FOCUS

THAT THE PURPOSE OF GOD ACCORDING TO ELECTION MIGHT STAND

APRIL 2016 VOL. 20 NO. 01
May the glorious majesty and unparalleled excellence of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ ever be a source of praise, gratitude and inspiration to His redeemed people.

Whatever befalls the church of Jesus Christ in this world, whatever afflicts the individual members of that privileged body, our God is still upon His throne. He has loved His people and graciously chosen them out of a dying race to show His grace and mercy upon them. We are His workmanship, He will never let us go.

He has fulfilled every requirement, satisfied every demand, provided every needed blessing and having ascended on high is seated as Triumphant Victor.

Clouds may form over the heads of His people and darkness seem to hide the brightness of His view from our eyes but our coldness will never diminish the ardour of His love, nor our weariness the lively workings of His Holy Spirit.

‘There is a path which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture’s eye hath not seen.’ God alone knows the road His people will be caused to walk to reach their heavenly home. But rest assured, believing soul, He has walked that way before us and will guide us every step. Lean upon Him. He will carry you through.

New Focus has reached its twentieth anniversary of publication and we are grateful to all those who have helped maintain its sovereign grace ministry over the years. The magazine was begun to provide readers with a clear statement of gospel truth by selecting material from historical writers and modern contributors who both love the Lord Jesus Christ and understand the nature of the Triune God’s free grace and purpose in the salvation of His elect people.

We believe we have succeeded in reminding readers of God’s providential care in supplying a long line of faithful gospel preachers and ministers for His church. We also hope we have been able in some small degree to be a comfort to those who mourn in Zion by setting forth the continuing value of gospel truth to our own generation. Our Lord will never leave Himself without a witness and we shall continue to employ New Focus magazine to uphold the doctrine of free and sovereign grace as long as we are enabled to do so.
Mary did not understand what was going on around her Son, but she stored the events in her heart as a treasure. She did not grasp everything, yet she saw the great value of the events. She hid them away as one does a treasured possession and saw to it their memory was not taken from her.

Then, at a proper time, God brought those treasured memories together with their meaning and they became glorious experiences of the grace of God. Imagine how many of these treasured memories were brought together in understanding when she saw her resurrected Son, now her Lord and Saviour! “That’s what the angels’ good news was about! That’s what Jesus meant, when He said, ‘I must be about the business of My Father’s household!’”

We are likewise confronted with things we do not presently understand. In God’s word and His works of providence we are often baffled. Should our lack of understanding move us to disregard what has been said or what has happened? No! Let us treasure these things in our heart, storing them away as the valuable things they are. At the right time, God will draw them forth and combine word with experience and reveal to us greater things than we have known thus far.

We shall say in our hearts, “Oh, that’s what the Scripture meant!” and, “I see now why God put me through that hour.”

The day will come when all those things stored in our heart as great treasure shall find their perfect explanation in the presence of the glorified Christ! Then we shall say, “Oh my, what glorious things were told to me and what wondrous things happened around me but I could not see nor hear the glory and wonder till now. My Lord Jesus, has done all things so very well!”

Until, then, let us content ourselves to take these things which are too wonderful for us and so high we cannot attain unto them, and treasure them in our hearts.

Joseph Terrell
Every text in Romans chapter eight is a text bursting with meaning. It seems to be an inexhaustible mine overflowing with glorious gospel truth. Every word seems to echo “Grace!” “Grace!” “Grace!” Everything directs our thoughts to the grace of God and shows forth the glory of God. Starting at verse one, Paul sets before us a golden ladder. Each step seems to ascend higher and higher. From justification, he rises to regeneration. From regeneration, he rises to sanctification. From sanctification, he rises to glorification. In glorification, he declares God’s elect to be “heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ!” To all who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ there is the promise of an inheritance that is incorruptible, eternal, undefiled, and “fadeth not away.” What can this mean? What is it to be an heir of God?

Without question, this inheritance is the only inheritance worth having. Any other inheritance is unsatisfying and disappointing. The riches of this world, for which men labour so feverishly, are sure to bring with them many cares. They can never cure an aching heart, ease a troubled conscience, or relieve the burdens of a guilty soul. The riches of this world cannot prevent sickness, bereavement, separations, and death. They cannot even secure temporary happiness or domestic tranquillity; but there shall never be any disappointment among the heirs of God in heaven.

The inheritance spoken of here is the only inheritance that can be kept forever. All others must be left at the hour of death, if they have not vanished before. Howard Hughes carried no more with him to the grave than Lazarus. That is not the case with the heirs of God. Our inheritance in Christ is eternal (Hebrews 9:15).

The inheritance awaiting God’s saints in glory is the only inheritance there is which is within the reach of all who desire it. Most people in this world will never be able to obtain great wealth or attain greatness, no matter how hard they strive for them. Yet glory, honour, and eternal life are set before sinners in the gospel and freely given to all who accept them on God’s terms. “Whosoever will” may be an “heir of God and joint-heir with Jesus Christ!” All who trust

“And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.”

(Romans 8:17)
Christ are the children of God; and all who are the children of God are “heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ.”

If Children, Heirs
All who are the children of God are the heirs of God. “If children, then heirs.” If we are the children of God, then we are the heirs of God. If we are not God’s children, then we are not God’s heirs. Shocking as it is for many to be informed of it, the fact is, not all people are the children of God. We are all God’s creatures; but we are not all God’s children. This heirship does not come as the result of natural creation or family descent. The Holy Spirit does not say, “If creatures, then heirs,” or “If children of Abraham, then heirs.” Grace does not run in bloodlines. Grace is the free gift of God (John 1:12, 13; Romans 9:7-13). Neither human merit nor religious rituals are the basis of heirship (Galatians 4:30; Romans 4:9-12). It is not written, “If servants, then heirs,” or “If circumcised or baptized, then heirs.”

The Holy Spirit tells us plainly that the one condition of heirship with Christ is this “If children, then heirs.” Perhaps you ask yourself, “How can I know whether or not I am a child of God? How can I know whether or not I am born again, born from above?” God provides us with very clear answers to those questions in His Word. There is no guess work to this thing.

Five Characteristics
Here are five characteristics of all who are children of God. If these things are true of us, we are the children of God, born again by almighty grace, and heirs of God. If these things are not true of us, then we are yet “children of wrath even as others”.

1. All who are born of God, all who are the children of God, all who are saved by the grace of God, all who are “heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ,” believe on the Lord Jesus Christ (John 1:12).

If you trust the Lord Jesus Christ alone as your Lord and Saviour, if you look to Christ alone for acceptance with God, your faith in Him is the fruit and evidence of His work of grace in you (Hebrews 11:1). Our faith in Christ is the fruit and evidence of the fact that we have been born of the Spirit and that we are the children of God (Galatians 4:6, 7).

2. All who are the children of God are led by the Spirit of God (Romans 8:14).

The Holy Spirit leads those who are Christ’s. There is a movement in their hearts, lives, and affections which they feel, though they may not be able to explain it, a movement which is always in the same direction. The Holy Spirit always leads us away from ourselves to Christ. Away from our sin to His blood. Away from our righteousness to God’s righteousness. Away from self-confidence to the confidence of faith in Christ. Away from our feelings to His Word. Away from our works to His work. The Spirit of God also leads believers by providence, through the counsel of the Word, and by the power of His grace. He guides them in the ways of God, in paths of righteousness, and to the throne of grace.

3. For another thing, all who are born again by the power and grace of God, through the Holy Spirit, have the blessed liberty of the sons of God (Romans 8:1-4, 15).

We have been delivered from that slavish fear of God’s judgment which is caused by the guilt of sin and the terror of the law. We have been redeemed from that guilt that caused Adam to hide “himself in the trees of the garden” and made Cain “go out from the presence of the Lord”. Though we fear God in the sense of holding Him in the highest reverence, believers are no longer afraid of God in the sense of being terrified by Him. Sinners though we are, we are no longer afraid of God’s holiness, justice, and majesty.

We see God now in the full glory of His holy Being and have peace, because we see Him reconciled through the blood of His own dear Son. We see all His glorious attributes displayed and honoured in the death of Christ as our Substitute. We now draw near to God in prayer and speak to Him with the confidence and peace of a child to his father. We now serve the Lord our God, not out of fear, but in love and gratitude. We have exchanged the spirit of bondage for the Spirit of liberty. We have given up the spirit of fear for the Spirit of love. We have put off the spirit of obligation and put on the Spirit of gratitude. We have dropped the spirit of law and taken up the Spirit of grace.

4. All who are born of God, all who are the children of God, have the witness of the Spirit that they are the children of God (Romans 8:16; 1 Corinthians 1:22; 2 Corinthians 5:5; Ephesians 1:13; 4:30; 1 John 5:10).

The Holy Spirit has sprinkled our hearts with the blood of Christ. The blood applied by the Spirit assures us that Christ is sufficient. He gives us witness by the Word, assuring us that our sins have been put away, that peace is restored, that heaven’s door is opened before
Pastor Don Fortner’s daily readings are encouragements to look to the Lord Jesus Christ as our Daily Bread and a spur to read through the whole Bible in a year, not as a yoke that binds, but as the revelation of life in Him. The studies reveal the sinner’s desperate need for salvation and God’s gracious provision of His Son, the only Saviour. They illuminate the gospel of Jesus Christ clearly and distinctively, positively extolling its glorious truth and also exposing the many false “gospels” proliferating today.

In these devotions it will be seen each day that Christ is the message of all the scriptures; “they are they which testify of me”. The gospel of Jesus Christ and Him crucified is vital both for the salvation of sinners and the life sustaining feeding of the saints, to the glory of God.

Angus Fisher, Shoalhaven Gospel Church, Nowra, Australia

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GOOD GOING HOME

us, and that hell’s pit is forever shut. We have, by the witness of the Spirit, what the world can never have “A good hope through grace” (2 Thessalonians 2:16).

5. The sons of God voluntarily take part in the sufferings of Christ.

It is written, “If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together” (Romans 8:17). We seek to know our Saviour “in the fellowship of his sufferings” (Philippians 3:10). And all God’s children voluntarily take up their cross and follow their Master. They “follow the Lamb withersoever he goeth”, regardless of cost or consequence.

**Same Reason, Extent And Fulness**

All who are the children of God are the heirs of God; and all who are the children of God are the heirs of God for the same reason, to the same extent, and to the same fulness. Many believe that while all God’s children are His heirs, some will inherit a scanty portion as naughty sons and daughters while others will have a large, honourable, and happy portion as obedient children. Nothing could be further from the truth. Our inheritance in heaven is not conditioned upon our works, be they good or bad, but upon our relationship to God. “If children, then heirs!” The issue is determined by that word “if”. If we are the Lord’s children, then no doubt can exist regarding our heavenly inheritance.

There is no such thing as degrees of reward in heaven. There are no slums in the heavenly Jerusalem. There are no uncrowned princes in heaven. Whoever he was who invented the doctrine of degrees of reward in heaven knew nothing about the doctrine of grace in the gospel. The whole system smacks of the popish doctrines of indulgences and purgatory. It is but another subtle system of works religion.

Not all of God’s children are prophets, apostles, preachers, teachers, evangelists, or even well-instructed. Not all are rich and influential in spiritual gifts and works. They are not all strong and useful; but they are all heirs of God, and equally so.

All are children of the same Father, loved with the same love, to the same degree. There are no degrees to our Father’s love. All are blessed with the same blessings from eternity. Our Father will not take away what He has already given us; and He has already given us all things in Christ before the world was made (Ephesians 1:3). All are accepted upon the same grounds, for the same reason, to the same degree (Ephesians 1:6). All are equally related
to the Elder Brother, the Firstborn Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the inheritance comes. All have already obtained the inheritance in Christ representatively (Ephesians 1:11; Hebrews 6:20).

There is no room for works in the system of grace (Romans 11:6). Our glorification will no more be determined by our works than our election, redemption, justification, regeneration, and sanctification. Salvation is all of grace. If heavenly glory is the ultimate end of salvation (and it is), then our works have nothing to do with it.

“Heirs of God”
The Holy Spirit describes all believers as “heirs of God”. Think of the implications of that fact. Our inheritance is divinely great. This is what the Scriptures declare. “He that overcometh shall inherit all things” (Revelation 21:7). “All things are yours” (2 Corinthians 3:21).

If we are the children of God, then we are heirs of God’s salvation (Hebrews 1:14), heirs of eternal life (Titus 3:7), heirs of promise (Hebrews 6:17), heirs of the grace of life (1 Peter 3:7), heirs of righteousness (Hebrews 11:7), heirs of the kingdom (James 2:5).

If we are heirs of God, our inheritance is an inheritance of infinite proportion, too. To be heirs of God is to be heirs of all that God possesses, heirs of all that He is, heirs of God Himself, and heirs of all that to which the Lord Jesus Christ, as the God-man, our Mediator is heir. He has given to all His elect all the glory that God the Father gave to Him as the result of His perfect obedience to God as our Representative (John 17:5, 22).

Joint-heirs with Christ
Between Christ and His people there subsists such a gloriously mysterious union that all believers are joint-heirs with Christ Himself. “If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ.” This is grace indeed. God has pardoned us, received us into His house, adopted us as His sons, made us all His heirs, and has made us to be joint-heirs with His own dear Son. As justification is union and communion with Christ in His righteousness, and sanctification is union and communion with Christ in His holiness, glorification shall be union and communion with Christ in His Sonship.

Our inheritance with Christ is an inheritance worthy of the Son of God. What an inheritance that must be! It is such an inheritance as the Father reserves for and gives to His well-beloved Son in whom He is well-pleased. Our worthiness to obtain this glorious inheritance is our union with the Lord Jesus Christ. Our only worthiness to approach God in any way, at any time, is Christ.

Yes, in Christ every believer is worthy to obtain this inheritance (Colossians 1:12). We have been made worthy by the work of God’s free grace in Christ, who brought in perfect righteousness for us by His holy life and fully paid our debt by His sin-atoning death. Our everlasting inheritance in glory with Christ is a matter of absolute certainty. Our union with Him secures it. His title deed to glory is ours. The two are indivisible. His prayer for us claimed it for us. He has gone into heaven to prepare it for us, and holds it in our name, as our Forerunner. He is coming again to bring us into the blessed possession of it.

I really do not know what to expect when we have obtained our inheritance (1 John 3:2); but some things are both certain and clearly revealed in the Word of God. When we have been raised from the dead and transformed into Christ’s likeness, when we enter into His glory there will be nothing in eternity to sadden our hearts or dampen our spirits (Revelation 21:3, 4). “Then we shall know, even as we are known.” We will say an eternal “good-bye” to sin, Satan, and sorrow, and attain perfect holiness. We shall enter into perfect rest (Hebrews 4:9). Yet, we will serve the Lord perfectly (Revelation 7:15). We shall live in perfect communion with one another. We shall be totally satisfied when we shall see our Saviour face to face (Psalm 17:15).

Diary Item - New Focus Conference 2016
God willing, our next New Focus Conference will take place on May 28th and 29th, 2016. Our venue will again be Datchworth Village Hall, Knebworth, Herts. SG3 6TL.

Preachers: Clay Curtis, Allan Jellett, Harry Qazi, Jared Smith, Peter Meney.

For further information see back page.
Duty-Faith Preaching and The Free-Offer

Duty-Faith and the Free-Offer are two of the most pernicious heresies infiltrating churches today.

Preachers that demand sinners exercise faith, as the initiating cause of the new birth, are appealing to the flesh, wherein dwelleth no good thing. Subsequently, false converts are mass produced through manipulative devices in getting people to ‘make a decision for Christ’. The scriptural concept of faith is this—the sinner believes because he has been born again; he is not born again because he believes. Hence, faith is a gift to the saint, not a duty of the sinner.

In addition, preachers that ‘offer’ the gospel (as if it lies in the sinner to accept or reject it) contradict the central message of sovereign grace. The sinful heart must be made willing to receive Christ by the conquest of Jehovah—until the sinner is subdued by the Holy Spirit, he will forever reject the gospel of Christ. It is therefore vain to offer what the sinner will not receive. Furthermore, the gospel of Christ is a gift designated for those whom Jehovah has loved from eternity—provision for these persons alone has been made, and therefore the promise of salvation is to them only. The preacher oversteps his authority if he promises salvation to all (offering it to them), without knowing whether those persons are the special object of Jehovah’s love.

We believe the preacher is responsible to declare the whole counsel of God to the sinner, setting forth the terms and promises of the Covenant of Works, together with the terms and promises of the Covenant of Grace. The sinner is to be informed of his duty towards Jehovah—perfect obedience to the law; and, of the curse under which he has been subjected—eternal damnation for disobedience. The sinner is to be informed also of the sovereign grace of God unto salvation—how the Father has set His eternal love upon a remnant of the human race, and how the Son has assumed the role of redeemer in the Person of Jesus Christ, and how the Holy Spirit has assumed the role of Sanctifier through His effectual work in the heart. Hence, the sinner is to be informed, that all whom the Father has given Christ shall come to Christ, and he that cometh to Christ will in no wise cast out. We believe it is through the declaration of this gospel that the Holy Spirit quickens the sinner, whereby he is enabled to believe the gospel and receive the gift of God which is in Christ Jesus the Lord. Yes, we believe the gospel of sovereign grace should be freely preached to all; we do not believe, however, that it should be falsely preached (duty-faith) or freely offered.

Josiah Condor

’Tis not that I did choose Thee,
For Lord, that could not be;
This heart would still refuse Thee,
Hadst Thou not chosen me.
Thou from the sin that stained me
Hast cleansed and set me free;
Of old Thou hast ordained me,
That I should live to Thee.

’Twas sov’reign mercy called me
And taught my op’ning mind;
The world had else enthralled me,
To heav’nly glories blind.
My heart owns none before Thee,
For Thy rich grace I thirst;
This knowing, if I love Thee,
Thou must have loved me first.

Josiah Condor
Paul says ‘therefore’ referring to the first three chapters of Ephesians wherein the Holy Spirit used Paul to teach us that we were dead in trespasses and in sins, but God in mercy called us by His grace. Therefore, based solely upon the abundant blessings of God given us by His free and sovereign grace, in Christ, through the irresistible work of the Holy Spirit, let us live our lives in a manner becoming the calling wherewith we have been called of God. Notice, Paul says I ‘beseech you’. He does not command, does not bring in the law, does not threaten or promise rewards. He uses no power or might of his own. He says, ‘I beseech you.’ It means ‘I entreat you. I exhort you.’ It is because the believer’s motive is the grace and love of God alone.

This is important for each of us to remember because there is no better way to exhort a fellow believer to ‘all lowliness and meekness’ than to do so in a spirit of ‘lowliness and meekness’. Paul told Timothy, ‘the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves’ (2 Timothy 2:24, 25). There is instruction in the spirit with which we instruct, as in the instruction itself. What instruction is in a gentle, patient and meek spirit? It says we are powerless in ourselves. A lowly and meek spirit says that our only hope is, ‘if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth’ (2 Timothy 2:25).

Believer, you long for that loved one to believe Christ, you long for that brother or sister in Christ to turn from the error that will cause them harm. And there is such a thing as righteous anger when an unbeliever speaks against the God you love. But try to remember, they oppose themselves, not you. Solomon said, ‘By long forbearing is a prince persuaded, and a soft tongue breaketh the bone’ (Proverbs 25:15). Paul told the Thessalonians, ‘We were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children’ (1 Thessalonians 2:7). A pastor at the end of his calling once told a young man at the beginning of his, ‘Love them to Christ.’
The salvation of a sinner is the result of divine arrangements which were made before the foundation of the world. The chosen of the Father were ransomed by the blood of the Son; and the power of the Spirit is continually engaged in silently but surely bringing redeemed men and women into a saving and experimental acquaintance with the grace and power of their Lord. “A wonderful operation is therefore perpetually going on in this world. God is arresting the minds of sinners, opening their hearts, imparting the principle of godly fear to their breasts, bringing them personally and gradually into His presence, and assisting them by His Spirit to open their mouths in prayer before Him, and whilst they are doing so, He stretches His wings over them, and claims them all, saying, “This people have I formed for Myself; they shall show forth My praise.”

In these operations the supremacy of God is very observable. “Christ knows where His people are, if all others are ignorant of them. Hence He can gather them (at His pleasure). Whether they are in India or Greenland, He (can and) will apprehend them. He requires no information from us, no creature-urging, in connection with this great and gracious work. If men do not come to hear the Gospel preached, God will send the Gospel to them. He will see that the Spirit of Christ shall go to them, and gather them and take them into a saved state.”

In communicating vital and experimental religion to His people the Lord also invariably exercises His prerogative of sovereignty, and performs His saving operations in the manner

I was a stricken deer that left the herd Long since. With many an arrow deep infixed My panting side was charged, when I withdrew To seek a tranquil death in distant shades. There was I found by One who had Himself Been hurt by the archers. In His side He bore And in His hands and feet the cruel scars. With gentle force soliciting the darts, He drew them forth, and healed, and bade me live. Since then, with few associates, in remote And silent woods I wander, far from those My former partners of the peopled scene; With few associates, and not wishing more.

William Cowper, “The Task,” Book III

A Stricken Deer

T
which His own good pleasure dictates. He is
the Lord of time, and can do as He wills, and
when He wills. He is the God of providence,
and can originate such circumstances as will
co-operate with the fulfilment of His ancient
purposes of grace. He is Lord over all the
powers of the human mind, and can inform
the understanding, enlighten the conscience,
and bring the rebellious will into harmonious
allegiance to Himself, whenever it seems
good to Him so to act. His various methods
of procedure are also adopted in accordance
with His unerring wisdom, and never fail to
accomplish the high and holy ends that He has
eternally had in view. He can arrest sinners
by the most varied means, convey saving and
sanctifying impressions by the most varied
instrumentality, and reveal His majesty and
mercy through channels of the most varied
character. [Then],

“When the Holy Spirit, by an act of Almighty
Power, has implanted the seed of immortal life
in the heart of a sinner, he quickly becomes, in
a manner, altogether unaccountable to himself,
the subject of new appetites, new desires, and
new fears, such as he finds the whole creation
insufficient to relieve. He is overwhelmed with
a sense of his lost and ruined condition, to the
terrors of which his eyes are now opened for
the first time: he feels that his life has been
one continued scene of rebellion against God:
that he has not one plea to urge against the
fiery curses of His law: nor ability to render in
a single instance, an obedience adequate to
its demands. In short, he feels himself to be a
lost and undone sinner, and were it possible
for him to be left in this condition, he must
inevitably sink into despair. Now when the
Gospel comes with convincing energy to the
heart of such a man, it proves, indeed, spirit
and life to his soul; it tells him of an atonement
for the whole multitude of his crimes; of an
obedience sovereignly imputed to him without
respect to his duties or deserts; of an ability
laid up in Christ, which shall always be found
equal to his exigencies, the effects of which
he already begins to understand, when, in his
new-felt strength, he gradually throws off the
yoke of his old master, and turns into pleas at
his Father’s footstool, those exceeding great
and precious promises, which the Gospel puts
into his lips.”

Cheering
Words
from John Kent

1 What cheering words are these!
Their sweetness who can tell!
In time and to eternal days,
“’Tis with the righteous well.”

2 In every state secure,
Kept by Jehovah’s eye,
’Tis well with them while life endure,
And well when called to die.

3 ’Tis well when joys arise;
’Tis well when sorrows flow;
’Tis well when darkness veils the skies,
And strong temptations blow.

4 ’Tis well when on the mount
They feast on dying Love:
And ’tis as well in God’s account,
When they the furnace prove.

5 ’Tis well when Jesus calls:
“From earth and sin arise;
Join with the hosts of ransomed souls,
Made to salvation wise.”

Complied from extracts from Wm. Styles’
memorandum of John Hazelton.

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The error of Pelagius was his exalting the free-will of the creature above the free grace of God, in all the articles of salvation, and consequently in this of justification: he laid aside the doctrine of Christ’s imputed, for that of his own inherent righteousness; that free-will might have of its own, wherein to trust, whereof to glory, and wherewith to come before God. Thus unmindful was he, and so are all his followers, of what Christ has told us; “As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me; for without me ye can do nothing,” John 15:4, 5. These pervert the order of grace, as much as the order of nature would be perverted, should any say, that the branch bears the root, and without the root the branch might blossom, and bring forth fruit. That great text, so expressive of the grace and order of the Gospel, is a full confutation of Pelagianism; “By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them,” Ephesians 2:8-10. To be sure, Pelagius was one of the greatest patrons of free-will, and as bitter an enemy of free grace, as the church ever was troubled with; his leaven spread itself far and near, and is like to do more and more under latter-day darkness.

In the same path Arius before trod, with this dreadful addition, his affirming Christ to be no more than a creature, though he made Him to be the first and chief of mere creatures: thus he robbed Christ, at once, of the divinity of His Person, and of His crown, as Mediator: according to whom, the great end of all He either did or suffered, was partly to confirm His doctrine and mission, and partly to set His people an example; but he utterly denied His being, in a true and proper sense, the Lord our righteousness, or the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believes: and so did Socinus, with this farther addition, that he made Christ to be a creature of a late date, who had no existence, save in type and promise, before the fulness of time. Thus wilfully did he shut his eyes against that great chapter, the first of John, which alone is a full confutation of his soul-ruining error; where Christ is not represented as beginning with time, but as existing before all time: It is not, in the beginning did the Word begin to be; “But in the beginning was the Word, and the
Word was with God, "eternal as being God; for so it follows, "and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made. He was in the world, and the world was made by him," John 1:1-3, 10.

The Arminians also are for being justified by free-will righteousness, and not from free grace: The glorious gift of righteousness, which has so much grace in it, and accompanying it, is by them despised; and a rag of their own, a sorry web, which God has said shall never become a garment, is preferred. They shamefully wrest and darken all those texts, which shine in both Testaments, like stars of the first magnitude; and proclaim, as on the house top, that Christ is the Lord our righteousness, in the business of justification before God.

Such would do well to consider the history of free-will, as it is recorded in the historical part of Scripture. The greatest trial of free-will was the trial God made of it, in Lucifer, the son of the morning, and in all the non-elect among the angels; who, under his conduct, kept not their first estate, but soon left their first habitation; and, of bright and shining angels, are become infernal devils: next to which was the trial God made of free-will, in our first parents; from whom nothing was withheld, which became a bountiful Creator to bestow on so noble a creature as man; but how soon did man, left to the conduct of his own free-will, lose all, and become a bankrupt? Now, if free-will made no earnings of a covenant of works, get nothing by it in a state of innocency, but lost all; is it likely to recover all, on the footing of a covenant of works, in a state of sin and apostasy?

We may here consider, how man's will has been tried since the fall, and found to be no ways fit to be trusted. Was it not tried before the flood, when length of life, and strength of constitution, furnished mankind with the greatest opportunities to improve all the talents free-will, as it is called, was entrusted with? But, instead of retrieving what it had lost, or of growing better, mankind grew worse and worse: "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth; and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually," Gen. 6:5. Free-will so rebelled, and was so provoking, as to bring down a deluge of water, in those early days, on mankind; as it will, in the end, bring down a deluge of fire, even the general conflagration.

It is very observable, and very humbling to consider, how free-will, instead of acting the grateful, dutiful, obedient part, when Israel was so remarkably delivered out of Egypt, and led by such an high arm of power, through the Red Sea; murmured against God; called His power in question; talked of stoning Moses, and of returning back into Egypt; made a calf in Horeb, just before the burning mount, and to it ascribe all the praise of Israel's deliverance.

How did free-will behave in Christ's day, and in Christ's family? In Christ's day, in the persons of the Scribes and Pharisees, the Priests and the Rulers; who, instead of receiving the Messiah with hearts enlarged in His praise, poured on Him the utmost contempt; and though they wondered at the miracles wrought by Him, yet they despised His person and character, and so they perished. And as free-will acted a strange and most unaccountable part in Christ's day, so it acted the basest part in Christ's family, in the person of Judas; who, though he eat of His bread, saw all the miracles which were wrought by Christ, and heard the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth, lifted up his heel against Him, sold Him for thirty pieces of silver, and betrayed Him with a kiss. This put the traitor upon being his own executioner, prepared the halter he deserved, put it about his neck, and so dispatched him. In a word, all the sins that were ever acted on earth are the birth of free-will.
Mephibosheth was a child prince of the royal house of Israel during some of its greatest days. He was born into privilege and no doubt much celebrated at his birth. He was grandson to Saul, Israel’s first king and son of Jonathan. But the life of Mephibosheth was not to be one of peace and happiness. At just five years old both his father and grandfather were slain and since no mention is made of his mother we may suppose this left him an orphan. A child who knew his dad only long enough to miss him.

Mephibosheth was in the care of a nurse, though we might question how careful she was. Fearing danger for herself and the child she fled but stumbled and dropped the child leaving him lame in both feet for the rest of his life. One wonders what pain the infant suffered in those early years, and without the comfort of a parent in his distress. So began a life of disasters, disappointments, and anxieties for Mephibosheth. His is a story of loss and personal tragedy that unfolds during the reign of King David.

The child is first taken into the mountains to be hidden and there he is raised by Machir, son of Ammiel. At some point he appears to have married, for he had a son.

David in accordance with God’s will and anointing, comes to the throne and unites the two factions of Israel and Judah. During a time of peace he thinks of his old friend Jonathan and remembers promises made as a token of their love for one another (1 Samuel 19). David resolves to seek out any who remain of the house of Jonathan to show kindness to them for Jonathan’s sake.

Ziba, a servant of Saul, appears and tells David of a son of Jonathan who still lives. David calls for Mephibosheth to be brought to Jerusalem to live under the care of the king; a kindness for which Mephibosheth shows great respect and gratitude. Ziba is appointed steward of Mephibosheth’s inheritance and for many years Mephibosheth lives in Jerusalem dining daily at David’s table.

But uneasy lies the head that wears a crown and David is threatened from within his own house. Absalom rises against his father and David flees the city. In the confusion Ziba abandons and betrays Mephibosheth, lying about him to the king. Upon David’s return distraught Mephibosheth is able to expose his servant’s deception and David’s trust is restored. This history can be read in 2 Samuel 16:1-4 and 19:24-30.

In truth, Mephibosheth is a sideshow in these great national incidents, a minor character in the story, yet his experiences teach us lessons about life and grace that even today resonate with many of God’s people. Here are five lessons from the life of Mephibosheth that apply to God’s people now.

1. A Prince In Israel
Mephibosheth was a prince in Israel but he lost everything, and was lame. Spiritually, God’s elect people in this world are Princes in Israel. Mephibosheth was so by birth. His position was the result of who his father was. So God’s elect are princes in Israel, not by their own efforts but because of who their Father is. John calls these people the “begotten of God” and the psalmist says, ‘Let Israel rejoice in him that made him: let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.’

Yet these princes are hidden among fallen sinners. In Adam they fell. In his loss they lost...
communion with their Father. Furthermore, these princes are lame. They cannot recover their family blessings by their own efforts. They must learn the true nature of their need and inability. With every other sinner they try to walk in their own strength until, in mercy the Lord teaches them about their lame state.

2. Covenant Grace
Mephibosheth was the beneficiary of covenant promise, yet he knew nothing about his benefits until David sought him out and revealed them to Him. The elect of God are under covenant promise yet they know nothing of it, even while their Saviour is actively seeking to save them. Mephibosheth knew nothing of the love between David and his father yet, upon the foundation of that love, his own position was secured. He did not seek David nor thought any good would come to him if he did. Likely the opposite was true. He had reason to fear David seeking after him.

Spiritual life is God's gift, freely given. It is unsought by the sinner. Yet for Christ's sake, in covenant promise, the Father bestows mercy, grace, forgiveness and peace. Covenants are a frequent subject in scripture, especially with respect to God's dealings with men. Thus the prophets declare, “my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee” (Isaiah 54:10). “Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them” (Ezekiel 37:26). The Lord Jesus Christ, “that great shepherd of the sheep”, has won every blessing for His bride, “through the blood of the everlasting covenant” (Hebrews 13:20).

3. Goodness And Mercy
Mephibosheth was cared and provided for comprehensively at the king's table. He rested every day from his own labours and was under the king's protection. “But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19). Child of God, how many times have we fed at the King's table? How often have we known His company, His presence and protection? How blessed to commune with the King and His royal household at His table. Let us never despise the Lord's table.

“Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever” (Psalm 23:5, 6).

4. Testing Times
During Absalom’s rebellion Mephibosheth experienced great trial. He was betrayed, abandoned, misrepresented. Life did not always go smoothly for him. Nor will it for you. Absalom usurped David and today, rebellion against God continues. Those who sit at the Lord's table find themselves in an alien environment. From without, or within, we may suddenly find our peace is removed and our troubles increased. Ziba prospered from his malignity, as often the wicked appear to do. But what is worldly gain for eternal loss? Enjoy your evil gains, Ziba, it is all you'll ever have.

“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, ... For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Matthew 6:19-21).

5. The King Returns
David returns to Jerusalem and Mephibosheth's peace is restored. He expresses his joy at His Lord's return. Perhaps the Lord Jesus withdraws a little to try our love and test our faith. God's people are altered by experiences, as was Mephibosheth. Sadder, wiser men and women persevere through trials to discover their Lord Jesus Christ “as an Angel of God”.

Mephibosheth was a different man. His experiences changed him. Had he taken David's presence for granted? Had he grown accustomed to sitting at his table, eating his food? Now he expresses his love and gratitude as he welcomes his friend's return.

Sometimes we don't know what we have until it is taken away. Bless the Lord when He returns in mercy to His loved ones.

There is an interesting postscript to the history of Mephibosheth. It is recounted in 2 Samuel 21:1-9. The Gibeonites demanded justice for mistreatment by Saul. The lives of all who remained of Saul's house were forfeit. Yet, once again, David stood forth for the deliverance of His friend and saved Mephibosheth's life.

Every child of God must and will learn they are lame. They will endure disappointments in this world. They shall learn to trust Christ in the midst of trial. But when the King comes to them, delivers and blesses them, there is no greater comfort in the world.
Traditionally, the debate concerning the reasons behind the Gunpowder Plot has taken a most restricted course, depicting a struggle solely between Roman Catholics and Protestants. This is a part truth which leaves a large part of the wider struggles against Church, King and Parliament out of the picture. There were Roman Catholics who were willing to compromise with the Reformed Protestant state but also so-called Protestant movements who were not. There were also many peace-loving Scotsmen who were, nevertheless, for one king over two separate nations with two separate churches. Many peace-loving Church of England clergy objected strongly to new militant Scottish Separatists who were campaigning for a rule of monarchical elders even over the secular powers-that-be including Parliament and the King. This sect mixed true religion with fables spread about the ancient Culdee cloisters of pre-Saxon and pre-Roman Catholic times and the modernism of Humanism and the Enlightenment and were for a total overhaul of the Scottish Reformed Church, its General Assembly and its principles of tolerance. This is why, when James was assailed from that corner, he affirmed truthfully that such a Presbyterianism and Kingship were opposites. Rutherford countered this with his doctrine of the infallibility of the Presbyterian Synod pronouncements in true Roman Catholic style. Baillie lumped Anglicans and Independents together as ‘Malignants’.

Because of this one-sidedness in observing history, politics and religion, it is not generally known that parallel to Roman Catholic attempts to murder the King and destroy the Church of England and Parliament, there were repeated attempts by the New Scottish Presbyterians to do the same. Furthermore, the Jesuit revolt never really endangered the person of James as Robert Cecil’s spies knew about the plot.

1 See the Chapter ‘The Toleration Controversy’ in W. M. Campbell’s The Triumph of Presbyterianism.
well in advance. In Scotland, however, through the revolts of ‘Protestants’, James’ suffered a series of attempted assassinations in the opening years of the seventeenth century which left the King struggling physically for his life at the hands of ‘Protestant’ assassins with their knives or strangling hands only inches from his throat. Indeed, the New Presbyterians had been plotting James’ death since he was kidnapped by William Ruthven, Earl of Gowrie, in 1582 and the danger of being murdered by a Ruthven or a Stewart persisted until the early 1600s. This is the reason why James always wore stiletto-proofed quilted clothing, leaving his merciless critics to proclaim that the King was an ‘over-dressed’ coxcomb. Even St Andrews, where Andrew Melville taught, added to the anti-Royal family campaign by claiming the Queen was an atheist, but they had claimed that of Elizabeth, too. We remember that St Andrews was the university which had martyred Patrick Hamilton, Scotland’s true Reformer in 1528. James Stewart, Lord Arran, accused by Old School Presbyterian John Durie, the King’s personal advisor, of action against his person behind the King’s back, planned to get rid of King James and call himself James VII of Scotland. Durie said similar things of Lennox.3

My readers will deduce that there will be, God willing, a further essay from my pen on the Presbyterian equivalent to the Jesuit Gunpowder Plot but, in this essay, we shall stick to the events of 5th November, 1605.

Preparing for the Big Bang

Philip Sidney in his History of the Gunpowder Plot believes that despite all the vast number of accounts of the plot the truth has not been told, Jardine and Gardiner’s works being exceptions (which I have used amongst others). I shall thus strive to keep mainly to contemporary sources in my account but, of course, even those may be biased reports.

Although the Jesuit plotters were deeply united by the thought of ridding England of her Church and government, none of them could come up with a feasible plan of how to do so until months had gone by. Though methods were first discussed towards the end of 1603 by Catesby, Percy, and Wright, no concrete plans were worked out until the end of 1604 when James began to clamp down harder on Roman Catholic opposition. Catesby and his fellow-plotters now decided to build a tunnel starting from a neighbouring house in Lambeth let to them by a ‘Master Whynniard’ which was to end directly under Parliament. The government buildings in those days were of a large ‘H’ format with private properties built into, under and alongside the rooms where Parliament met, so there was obviously little security to fear and only their noise could be of disadvantage. Meanwhile, Catesby had enrolled Thomas Winter as a fellow-conspirator, a scholarly man on whom we rely for a written account of how the plot developed. Winter was keen on leaving England to join the English Jesuits in Flanders under Spain’s command. Instead of enlisting there as a soldier, Winter canvassed for further conspirators and managed to persuade Guy Fawkes of York to return to England to help blow up Parliament. It appears from lawyer David Jardine’s account that Winter canvassed the King of Spain on the Continent for direct material support which was not forthcoming.

Fawkes was described by Father Greenway (an assumed name in accordance with Jesuit

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2 The Stuarts originally spelt their name ‘Stewart’ but altered it, long before James’s birth, to the French spelling ‘Stuart’ which the New Presbyterians thought was unpatriotic. However, Andrew Melville kept the French spelling of his own name, though he sometimes used the Celtic spelling ‘Melvyn’ which means ‘Chief’ or ‘Strong Friend’. Other sources claim it means ‘mill worker’.


4 The Catholic Encyclopedia claims Percy was a bigamist

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custom) as ‘a man of great piety, of exemplary temperance, of mild and cheerful demeanour, an enemy of broils and disputes, a faithful friend, and remarkable for his punctual attendance upon religious observances,’ However, Jardine, in his detailed records of the plot and coverage of the subsequent trials, also shows the ‘other side’ of Guy Fawkes, that is, ‘as a mercenary ruffian, ready for hire to perform the chief part in any tragedy of blood.’

The plotters had a few scruples concerning ‘collateral damage’, Roman Catholics or friends of Roman Catholics who might get blown up alongside the hated Protestants but soothed their consciences in true Jesuit style by arguing that the end justified the means. They did not appear to have discussed the enormous slaughter and damage which would occur in the private houses and buildings affixed to the Lords’ Chamber, the old Palace of Westminster, when the alleged sixty barrels of gunpowder, estimated at over two and a half tons, which they planned to ignite went off. This would have sufficed to blow a hole a square kilometre in circumference in a most heavily populated and frequented part of London.

Choosing the date for the blow-up
The first session of Parliament on March 1605 was too early for the plotters to strike, so they decided to wait until November 5 of the same year when the second session of Parliament would sit and the Commons would join the Lords in the Lords’ Chamber on the bridge of the ‘H’. This attack would entail placing the powder in one heap, rather than spreading it under several Parliament buildings, so its effect would be greatest. The original five plotters began to ‘mine’, as they called it, towards the supposed cellars of the Lords’ Chamber on 11th December, 1604 from their rented house, having only a vague idea of the direction to be taken. They decided to keep on tunnelling until they were immediately under the Chamber and so took several weeks’ provisions with them besides plenty of weapons in case they were discovered. Apparently, it took them until Christmas Eve to reach the Chamber’s foundations without their seeing the light of day. The stories do not tell us what happened to the debris they dug out but as the hired house was on the Thames water front, it was probably dumped into the river where the

London tides would distribute it from human gaze. Over the Christmas season, the plotters now transferred the gunpowder they had managed to gather from all quarters and stocked in Catesby’s house, up to the tunnel end.

Unnecessary tunnelling
It was now that the plotters realised that their plans had been too makeshift. Whilst tunnelling, a great noise was suddenly heard above them and the plotters feared that they had been discovered but were prepared to fight it out to the death rather than surrender. Instead of their tunnel leading to the Chambers’ cellars where they had hoped to store the gunpowder, they now discovered that above them there was a spacious ground floor hall under the Lords’ which had been let out to a coal merchant who was now moving his goods to another location and the noise the plotters had heard was the transporting away of the coals. Percy went round to enquire what was happening and heard that the gigantic room was to let, so he paid a year’s rent in advance and the first floor, directly below the Lords’ Chambers was now legally occupied by the plotters and the months of hard work ‘mining’ had been totally unnecessary. Thus, in some later Jesuit accounts of the gunpowder plot, the part concerning the tunnelling is diplomatically left out.

Now, with free access to the area below the Chambers, Catesby and his fellow conspirators believed that their goal was near, so they decided again to approach foreign Roman Catholic princes in France, Spain and Rome for international backing for their plan to bring the King, the Reformed Church and England to their knees. However, they soon found out that meeting foreign princes on a one to one secret basis was as good as impossible and, openly at least, the Roman Catholic monarchs did not appear to wish themselves identified with the hit-and-run plans of the English Jesuits.

A change of tactics
This led Fawkes to plan new tactics. He suggested that not all the Royal Family be killed but children Elizabeth and Charles should be first kidnapped. Then, when the King, his eldest son Henry Frederick, Prince of Wales, the Chief Councillor Robert Cecil, the Privy Council and most of the MPs were dead, the Jesuits would influence the country to make either Elizabeth or Charles puppet rulers over England. Trusting that the majority of Roman Catholics would support them and Sir William Stanley’s army
of English dissidents based in the Netherlands would come over and help support a restored Roman Catholic rule in England, the country could then be divided from Scotland. This would not be against the interests of the New Presbyterian Assembly who would in turn be able to further their own nationalistic and territorial plans.

Meanwhile, the logistics of rebellion were proving most expensive so the original five decided to recruit further conspirators so as to share the costs and the work. Sir Evarard Digby, gentleman, sportsman and warrior was enrolled to lead a kidnapping party and happily brought with him 1,500 pounds cash to boost the funds. In all, Catesby drew in enough new plotters to provide a large private army and fill the murderous kitty with many thousands of pounds. However, it is said that Catesby, in his zeal to procure men and money, did not reveal all of the plan to those who were interested in supporting the Romanist cause. At least, this was the story the Jesuit clergy told after the plot was discovered. Father Henry Garnet the Superior of the English Jesuits, for instance, confessed his ignorance that the plot included the blowing up of Parliament. However, it is human nature to affirm one’s interest in a plot, only to profess absolute ignorance when the plot fails. Indeed, it appears that Garnet was in the plot from the very start and helped recruit the fellow-conspirators and knew quite well what dark deeds were being planned as his correspondence with the Jesuit Superior in Rome indicates. Chronicler Lewis Winstock makes the interesting remark that when a planned foul deed is asked to be classified as confessional, a Jesuit priest is then correct to say that he knew nothing of it and thus did not need to prevent it from happening.7

One of the main planks of enrolling a wider band of revolutionaries was to arrange for outbreaks of rebellion throughout the country and especially in the Midlands. These rebels were issued with specially made swords engraved with scenes of Christ’s passion to illustrate the holiness of their devilish endeavours. As early as 1604, reports were coming in from Flanders via Brussels that there was to be a major attempt at rebellion and reports reached the King that bands of up to 300 heavily armed men were celebrating pre-battle mass together and plotting raids in England. If this were true, the mercenaries kept most quiet about it and never showed their faces and James took stronger measures against the superstitious and rebellious religion of the papists and placed heavy fines on their actions. It appears thus that James and Robert Cecil knew that coups were planned in London and the Midlands but decided to wait until the conspirators had recruited more rebels so as to catch as many papists as possible in one wave of arrests and thus put an end to the entire Roman Catholic threat. Indeed, the King was so busy dealing with Roman Catholic rumours of rebellion in England that he neglected to curb growing Presbyterian plans for insurrection in Scotland.

Lord Monteagle warned of the plot
The first definite tip concerning the use of gunpowder came, however, in a letter delivered by a ‘tall stranger’ to Lord Monteagle which ran:

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7 See Gunpowder, Treason and Plot, pp. 55, 56.
My Lord. Out of the love I bear to some of your friends I have a care of your preservation. Therefore I would advise you, as you tender your life, to devise some excuse to shift of your attendance at this Parliament, for God and man have concurred to punish the wickedness of this time. And think not slightly of this advertisement but retire yourself into your country, where you may expect the event in safety.

For though there be no appearance of any stir, yet I say they shall receive a terrible blow this Parliament, and yet they shall not see who hurts them. This council is not to be condemned, because it may do you good and can do you no harm, for the danger is passed as soon as you have burnt the letter. And I hope God will give you the grace to make good use of it, to whose holy protection I commend you.

Though late at night, Monteagle called on the Palace at Whitehall and placed the letter in Lord Cecil's hands. Cecil said the King would arrive soon and must be shown the letter, especially as he was an expert in deciphering cryptic meanings in texts. When James read the letter, he immediately realised that the plotters' ‘terrible blow’ meant they were going to blow up Parliament. He always feared that his enemies who had used explosives to murder his father, Lord Darnley, would try the same method on him.

The King commanded at once that the Lords' Chamber and other Parliament buildings and property alongside and underneath should be searched for the explosives. Cecil and Monteagle were quick to find out from Wynniard, who was Keeper of the Wardrobe, that Percy had hired the room under the Chamber to store coal and wood, allegedly for his own provision. The two men found such a store there and Guy Fawkes hanging about who said he was guarding the material for Percy. Now deeply suspicious about what was under the coals, the two men decided to leave things as they were for the moment and return with a stronger party. Now, however, the plotters realised that the King was on their tail and Winter was visited by ‘one’ who told him that Monteagle had been informed of ‘the great blow’. Fawkes was sent back to keep watch over the hidden gunpowder and found, to his relief, that the secret marks, which would have been destroyed if the explosives had been found, were all intact.

Now Catesby and Winter looked for the letter writer and suspected Francis Tresham who had pulled out of the plot and was Lord Monteagle’s brother-in-law. After questioning Tresham, however, Catesby and Winter did not continue to accuse him as it was now obvious that other plotters such as Digby had also warned close friends and relations to be absent from Parliament on 5 November. So, leaving Fawkes in charge of the explosives, and hoping that the government would drop their suspicions, Catesby left London for the Midlands on November 4 now plotting to kidnap Elizabeth, the future ‘Winter Queen’ of Bohemia. Meanwhile, Antony Rookward organised a chain of horses between London and the Midlands to inform Catesby if the plot turned out successful. So that Fawkes would be able to time the fuse correctly and get out of the way in time, Percy sent Fawkes his watch via Robert Keyes at 10 p.m. on the night of November 4. Fawkes thought only three matches would suffice to light the fuse and hid them in his attire.

The explosives are found
At midnight, an armed party under Sir Thomas Knyvet went to inspect the pile of coals and found Fawkes fully dressed near at hand which appeared suspicious so late at night so Fawkes was immediately apprehended. The matches were discovered and other instruments used for igniting explosives and then thirty-six barrels of gunpowder were found. When cross-examined, Fawkes refused to reveal the names of his co-plotters, but, nevertheless, an immediate search was made for a number suspected. Now, at 4 o’clock on the morning of the fifth, the King was awakened and told about the discovery. Word soon spread amongst the plotters that the coup had failed so they all galloped off to Catesby’s house at Ashby St. Legers from their various hideouts and met one another on the way and so arrived at Catesby’s together. The search throughout London thus proved unsuccessful. As none of the other plotters were present at Fawkes’ arrest, no one seemed to know just what had happened but Catesby kept a clear head and did not proclaim a total failure but said that enough had been done to unite Roman Catholic zeal and that he would now visit the bands of Roman Catholic armed men which he estimated at many thousands.

8 A facsimile of this letter is reproduced by Winstock, p. 65.
9 See my New Focus article of Apr-May 2010 Vol. 14 No. 6, p. 15
and march through the Midlands, gathering Roman Catholic rebels as he moved through the Midland counties. This was all a pipe dream, however, and Catesby had difficulty finding fifty men eager to wage warfare in the name of their religion. Throughout their tour to enrol thousands, the conspirators managed to gain but a handful of men and steal a few horses. John Grant brought weapons and armour from London but there were less ‘freedom fighters’ to don them than sets of armour. Gradually, the number of 50 decreased as the would-be rebels realised what little chance they had. Wherever Catesby went saying that he was fighting for God and the country, the people he bargained with said they were for King James, who had become very popular in England, and God and country and would not fight against the King’s will. Soon, Digby was heard to declare, ‘Not one man came to take our part, though we expected so many’.

**The revolt comes to naught**

The end of the revolt was now at hand and it came via the very medium the plotters had planned to use against King, Church and country: through a gunpowder explosion. The Roman Catholic residue of rebels with Catesby, Rookwood and Grant at their head, Winter, being away canvassing for recruits, had some twenty pounds of gunpowder which had become wet so they put it on a huge tray by the fire to dry. One of the men carelessly threw a large amount of wood onto the fire and the sparks flew in all directions and ignited the gunpowder. There was immediately an enormous explosion which left Catesby, Rookwood and Grant badly burned. Grant ‘was much disfigured and his eyes almost burned out’. At this sight the rest of the murderous band fled. Winter now realised that they would never reached their aims and decided to give up and face their punishment and we read ‘they fell earnestly to their prayers’. From the thousands which had been envisaged as being strong enough to win England over to the papists, there were now only thirteen left, a number of whom were very badly burned. They were quickly surrounded on 8th November, 1605, by several hundred of the local sheriff’s men armed with muskets who soon killed a number and severely wounded the rest. Robert Catesby, Thomas Percy, John Grant, Thomas Winter and Ambrose Rookwood, though badly wounded and at death’s door, were patched up and taken to the Tower as the King had put a price on their heads should they be delivered alive. They were soon joined by Robert Keyes, Sir Everard Digby and Thomas Bates and shortly afterwards by Francis Tresham who had been caught separately. Now only Robert Winter of the main plotters was still at large but he was soon rounded up. The Jesuit ministers Father...
Garnet, Father Tesimond and Father Gerard, who were charged with being the originators of the plot, chiefly through the testimony of Bates, had vanished into thin air.

Sunday, the 10th of November, was set apart for the national celebrations. In Scotland when a nigh successful attempt was made on James’ life, the New Presbyterians refused to offer up thanks. In England, there were thanks given to God in every church and on every street. And still England gives thanks to God every year for this great deliverance.

The Trials
Most of the plotters nowadays would have been given fines, put on probation or given short prison sentences if not let off as ‘first offenders’. They would have been provided with a lawyer, free of charge, if they could not afford one themselves. Some would have been prosecuted for attempted manslaughter but nobody would have been sentenced to more than 15 years imprisonment and most, apart from the seriously wounded leaders, would have lived long enough to celebrate their own part in the Gunpowder Plot, being willing to die for ‘God and their country’. Though the seventeenth century was far more severe when dealing with conspirators, of the fifty or more original plotters, initially only eight were placed on trial. These were Guy Fawkes, Thomas and Robert Winter, John Grant, Robert Keyes, Thomas Bates, Ambrose Rockwood and Sir Everard Digby. The King gave strict orders that Fawkes was to be lightly treated but if he remained stubborn, severer methods might be used to loosen his tongue. Such methods may be viewed at Madame Tussauds waxworks in the Chamber of Horrors so will be spared the reader here. Actually only Fawkes was eventually tortured. The confession that Fawkes signed about a week later shows an unreadable squiggle which might have been made out as ‘Guido’ but Fawkes collapsed before he could write his surname. Cecil could not get the whole story out of Fawkes as he first joined the plotters when things were under way. Other men such as Tresham, perhaps more in ‘the know’, were found poisoned in their beds after mysterious ‘friends’ had visited them. The eight remaining plotters were charged with, to use the words of the prosecuting Attorney General Sir Edward Coke, ‘the greatest treasons that ever were plotted in England and concern the greatest King that ever was of England’. Coke was far from being a ‘Hanging Judge’ and his great works on human rights and especially his Institutes of the Lawes of England are ranked with the Magna Carta in importance and provided the foundation of both British and American law. Nevertheless, his methods of execution were, for our modern taste, barbarous, revolting and unimaginably cruel. There were few ‘last words’. Rookwood, spotting his wife in the gathered crowd, called out to her to pray for him. Encouraged by her response, he ‘prayed God to make the King a Roman Catholic’. Winter, contradicting Bates, said that the Jesuits had nothing to do with the plot. Guy Fawkes was so weak, he had to be half carried up the ladder to the hangman’s scaffold. Father Henry Garnet, the Superior of the English Jesuits left his priest-hole hideout, complaining it was too uncomfortable and was immediately captured, tried and executed. Parliament then passed numerous anti-Recusant laws, the most severe in the history of England. Wealthy Roman Catholics who refused to attend a Protestant church at least once a year were fined three-quarters of their fortunes.

When all is said and done and the barbarity of the 17th century is taken into account, this writer believes it is still right and proper to celebrate Guy Fawkes’ Night with thanks to God for a tremendous deliverance. Our prayer should always be ‘Give peace in our time, O Lord.’ But what use is this peace if we neglect to preach the Gospel in our Master’s soul-saving service?

“Remember, remember the fifth of November.
The gunpowder treason and plot. I know no reason why the gunpowder treason Should ever be forgot.”

10 W. Cobbett, State Trials, 1809, p. 161 and passim in this paper.
I cannot find in all the Bible, the name archangel but twice; once in 1 Thessalonians 4:16; and once in Jude 1:9. And as for archangels, as if there were more than one, or many, the very name itself implies that it is an error. For arch-angel signifies the first, or prince of the order of angels, consequently, there cannot be many firsts, without making it necessary to alter the term. So that, what is said of angels and archangels, together in hymns of praise, seems to be founded in a misapprehension of Scripture in relation to one arch-angel only, for the word of God speaks of no more, and the name is not plural.

The question is, who is this archangel, twice, and but twice only, noticed as such in Scripture? If the reader will consult both places, he will find that of whomsoever it be spoken of it is only spoken of him in office. And if the reader will compare the passage, particularly in Jude, with what the prophet Daniel saith, (Daniel 10:13-21), I conceive that both together will throw light upon the subject. “Lo!” saith the prophet, “Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me.” And again, he calls the same person, (Daniel 10:21) “Michael, your prince.” In the passage of the apostle Jude’s Epistle, he saith, “Michael, the archangel, when contending with the devil, he disputed about the body of Moses.” It should seem, therefore, pretty plain, that this Michael is one and the same person. In one he is called prince, in the other, archangel. But in both, it is evident, that the name is a name of office.

For my own part, I do not hesitate to believe that it is Christ Himself, which is meant by the name archangel in Scripture; and of whom it is said, in relation to His coming at the last day, that “he shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels” (2 Thessalonians 1:7). And elsewhere, the Lord Jesus describes this advent in similar words (Matthew 25:31; Zechariah 14:5; Matthew 16:27). Whether this appearing of Christ hath respect to His coming in His thousand years’ reign upon earth, or to the universal judgment, the sense of the words (in reference to the subject of the archangel we are now considering) is the same.

Some have thought that the archangel spoken of by Jude cannot mean Christ, because it is there said, that he durst not bring against Satan a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee. But this is not an objection in the smallest degree. The Lord Jesus durst not do it; not because He dared not, or had not the power, but because it belonged not to the Redeemer’s character, “who, when reviled, reviled not again, ... but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously” (see Zechariah 3:1-4). Here we have a similar contest. Now that He who spake was the Lord, appears by His saying, “Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with a change of raiment.” Hence, therefore, it is plain from this passage, that the angel before whom Joshua, as a type of the church, stood, was Christ, who is elsewhere called the angel of the covenant (Malachi 3:1), the same as Jacob spake of (Genesis 48:16). So that both the angel of the covenant and the archangel are one and the same; and both spoken of in the nature of the office and character of Christ, for Christ “took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham” (Hebrews 2:16).

From the whole view of this subject, I venture to believe, that, as Scripture speaks but of one arch-angel, and that officially, that archangel is Christ. For on the supposition, that it be not so, it becomes a matter of greater difficulty to say, who this arch-angel can be. If it be not Christ, it must be some created angel. And is there a created angel higher than Christ. If, while Jesus is called the angel of the covenant, is there an archangel also, above this angel of the covenant? I leave these questions with anyone not satisfied with my former observations, that the Lord Jesus Christ is the person spoken of twice in Scripture as the arch-angel.
New Focus Conference 2016

Datchworth Village Hall
Datchworth Green
Knebworth, Hertfordshire, SG3 6TL

Preachers:
Clay Curtis (Rocky Hill, NJ, USA)
Allan Jellett (Knebworth, UK)
Harry Qazi (Merton, UK)
Jared Smith (Kensington, UK)
Peter Meney (Great Falls, MT, USA)

TIMES ... CATERING ... NEW & SECONDHAND BOOKS
Services begin at 11.00am on Saturday 28th May followed by afternoon sessions and an evening session at 7.00pm. We shall start at 10:30am on Sunday 29th. Following Sunday morning’s sermon there will be a communion service. There is no charge for the conference. Refreshments on Saturday and prior to departure on Sunday are courtesy of Knebworth Grace Church. To assist us with catering we request all those planning to attend to contact Allan Jellett 07403 375393 or email: allan.jellett@me.com. A new and secondhand book stall will be provided by Lorna and Jeremy Roe from Christian Bookshop Ossett.

DIRECTIONS FOR TRAVEL
The B197 runs between Stevenage and Welwyn. From either direction (e.g. A1(M) Jn 7 at Stevenage or A1(M) Jn 6 at Welwyn) follow signs for Knebworth (from Jn 7 follow Ware, then Knebworth signs; from Jn 6 follow Stevenage A1(M) North until you see Knebworth signs but do not re-join A1(M)). In Woolmer Green about a mile south of Knebworth on the B197 take the road signposted Datchworth and Watton (Mardleybury Rd) opposite The Chequers public house. Follow the road for less than a mile into Datchworth. About 150yds after the Datchworth name sign, just past a small triangle junction on the left, the entrance to the village hall is on your left. For Satnav use the postcode or co-ordinates 51.8501N and -0.1638E.

Saturday 28th - Sunday 29th May 2016

Saturday 28th May, 2016
11:00 am Welcome
11:20 am Sermon: Peter Meney
12:30 pm Buffet lunch
2:00 pm Sermon: Jared Smith
2:50 pm Break
3:10 pm Sermon: Harry Qazi
4:00 pm Break
4:20 pm Sermon: Allan Jellett
5:30 pm Dinner
7:00 pm Sermon: Clay Curtis
Finish between 8:00-8:30 pm

Sunday 29th May, 2016
10:30 am Sermon: Clay Curtis
12:00 pm Communion: Allan Jellett
12:30 pm Light lunch and depart