errors corrected, their doubts removed, and their views of eternal glory brightened and elevated. Not that they expect to be amused with novel theories, or idle speculations; but they desire to have divine things “re-applied and re-impressed, to be reminded of forgotten truths, to have their knowledge reduced to practise,” to “hear of heaven and learn the way.” Hence they “prefer Jerusalem above their chief joy;” and when detained from its solemnities, either by personal affliction or domestic trial, their souls are cast down within them, and the golden harp of praise is hung upon the willows.

It is the *Element of Devotion*. In the House of God we dwell in a higher region, — we breathe in a holier atmosphere than on ordinary occasions. We leave in the vale of vanity at the bottom of the hill, “all the black cares and tumults” of the world, while we go up to worship the Lord in his holy mountain.

There humility lays us in the dust, — hope drops her anchor, — desire plumes its wings, — faith realizes things that are invisible, and praise ascends to heaven. There the world loses its charms, trials are forgotten, the mind is elevated, the affections become refined, heaven is enjoyed on earth, and we feel that a day spent in the courts of the Lord is better than a thousand spent elsewhere.

It is the *Centre of Fellowship*, the hallowed spot around which his dearest friends and Christian relatives “meet and mingle into bliss.” His delight is with the excellent of the earth; with these he feels a sympathy, a congeniality, a oneness, which Christian friendship only can impart. “As iron sharpeneth iron, so doth the countenance of a man his friend;” and their hearts burn within them

while they converse together of the love of Jesus, and the joys of paradise. But especially, a true Christian loves the sanctuary, and keenly regrets his absence from it, because —

It is the *House of his God* — the pavilion of his Sovereign, — the place where His honour dwelleth, and where His glory is pre-eminently manifested. There He displays the special tokens of His grace. Hence, when detained from the place of his “affection,” — “in a dry and thirsty land where no water is,” the Christian is ready to say, “My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee, to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary. Therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar.”

Let us, like the Psalmist, be grateful for the privileges of the sanctuary. They are as reservoirs of spiritual blessings, or as wells of salvation. Let us compare our condition with that of heathen nations, and with thousands of our fellow Christians around us, and then exclaim, “Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Zion, and unto thee shall the vow be performed. He hath shown his words unto Jacob, and his statutes unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation. Praise ye the Lord!” And let us anticipate with holy joy the period when we shall assemble together in the heavenly temple, and join in its services without either interruption or termination.

“Thine earthly Sabbaths, Lord we love,
But there’s a nobler rest above.”

FAITHFUL ATTENDANCE AT CHURCH SERVICES AND MEETINGS

Malcolm Watts

To prevent the spread of coronavirus, the Government introduced ‘lockdown laws’, which severely restricted the numbers able to meet together: in consequence, many churches throughout the country suffered temporary closure.

During this time we were all very thankful for the live-streaming of services, enabling people to worship, albeit online. But it is to be feared that now, when lockdowns no longer take place, some believers have become so used to watching on-screen that, for them, it has become a regular habit on the Lord's Day and, we fear, a substitute for public worship.

This is a cause for concern. It is recognised, of course, that, for reasons of looking after children, caring for the infirm, coping with illness, frailty or old age, some of God's people are unable to attend all the services; but when some absent themselves as a matter of choice, finding it more comfortable and convenient to stay at home, this is a fault and there is need to hear again the teaching of Holy Scripture.

First of all, the Lord requires His people to be physically present at church: "*Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise*" (Ps. 100:4; cf. 96:8).

Secondly, He forbids them to neglect meeting together for worship: "*Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is*" (Heb. 10:25).

Thirdly, the seeking of regular corporate fellowship is an evident mark of grace: "*Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth*" (Ps. 26:8).

Fourthly, in former times, the Lord's people conscientiously attended God's house on Sabbaths and other holy days, whether in the Tabernacle, the Temple or the Synagogue: "*this man (Elkanah) went up out of his city yearly to worship and to sacrifice unto the Lord of hosts in Shiloh*" (1 Sam 1:3; cf. Lev. 19:30).

Fifthly, it was prophesied that in the future, when Messiah had come, worshippers will encourage others to accompany them to the house of God: "*And many people shall go and say, Come ye and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob*" (Isa. 2:3).

Sixthly, the Lord Jesus regularly attended a place of worship and took part in the exercises of that worship: "*as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day*" (Lk. 4:16).

Seventhly, Christ assumed that His disciples would follow His example, saying to them, “*where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them*” (Matt. 18:20).

Eighthly, Scripture records that this was how it was in the days of the early church: “*all that believed were together*” (Acts 2:44); “*when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together*” (4:31); “*ye come together...*” (1 Cor. 11:17; cf. 11:20,33; 14:26).

Ninthly, when Christian believers join with others in the holy exercises of worship, they answer the divine requirement, “*glorify God in you body and in your spirit, which are God’s*” (1 Cor. 6:20).

Tenthly, and lastly, it should always be remembered that God particularly delights in public worship where He is most honoured, and there He is pleased to grant the special manifestations of His presence. It stands written, “*The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob*” (Ps. 87:2 cf. 27:4; 63:1,2).

If lockdowns have made us accustomed to watch the screen rather than make our way to the church, it is time to break the habit, and return to our former practice of joining the congregation of God’s people in His House. Let me encourage you to do this. We would love to see you regularly worshipping with us again. As the puritan David Clarkson says, “Public worship is the nearest resemblance of heaven...In heaven, so far as the Scripture describes it to us, there is nothing done in private, nothing in secret, all the worship of that glorious company is public.”

FELLOWSHIP NEWS

Liz Storey

As a fellowship we were so thankful to the Lord to witness the Baptism and reception into Church Membership of Duncan M on 29 May. It was a blessing to hear Duncan testify of how he came to faith in the Lord Jesus and to see so many of his friends present from the University Christian Union on this very special occasion. We pray for Duncan as he continues his studies in Winchester that he would know the Lord’s help in his Christian walk.

The Women's Prayer Meeting is now meeting in person again at Grove House every Wednesday at 10am and all are welcome, including Mums with young children. It is still available over Zoom (as during the pandemic) for those who aren't able to attend; but it is good to be able to share together again in this way.

A meeting took place recently with the Activities Co-ordinator at Milford House Care Home. This was to see if we would be able to arrange some services there again; and, although the finer details still need to be arranged, there was a very positive response from the staff. A tentative arrangement has been made for a monthly service on a Lord's Day afternoon once a month from August.

The Senior Endeavourer group is, God willing, planning a Summer Activity Week for the first week of August, and our prayers for this would be much appreciated. The programme includes, brunch in the Church and a beach trip on Monday 1st, an outing to Longleat Safari Park on Wednesday 3rd, and an activity day at Avon Tyrell on Friday 5th which includes raft building, geocaching and a high ropes challenge. They will then end their week of fun with a BBQ at the Church. Every day will include a talk and time for chat and discussion on a Christian topic. Our prayer is that this further opportunity with the young people would cause them to see their need of a Saviour and that they would call on Him in repentance and faith.

A church picnic is planned for Saturday, 23 July, so please keep the date free if you can. Further details will be available nearer the time. The venue will be the field next to the Chapel at Ibsley. This has been, in previous years, a very happy afternoon of fun and fellowship, so if you can, do come along!

In recent months, a number of our members have had cataract operations. We are thankful that these procedures have proved successful.

Others have been affected by the coronavirus. We pray for their swift recovery.

We were so very sorry to learn that Linda, mother of our dear sister, Abi G, has been very unwell of late. We assure Steve and Linda, who are now living in Wales, of our love, support, and prayers. May Linda know much of the Lord's gracious and comforting presence.

At the Lord's Supper on 12 June, Pastor Watts administered the Lord's Supper and, after a solemn reading of the Church Covenant, it brought the church great joy to receive into fellowship Pastor Thackway and Margaret, his dear wife. May they know God's all-sufficient grace as they serve the Lord together here at Emmanuel.

In the afternoon of 18 June, many met to witness the Installation of John Thackway to the Pastorate of Emmanuel Church, Salisbury. Friends from a number of other churches joined us for this very special occasion; and the service was singularly blessed to us all. [A report of the Installation Service is included later in this issue of *The Messenger*].

Pastor and Margaret Thackway have moved into the Flat at Grove House and we are so grateful to the Lord for bringing them to minister amongst us. They are already very much loved by us, and all thanks goes to our God for His great kindness towards us as a Fellowship. We continue to pray that plans to buy a house in the area would be blessed by our God, who is able to provide all that we need.

TESTIMONY OF DUNCAN M

**Given at his Baptism on
Lord's Day morning, 29 May**

Growing up in church life was really comfortable. I felt like I was able to live life with a foot in each camp. I could get through church on a Sunday and enjoy living in the world during the week. I could fill my time with friends and clubs and limit my thoughts of Christianity to Sundays.

As a church child, you go to the youth work, listen to the sermon, get a hug from Pastor Watts at the end, and then go home for a Sunday lunch.

At school, I could try defending the Christian Faith, but always had the get-out card of "that's just what my family believes". I didn't feel any urgency to commit to either side, which I now realise was such a dangerous situation to be in.

I remember sitting in the minibus so many times on a Friday night listening to the youth work leaders give epilogues, hearing so many Bible Stories and anecdotes as the leaders expressed that I had a need to be saved.

Although at that time I had much knowledge of biblical things, I had no true personal experience of what it was to be in a relationship with God.

I always had the thought that it would be nice to become a Christian at some point but my thoughts were very self-centred and I was too concerned with my weekly activities to put a relationship with God on my priority list. It was far less daunting to wander and stumble around in the darkness than to accept that I was a sinner in need of an Almighty God. John 3:19 - "Light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."

As I grew older, I became increasingly aware, sat in the pew, that I wasn't right with God. Despite growing up in church, I wasn't a part of God's people, and it was uncomfortable to feel the growing and pressuring need to be saved. The lifetime of Sundays and bedtime prayers weren't enough to secure my salvation.

I began to pray that the Lord would open my eyes to my desperate need for a Saviour. It was also such a blessing to have friends in the church who were keen to pray alongside me and to give up their time to answer questions about faith in a non-judgmental way.

During the uncertain times before starting university at Winchester in September 2020, I remember feeling so close to becoming a Christian, and I prayed to the Lord that at this time of transition the Lord would make the path so clear for me. With the independent lifestyle of university come many and varied choices; I'm thankful to the Lord that I still had the desire to attend church, despite leaving the family-home.

Even though I had concerns about moving to Winchester and beginning this new chapter in my life, I've been blessed with such a strong company of young Christian believers who have encouraged me on my faith walk. It's been so amazing to see the Lord continue to bring people to Himself in Winchester and answer His people's prayers abundantly. It's exciting to serve on outreach teams with the Christian Union and to share the good news of Jesus Christ

with other students when a few years ago I would never have dreamt of doing this. Please pray for this evangelism as new events are planned to reach out to the new first-year university students in September.

It's only now, after becoming a Christian, that I clearly see that the God of the Bible-stories, who was shared with me since I was little, is the true and living God today. The God who created the entire world in only six days, and sent his Son from Heaven to Earth to be born in a stable, purposed and desired to have a relationship with me, a poor sinner, who had spent so many years of my life not wanting God's rule over me.

After viewing the Christian life for so long as restrictive and limiting, I can now see that turning away from sin, and accepting Christ's sacrifice on the cross as redemption for my sin, is the only way to have true and everlasting life. "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). As much as I love my friends, my university course, and my job, none of these things are a firm foundation on which to build my life.

1 Corinthians 3:11 - *"For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."*

INSTALLATION SERVICE OF JOHN P. THACKWAY AS THE MINISTER OF EMMANUEL CHURCH

Where do we begin? 'In the beginning God...' He is, was, and always will be the First Cause. God's providence is a mystery, His wisdom is very deep, and His ways are not our ways and are past finding out.

So began the statement from our elders, Paul Thick and Steve Storey, at the Installation Service for our new minister, Pastor John Thackway, on Saturday 18 June.

This was the culmination of months of prayerfully being led by the Lord, waiting upon Him, and finally Pastor and people coming together on this most memorable occasion.

With a spirit of solemn and yet joyous thanksgiving, we assembled, all of us at Salisbury so pleased to see many dear friends from other churches joining us, including some from Holywell. We received apologies from others regretfully not able to be with us. If everyone who wanted to come *had* come, we believe we would have had a full church.

Pastor Neil Pfeiffer of Swansea very ably led the service. It seemed proper, Pastor Thackway moving from North Wales to here, that Wales should be represented at the service. Pastor Aaron Lewis, our beloved neighbour at Ibsley, read the Scriptures (Ephesians 4:1-16) and prayed. Then the first praise was Psalm 68:7-11, fittingly including the verses:

O God, thou to thine heritage
didst send a plenteous rain,
Whereby thou, when it weary was,
didst it refresh again.

Thy congregation then did make
their habitation there:
Of thine own goodness for the poor,
O God, thou didst prepare.

Following the Statement from the Elders concerning the way the church at Salisbury was led to call John Thackway, a Statement was then made by Mr. Thackway himself concerning the Lord's dealings with him after receiving that call. It was expressed in these terms:

“the Lord gave us an overwhelming sense of His call to come here. Through God's Word, and His concurring Providences, slowly the conviction was wrought in us that this was *the irresistible call of God.*”

Mr. Thackway reminded us that he and Margaret were preparing to come last October, but that this was postponed on account of Margaret needing treatment again for cancer - treatment involving chemotherapy and surgery. However, two verses of Scripture reassured them: “But I trusted in thee, O LORD: I said, Thou art my God. My times are in thy hand”; and “he led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation” (Psalm 31:15; 107:7) – the right *time* and the right *way*. And so it came about - just as the Lord would have it.

The Act of Installation followed, led by Pastor Watts, in which certain Formal Questions were put to Pastor Thackway concerning his taking up the office of Minister at Salisbury. These were satisfactorily answered, as Mr. Thackway solemnly affirmed his “belief in the Scriptures as the inspired and inerrant Word of God and as the only infallible authority for faith and practice”; declared his wholehearted agreement with the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith; approved reformed church government by Teaching and Ruling Elders; promised uncompromising adherence to purity of worship as required by the Regulative Principle, which teaches that “the acceptable way of worshipping God in instituted by Himself, and limited by His revealed will, so that nothing may be introduced into worship without positive scriptural warrant”; and he then engaged faithfully to discharge his Ministerial duties, “leading the Lord’s people in the ways of God’s holy ordinances, teaching and governing them according to the Scriptures, setting before all a godly and holy example.” These things he solemnly vowed to perform, “trusting in God’s enabling grace.”

The Members of the Church, on their part, formally received Mr Thackway as the church’s Minister, promising “to receive the Word of Truth from His lips with meekness” and “to submit to him in the exercise of scriptural discipline, giving to him all due honour, obedience and encouragement in the Lord.”

Then Pastor Watts – on behalf of the church - extended to Mr. Thackway “the right hand of fellowship”, formally declaring him the new Minister of Emmanuel Church.

Following prayer, greetings were read from a number of friends unable to attend the service. We then rose to sing Psalm 40:5-10, with words, fulfilled by the Lord Jesus Christ, whom all true Ministers should seek to emulate and follow:

Within the congregation great
I righteousness did preach:
Lo, thou dost know, O Lord, that I
refrained not my speech.

I never did within my heart
conceal thy righteousness;
I thy salvation have declar’d,
And shown thy faithfulness.

Following the singing of this psalm, Pastor Watts preached, but before announcing his text, he remarked that this was the third time he had been asked to preach at an Installation Service for his good friend, John Thackway. He had preached at one such service at Devizes in 1976; at another in Holywell in 1991; and now in Salisbury in 2022 – “we maintain a consistency!”

Pastor Watts announced his text, which was 2 Corinthians 12:14,15: “*Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you: for I seek not yours, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children. And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved.*”

He said it was usual on these occasions to give a Charge to the Minister, and then a Charge to the Church. He proceeded to do this, the Charge to the Minister being found in verses 14 and 15a and the Charge to the Church being found in verse 15b. He developed these two main points, drawing attention to the Pastor’s love for his Church, and the Church’s love for their Pastor.

The Charge to the Minister: Like Paul, the Minister should desire to be in the company of his people, faithfully and regularly leading them in worship, offering them warm hospitality, speaking kindly to those in need of comfort, sharing their problems and heartaches, visiting them whenever possible, contacting them with real and strong encouragement.

He noted and emphasised the words: “I seek not yours, but you”, saying that a true Minister is present with them “*not to take*” but “*to give*”, showing the loving care of a “parent” for his “children”, enjoying a close relationship with them, esteeming them as most precious, providing for their every need, protecting them from harm and evil, and rejoicing over their spiritual growth and development.

Ministers should “spend and be spent” for their people: “spending” time, effort, strength, patience and even hardship to look after those committed to their care; and this sometimes to the point that they are “spent”, even to the point of weariness and to exhaustion. This must be the measure of their love for the Lord’s people in their churches.

The Charge to the Church: This is to be found in the words, “the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved.” It shouldn’t have been like this:

hence, there is an exhortation concealed in these words, to return or to requite a Minister's love, with love from all the members of the Church.

Love for their Minister should be shown in respect, faithful attendance at their public ministry, prayer for them in their constant service, submission to their spiritual leadership, sympathy when they are under pressure, practical help when they are in need of it, sparing them grief and heartache by avoiding everything tending to division, visiting them should they themselves need comfort, and befriending them if and when they appear to stand alone. Members are to esteem them highly "*in love*".

Paul should have been able to write: "the more abundantly I love you, the *more* I be loved".

Sadly, he couldn't write that, because some at Corinth had become critical of him; so, in writing as he did, he was expressing his desire that the church would fulfil its God-given responsibility and "love" him with a true, fervent, and constant love.

It was a moving and inspiring message, and one that had application not only in Salisbury, but in places all over the country. May the Lord enable us all to take heed to his words and respond positively to them among ourselves here in Salisbury, and in each and every church represented by us!

The service concluded with the singing of Psalm 72:15-19, containing the wonderful words concerning our great Redeemer:

His name for ever shall endure;
last like the sun it shall:
Men shall be blessed in him, and blessed
all nations shall him call.

And blessed be his glorious name
To all eternity:
The whole earth let his glory fill.
Amen, so let it be.

After this praise, our new Pastor solemnly pronounced the Apostolic Benediction.

Later, the congregation was treated to a delicious tea upstairs in the Hall and in the rooms downstairs. It was a delight to be together as like-minded believers, sharing the good things of God and rejoicing together that the Lord has brought Pastor and people together.

We pray that He who has done this will richly bless us in the coming days, to His eternal praise and glory.

GOOD NEWS FROM THE TRINITARIAN BIBLE SOCIETY

I can confirm that, as of this morning, the stock-level of Platinum Jubilee Bibles on our system is zero. There are still some copies in the warehouse, but they are allocated to orders which have been placed but not yet fulfilled. This is a cause of great rejoicing: remarkably, all 40,000 Bibles have been used within a fairly short period of time, yet they were available right up to the Platinum Jubilee celebrations and then were used up just a few days afterwards. May the Lord greatly bless the distribution of His Word. We have ordered an additional quantity of Jubilee Bibles (10,000), and these are expected in October.

Philip Blows

THE CHURCH COVENANT

Malcolm H. Watts

The Bible's great theme is God's covenant. One of the very first things we notice about the Bible is its division into two parts: the Old Testament and the New Testament. The word translated "testament" generally means "covenant" and it would have been better if that word had been chosen because the Bible is essentially the revelation of the covenant.

What is this covenant? It is the gracious "arrangement" made within the Godhead from all eternity concerning the salvation of sinners (Gal 3:17; Eph. 3:11; Heb. 13:20). God has promised, upon the basis of His Son's redeeming work, friendship, and everlasting life (2 Tim. 1:9; Titus 1:2). The Gospel makes this known and reveals that by faith, sinners can be united to Christ and

involved in the covenant which to them becomes simply a promise of absolute grace: “Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live: and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David (i.e. the mercies promised to David)” (Isa. 55:3; cf. 2 Cor. 1:20; Eph. 3:6).

A sinner must be personally incorporated into this covenant to be saved. “He hath made with me”, says David, “an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire” (2 Sam. 23:5).

When, however, a group of professing believers unitedly enters that covenant, it becomes a Church, with all the privileges of worship and the ordinances. As God once said to the people of Israel, “If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant (i.e. receive Me as your God and assume your covenant responsibilities), then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation” (Exod. 19:5,6). Under this covenant, the natural seed of Abraham bore the face of the Church.

Biblically understood, the church is a company of people called into covenant and communion with God. Our spiritual forefathers saw that clearly. John Robinson, Pastor of the Pilgrim Fathers, wrote: “This we hold and affirm, that a company, consisting though but of two or three, separated from the world, whether unchristian, or antichristian, and gathered into the name of Christ by a covenant made to walk in all the ways of God known unto them, is a church...”¹

This was the concept of the church generally held among the early Puritan and Separatist Independents.

As early as 1582, Robert Browne wrote that “the church planted or gathered is a company or number of Christians or believers, which, by a willing covenant made with their God, are under the government of God and Christ, and keep His laws in one holy communion.”² His church at Norwich was formally constituted by covenant. We have Browne’s own account of it (and with the

¹ A Justification of Separation from the Church of England, in *The Works of John Robinson* (London: John Snow, 35 Paternoster Row, 1851), vol 2, p.132

² *A Book which sheweth the Life and Manners of all True Christians*, in *The Writings of Robert Harrison and Robert Browne*, edited by Albert Peel, Litt.D and Leland H. Carlson, Ph.D. (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., published for the Sir Alley Stewart Trust, 1953), p.253

original spellings!): “A couenant was made & ther mutual cosent vvas geueen to hould together. There vvere certaine chief pointes proued vnto them by the scriptures, all vvhich being particularlie rehersed vnto them vvith exhortation, thei agreed upon them, & pronouced their agrement to ech thing particularlie, saing; to this vve geue our consent. First, therefore, thei gaue their consent, to joine them selues to the Lord, in one covenant & fellowveship together, & to keep & seek agrement vnder his lavves & gouernment: and therefore did vtterlie flee & auoide such like disorders and vvickednes, as vvas mencioned before.”³

Another sixteenth-century puritan church about which we have information is the one founded by Henry Barrow and John Greenwood in Islington, London, in 1588. One member, called Daniell Bucke, “being asked what vowe or promise he had made when he came first to their socyetye, he aunswereth and saith that he made this protestacion, That he wold walke with the rest of that congregacion soe longe as they did walke in the waye of the lord and as ffarr as might be warraunted by the word of god.”⁴ Another, Quinton Smyth, described how on joining the church “he did covenaut with ther Congregacion to walke with them in the lawes of god, soe longe as ther doinges should be approved by the word of god, and so longe would forsake all other assemblies.”⁵

According to John Bradford, the many godly persons living around Gainsborough and Scrooby who sought membership in Robinson’s church, “joyned themselves (by a covenant of the Lord) into a church estate, in ye fellowship of ye gospel, to walke in all his wayes, made known, or to be made known unto them, according to their best endeavours, whatsoever it should cost them, the Lord assisting them.”⁶

Henry Jacob came together at Southwark to establish a gospel church. Here is the eyewitness account of what took place in 1616: “Those who minded this present Union & so joyning together joyned both hands wth other Brother and

³ *A True and Short Declaration*, in *The Writings of Robert Harrison and Robert Brown*, p. 422

⁴ Champlin Burrage, *The Early English Dissenters in the Light of Recent Research, 1550-1641* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1912), vol 2, p. 35. *The Writings of John Greenwood and Henry Barrow, 1591-1593*, edited by Leland H. Carlson Ph. D, LI.D. (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd, Published for The Sir Halley Stewart Trust , 1970

⁵ Burrage, vol. 2, p 260. *Greenwood and Barrow*, p. 366

⁶ *Bradford's History "of Plymouth Plantation" from the Original Manuscript* (Boston: Wright & Potter Printing Co, 1901), p.13

stood in a Ringwise: their intent being declared, H. Jacob and each of the Rest made some confession of Profession of the Faith & Repentance, some ware longer some ware briefer, Then they Covenanted together to walk in all Gods Ways as he had revealed or should make known to them.”⁷

The records show that there were churches formed by covenant at Bristol, Woodbridge, Bray, Mattishall, Canterbury, Axminster, Bury St Edmunds, Wattisfield, Bassingbourne, Woodall, Cockermouth, Bideford, Wrentham, Rotterdam, and in many other places. The church covenant idea is no novelty but something deeply embedded in the earliest history of independent evangelical churches. It was considered “the sole formal cause” of “a true gospel church”.

In conclusion, but very briefly, I will mention some of the advantages of having such a covenant:

- a) It is a beautiful way for the church as a whole to express its love to the Lord;
- b) It impresses upon all their spiritual responsibilities as well as the seriousness of their departures from God;
- c) It has the effect of binding the church together in real and lasting unity;
- d) It can move the Lord to manifest Himself in a new way, answering this expression of devotion;
- e) It can be solemnly renewed whenever the church feels in a low spiritual state or whenever it has reason to believe it has given offence to the Lord; (please read prayerfully: Josh. 24:14-25; 2 Chron.15:8-15; 23:16-21; 29:1-11; 34:29-55; Ezra 10:3-5,12,19; Neh. 10:29).

As to the way of entering into this covenant with other believers, when, in King Josiah’s day, the King and his people renewed the covenant, we read that “the King stood by a pillar, and made a covenant before the Lord...And all the people stood to the covenant” (2 Kgs. 23:3). It was thus that they showed their resolve and purpose of heart, pledging themselves unitedly to covenant with God.

In the records of a church gathered together in Wykecroft, Axminster, there is mention of another way of subscribing to the covenant:

⁷ *Selected Documents from the Gould Manuscript*, in Burrage , vol. 2, p. 294

“The manner of this church’s covenanting, and in all after renewals of covenant, was observed to be on solemn days of humiliation and prayer. And after the reading the covenant deliberately and distinctly in the audience of the congregation, each and every individual member subscribed, or by their voluntary consent had their names subscribed to the covenant; or, which was most usually practised, solemnly lifted up their right hand to heaven in testification of their real assenting to this covenant, and then subscribed with the hand.” (*The Axminster Ecclesiastica, 1660-1698*, edited by K.W.H. Howard, Gospel Tidings Publications, 1976) p.31.

UNACCOMPANIED PSALM-SINGING IN PUBLIC WORSHIP: THE VIEWS OF JOHN CALVIN

Preface to 'The Form of Ecclesiastical Prayers and Songs' (1542)

“What Augustine says is true, that no-one can sing things worthy of God unless he has received them from himself. Therefore, after we have sought on every side, searching here and there, we shall find no songs better or more suitable for our purpose than the songs of David, dictated to him and made for him by the Holy Spirit. But singing them ourselves we feel as certain that God puts the words into our mouths as if he himself were singing within us to exalt his glory.”

A Preface to a Commentary on the Psalms (1557)

"The varied and resplendent riches which are contained in this treasury it is no easy matter to express in words; so much so, that I well know that whatever I shall be able to say will be far from approaching the excellence of the subject.

"I have been accustomed to call this book, I think not inappropriately, "An Anatomy of all the Parts of the Soul"; for there is not an emotion of which anyone can be conscious that is not here represented as in a mirror.

"As calling upon God is one of the principal means of securing our safety, and as a better and more unerring rule for guiding us in this exercise cannot be found elsewhere but In The Psalms, it follows, that in proportion to the proficiency which a man shall have attained in understanding them, will be his knowledge of the most important part of celestial doctrine.

"Besides, there is also here prescribed to us an infallible rule for directing us with respect to the right manner of offering to God the sacrifice of praise, which he declares to be most precious in his sight, and of the sweetest odour.

"There is no other book in which we are more perfectly taught the right manner of praising God, or in which we are more perfectly stirred up to the performance of this religious exercise."

Homily on 1 Samuel 18:1-9

"In Popery there was a ridiculous and unsuitable imitation (of the Jews). While they adorned their Temples and valued themselves as having made the worship of God more splendid and inviting, they employed organs, and many other such ludicrous things, by which the Word and worship of God are exceedingly profaned, the people being much more attached to those rites than to the understanding of the divine Word....What...was in use under the law is by no means entitled to our practice under the gospel; and these things being not only superfluous, but useless, are to be abstained from, because pure and simple modulation is sufficient for the praise of God, if it is sung with the heart and with the mouth. Instrumental music, we therefore maintain, was only tolerated on account of the times and the people, because they were boys, as the sacred Scripture speaketh, whose condition required these puerile rudiments. But in gospel times we must not have recourse to those unless we wish to destroy the evangelical perfection, and to obscure the meridian light we enjoy in Christ our Lord."

Commentary on Psalm 71:22

"To sing the praises of God upon the harp and psaltery, unquestionably formed a part of the training of the law and of the service of God under that dispensation of *shadows and figures*, but they are not now to be used in public thanksgiving. We are not indeed forbidden to use, in private, musical instruments, but they are banished out of the churches by the plain command of the Holy Spirit, when Paul, in 1 Corinthians 14:13, lays it down as an invariable rule, that we must praise God and pray to him only in a known tongue."

Commentary on Psalm 81:2,3

He says again: "With respect to the *tabret, harp, and psaltery*, we have formerly observed, and will find it necessary afterwards to repeat the same remark, that

the Levites, under the law, were justified in making use of instrumental music in the worship of God; it having been his will to train his people, while they were yet tender and like children, by such rudiments until the coming of Christ. But now, when the clear light of the gospel has dissipated the *shadows* of the law and taught us that God is to be served in a simpler form, it would be to act a foolish and mistaken part to imitate that which the prophet enjoined only upon those of his own time."

Commentary on Psalm 92:4

"We are to remember that the worship of God was never understood to consist in such outward services, which were only necessary to help forward a people as yet weak and rude in knowledge in the spiritual worship of God. A difference is to be observed in this respect between his people under the Old and under the New Testament; for now that Christ has appeared, and the church has reached full age, it were only to bury the light of the gospel should we introduce the *shadows* of a departed dispensation. From this it appears that the Papists, as I shall have occasion to show elsewhere, in employing instrumental music cannot be said so much to imitate the practice of God's ancient people as to ape it in a senseless and absurd manner, exhibiting a silly delight in that worship of the Old Testament which was *figurative* and terminated with the gospel."

OLIVER CROMWELL

Malcolm H. Watts

Part 2

3. Member of Parliament

King James I died in 1625. This King, called 'the wisest fool in Europe' by the French Duke of Sully, had tried to marry his son, Charles, to the daughter of the King of Spain ("the Chosen Throne of Popery") in 1623, but James failed to bring this about. Many thought - and hoped - that Charles, his son, would prove to be a better King, but this was not to be; and just months after ascending the throne, on 1st May, 1625, he married Henrietta Maria, the Roman Catholic daughter of Henry IV, King of France. Things did not bode well.

In the same year (1625), Charles called his *First* Parliament, requesting an enormous sum to enable him to carry on a war with Spain; but when Parliament offered only £140,000, the King immediately dissolved it, determining to raise funds by forced loans and illegal taxes. In 1626, the *Second* Parliament was called, but this refused to give him more money until he sought good and right counsel and brought to trial the Duke of Buckingham, who had given disastrous advice on foreign policy. This being totally unacceptable to the King, he immediately dissolved it again. Then, in 1628, the *Third* Parliament was called, this time to help pay for a war with France. The King was granted funding but this was made dependent upon certain conditions. The 'Petition of Right' (1628) was drawn up, declaring arbitrary government, using imprisonment and taxation, to be unlawful. The King reluctantly signed this and received about £400,000. But he did not honour his commitment and continued to levy his illegal taxes, without Parliament's consent.

On 17th March, 1628, Cromwell had been chosen to represent Huntingdon in Parliament (Charles I's Third Parliament). The following year (1629), on 11th February, he rose to speak in the House of Commons. What was the thrust of Cromwell's first speech? Well, Romanism was on the ascendancy, and he said that 'he had heard by relation from one Dr. Beard (his old schoolmaster) that Dr. Alabaster had preached flat Popery at Paul's Cross (the north-east corner of St Paul's); and that the Bishop of Winchester (Dr. Neale), an Arminian, unsound in his doctrine, had commanded Dr. Alabaster as his Diocesan, that he should preach nothing to the contrary. Another minister, Roger Mainwaring, justly censured in the House for his unsound sermons, was by the same Bishop's means preferred to a rich living.' Asked Oliver, 'If these are the steps to Church preferment, what are we to expect?' These things are recorded in the Parliamentary History, and in the Commons' Journals of the same day, there is this notice 'Upon question, Ordered, That Dr. Beard of Huntingdon be written to by Mr. Speaker, to come up and testify against the Bishop; the order for Dr. Beard to be delivered to Mr. Cromwell.'⁸ Parliament (with Cromwell present) had protested against the King's arbitrary and unpopular taxes; and when, in this Parliament's *Second Session* (beginning 20 January, 1629), a motion was passed that if anyone levied taxes without the consent of Parliament, he was to be regarded as an enemy of the people, this led to an inevitable and serious breach between King and Parliament. When the King heard of what had been said and done, he acted as before and dissolved

⁸ Thomas Carlyle's *Introduction to the Letters*, vol. 1, pp.57,58

Parliament; but this time he went further, imprisoning nine of its members and imposing heavy fines upon three of them, including John Hampden, Cromwell's cousin, and a member of Parliament for Buckinghamshire.

England was without a Parliament for the next 11 years.

Oliver returned to Huntingdon, but the nation's struggle continued. In 1631, Cromwell sold his land in Huntingdon and moved to St. Ives (Cambridgeshire), where five of his children were born. In St. Ives he came under the ministry of Dr. Wells 'a man of goodness and industry, and ability to do good every way, not short of any I know in England... Since his coming, the Lord hath by him wrought many good things among us.'⁹

Meanwhile, Charles refused any restraint from Parliament and continued with his policy of arbitrary power. Tensions between King and Parliament greatly increased.

Sir Thomas Wentworth (who later became the Earl of Strafford) was recognized as the King's chief adviser, and was determined to make Charles an absolute monarch – "an absolute King is not nearly so bad as an absolute Parliament." William Laud, the King's other chief adviser, but in Church Matters, was appointed, in 1633, Archbishop of Canterbury. He was leader of the High Church Party and, under his influence, the Lord's table was replaced by an altar, crucifixes, pictures, and tapers were restored, and gaudy vestments introduced for priests.

The Puritans strongly objected to these unscriptural innovations, and they were severely and cruelly persecuted. Dr. Leighton, for example, was pilloried and whipped. He lost his ears, his nose was slit, and his cheeks were branded with SS ('Sower of Sedition'). Prynne suffered similarly, as did Dr. Bastwick.

On 23rd July, 1637, when the attempt was made to impose a Prayer Book on the Scottish Kirk, an old woman, named Jenny Geddes who was in the congregation at St. Giles, Edinburgh, angrily cried out, "Villain, dost thou say the mass at my lug (i.e. ear)?" and then seizing the stool on which she had been sitting, she threw it at the Dean's head. Instantly a riot broke out and the

⁹ A letter to Mr. Storie, a friend, dated 11th January, 1635, and included in *Letters*, vol. 1, p.80

Dean had to flee the place. After this, the Scots, determined to preserve their Protestant Faith, rose up in resistance to the King.

By this time, Cromwell had sold up again and moved to Ely (1636), where he inherited land belonging to his uncle. It was about this time that the “draining the Fenns” took place and Cromwell did what he could to help forward this work, standing up for the rights of commoners. In process of time, he became known in those parts as ‘King’ or ‘Lord of the Fenns’, apparently much to the annoyance of King Charles I.

When, in 1640, Charles summoned his *Fourth* Parliament (sitting for scarcely three weeks, it was called “the Short Parliament”), Cromwell went from Ely to London in order to represent Cambridge.

This Fourth Parliament was thought necessary largely because of problems in Ireland and Scotland. The Irish Roman Catholics were agitating for great freedom of religion, and the Protestant Scots had signed, in 1638, a *National Covenant* in defence of the reformed Kirk. At the Glasgow Assembly, the Scots had asserted the Church’s God-given right to settle its own affairs, independently of the King, and Episcopacy had been abolished in order to restore Presbyterianism. Charles found all this quite intolerable. “So long as the Covenant is in force”, he said, “I have no more power in Scotland than a Duke of Venice, which I will rather die than suffer.” In his anger, the King led an army into Scotland to suppress the uprising, but when he saw the superior strength of the Scottish army, he decided that it was wisdom’s way to make peace, and so the Treaty of Berwick was signed on 24th June, 1639. However, once again, Charles had no intention of keeping his word; and so, returning to London, he made preparations for the invasion of Scotland.

The King stood in need of a great deal of money. When Parliament met, the Lord Keeper, in the King’s name, asked for a generous supply of funds, in addition to those monies being raised, without parliamentary approval, through ‘tonnage’ and ‘poundage.’ The redoubtable Pym, in a two-hour speech, set before the House the grievance of the nation and demanded that nothing should be agreed “till the liberties of the House and kingdom are cleared.” Within three weeks, the King dissolved the Parliament.

It must be said that the King’s advisers, Sir Thomas Wentworth and Archbishop Laud, did not approve of the dissolution of Parliament, and when, under

extreme provocation, 25,000 Scots crossed the Tweed, Charles was forced to summon his *Fifth* Parliament - the so-called "Long Parliament", which first sat on 3rd November, 1640 and was not dissolved until 20 years later. However, it did not sit as a whole throughout this period, some of its members leaving at the outbreak of the Civil War; others were removed or purged, and still others left in the months leading to the execution of the King. This "Rump Parliament" was dissolved in 1653 (although it was recalled in 1660 at the time leading up to the Restoration of Charles II).

The members of this Parliament were determined men. They had made up their minds to have the country ruled by the King but *for* the people. Early on, this Parliament passed a law to the effect that it could not be dissolved or dismissed without its own consent. The King had no real option open to him but to agree to this. Then, the Parliament resolved to call the King's evil counsellors to account, particularly the Earl of Strafford, who had advised the King to use an Irish (Roman Catholic) army to subdue England and Scotland, and Archbishop Laud, who had moved the King to establish Roman ceremonies and practices in the Church to the undoing of the work of the English Reformation. As a consequence of Parliament's ruling, Strafford was executed, and Laud was imprisoned in the Tower, and finally executed in 1645.

On 1st November, 1641, news came of a rebellion in Ireland. Strafford's rule there had been harsh and now the Irish (the Celtic population) had turned savagely on the English and Scottish colonists. Parliament presented *The Grand Remonstrance*. This paper, prepared by John Pym, had Cromwell's full support. It set forth all the illegal acts of the King and his Ministers, from the beginning of his ignoble reign to that particular time. On 4th January 1642, Charles (almost predictably) with a body of troops (300-400 men), came to the House of Commons. An attempt was made to arrest five prominent Members of Parliament: Pym, Hampden, Haselrig, Hollis, and Strode, but warned beforehand, these men had already escaped. When the Speaker was asked where they were, he replied: "May it please your Majesty, I have neither eyes to see nor tongue to speak in this place, but as this House is pleased to direct me." After looking around for them, Charles said: 'I see the birds are flown.' Threatening to take his own course to find them, the members of the House angrily shouted, 'Privilege! Privilege!' The King withdrew, but before long the streets of London were filled with people crying out against the King. His audacious challenge to Parliament marked the beginning of the Civil War.

The Civil War began in 1642. What exactly were the causes of the English Civil War?

1. A long-term cause was the status of the monarchy which had begun to decline under James I. On account of matters financial (custom duties) and religious (the proposed marriage of Charles to a Spanish Princess), James had greatly damaged his relationship with Parliament.

2. Like his father, Charles was always short of money. After the Duke of Buckingham became his advisor, Charles found himself at war with Spain. This was largely due to the failed marriage proposal with Donna Maria (Philip IV's sister) and the Spaniards' unwillingness to do anything to restore Frederick to the Palatinate (S.W. Germany). Parliament allowed the King only £140,000 - even though he had asked for £300,000. Denied in his Second Parliament, Charles began, in 1626, ordering persons with property to pay him money as formal loans. Later, in 1630, he resorted to selling certain titles and to using the Court of the Star Chamber to fine people. And, in 1634, he proceeded to impose 'ship money' - the taxing of towns and villages with ports. Greatly annoyed because Parliament would not accede to his demands for money, the King three times dissolved Parliament, in 1625, 1626, and 1628) - and the King actually reigned for 11 years without a Parliament at all. This caused great offence, not only in Parliament but also in the country at large.

3. Religiously, Arminianism (as opposed to Calvinism) was furthered by the Crown. After George Abbot's death (1633), William Laud was promoted to Canterbury and, with Richard Neile already at York, Arminian control of the Church was practically complete. Laud, a High Churchman, sought, in the King's name, to enforce Uniformity upon the Church, urging 'the divine right of episcopacy' (government by Bishops), the efficacy of the sacraments (the sacraments bestowing spiritual blessing by a power in themselves as mere outward acts), the sign of the cross, the use of church vestments, the altar at the east end, the enforced use of the Prayer Book (which so enraged the Scots in 1637). Arminianism and High Churchism (so akin to Romanism) greatly increased the already growing dissatisfaction, so that events moved even closer to a national crisis.

4. Charles' personality was also a major factor. He was a most arrogant man, influenced by unworthy counsellors and liable to act impulsively and, at times, even petulantly.

5. James I had believed in 'The Divine Right of Kings'. Charles I also believed in this dogma, that Kings were appointed by God, therefore they had a Divine ...hereditary right, which meant that they could demand absolute and uncomplaining submission from their subjects. Despotism! 'These rulers claimed to rule by 'divine right', being accountable to God alone. They claimed to be autonomous and independent of external influence in the sphere of legislation. They held their power to be 'entire' and not limited or restrained. Last but not least, they held that the clergy were as much an integral part of the kingdom as the laity and that they had the right to regulate Church and clergy in the interests of policy and government.'¹⁰

6. The King ruled for 11 years without a Parliament (1629-1640). His reason for doing so was to enable him to levy a tax, which in turn enabled him to fulfil his purposes. This showed contempt for an honoured and respected institution. Furthermore, these years of unparliamentary government had been both tyrannical and cruel. Remember Leighton who, for writing a Presbyterian book, *Zion's Plea Against Prelacy*, was whipped, pilloried, mutilated, branded, and imprisoned for ten long years.

7. The King's foolish and provocative act (performed on the advice of the Queen) of forcing an entrance into the Commons to arrest five Members of Parliament who had dared to criticize him (4th January 1642), was reckoned to be a grievous offence if not a terrible crime. 'Charles' action played into the hands of his enemies; the attack on Parliament and its elected members incited the people of London...It had been a disastrous move...'¹¹ Indeed, this royal blunder was the immediate cause of all the miseries which befell the King and the Kingdom.

To be continued

¹⁰ John Guy in *The Oxford Illustrated History of Tudor & Stuart Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 219,220

¹¹ Taylor Downing and Maggie Millman, *Civil War* (London: Collins & Brown, 1991), p.49

EPILOGUE

The Jigsaw Puzzle

Apparently new UK Jigsaw Puzzle sales hit £100 million during 2020. Sales were up 38% on the previous year, and that's without taking into account second-hand Jigsaws, which are also enjoying increased sales in charity shops, even though second-hand puzzles carry the risk of lost or missing pieces, which must be frustrating as you come to the end of patiently piecing together your 1000-piece puzzle. Reports say that the increased popularity in sales is mainly due to COVID lockdown. A quick Google search gives useful tips for the first-time puzzler: turn all pieces picture-side up, sort edges and corners, pick out clear areas - wording, colour or textures; but, of course, ultimately you have the picture on the cover of the box that shows you the finished job and how it is going to look at the end even before you start.

Could the Christian life be likened to a Jigsaw Puzzle? Well, Yes and No. To the Christian, life can be like the box has been upended on the table with many pieces upside down; and trying to find the straight bits and the corners proves to be hard-going, and picking out the clear areas is nigh on impossible. What about those never to be found missing pieces? We sometimes wish for just a glimpse of the finished picture.

What about Abraham's puzzle? If anyone had lots of missing pieces and couldn't see the picture on the box it was him, along with the many others mentioned in Hebrews 11. Like Abraham, we must view our own life-puzzle with the eye of faith; and we have many New Testament advantages over Abraham, enabling us to see, in God's Word, wonderful views of the finished picture.

Although it's impossible for us to see the final finished picture of our completed life-puzzle, our heavenly Father skilfully had that finished and completed before time began. Yet we can say with the apostle Paul, "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." All puzzles will be completed on entrance to our heavenly home; but then, wonderfully, they will not be puzzles to us ever again.

Steve Storey