THAT THE PURPOSE OF GOD ACCORDING TO ELECTION MIGHT STAND
The Faith Of God’s Elect

Faith is precious. The Bible tells us so. Yet, not the bare existence of faith. In that sense, faith, in and of itself, is meaningless. I doubt there is a person on the face of this earth who does not claim to have faith in something or other, even if it is simply their own opinion.

Similarly, the term ‘people of faith’ has become an all-purpose description to gather together every flavour of religion and all manner of weird and wonderful notions. Christians, Jews, Muslims and flat-earthers are part of the ‘faith community’ but they are not all going to heaven.

The Bible says the just shall live by faith and the faith by which the just live is called by Paul the faith of God’s elect. There is natural faith and there is the faith of Christ. There is faith borne of human wisdom and faith from above that is spiritual and created by God the Holy Spirit. Thus when the Lord Jesus Christ says, “Thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace”, it is the faith of Christ graciously gifted, the faith of God’s elect that is in view, exercised in humble worship and reliance upon the Saviour.

James Wells, a London preacher of the nineteenth century, once said, “For myself, I believe that the substituting of mere mental and moral conversion—this mere natural faith for the faith of God’s elect—I believe that there are more souls deceived by this doctrine than by any other found in all Protestant Christendom”.

Wells is speaking of the great error of manmade religion. Hell will be populated by damned souls who earnestly followed their creed or confession, obeyed their preacher’s teachings and with his (or her) connivance imagined themselves fit for heaven. In their heads they believed, by their conduct they observed all the norms of custom and practice their church required, and yet they are not saved. What confusion will follow those words of Christ in that day, “Depart from me, I never knew you.”

The faith of God’s elect is belief in the being of God, and trust in His promises as revealed to the church in the person and redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ. JEHOVAH, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, has revealed Himself as “forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin” and giving eternal life to the church in Christ Jesus. Faith is giving credit to this Divine testimony, and relying upon God’s faithfulness for the fulfilment of it.

Not the glory and wonder of the promise; but the glory, wonder, and faithfulness of the Promiser is the proper object of faith. To believe, and rest in the almighty Promiser and His assurances in Christ, the Godman, is faith. “Acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness” is faith.

The possession of the faith of God’s elect and the exercise of it in this world is the gift of God. “Unto you,” says Paul, “it is given to believe” (Philippians 1:29). And every truly awakened and regenerated believer finds reason, to cry out, as the apostle did to Christ, “Lord, increase our faith” (Luke 17:5).

---

1 James Wells (1803-1872). A number of James Wells’ sermons and tracts can be found at www.surreytabernaclepulpit.com
"I Have Much People"

We preach the Gospel to every creature under heaven, not knowing where the hidden ones of Christ’s church are, but rejoicing in the glorious certainty that by the preaching of the everlasting Gospel, every elect sinner will be gathered in. A remarkable instance of the truth of this statement is Acts 18:9, 10. “Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city.”

The Lord Jesus declares, ‘I have much people in the covenant of grace, whom I have redeemed, but who are as yet unconverted, as yet ungathered, but who shall be converted and shall be gathered by the preaching of the everlasting Gospel. What a beautiful testimony to the success which shall attend the faithful preaching of the Gospel. It shall be continued in a place till every one of the Lord’s redeemed there is revealed by it. Now let us mark the word of the Lord to Paul. Did He say, go and offer the Gospel to every one in Corinth, and see who will accept it? No, but preach it, that I may thereby gather in my hidden ones; hidden to thine eyes, O Paul, but not hidden to mine. Therefore, preach it to all, that I may gather in my people thereby.
Thirty-seven years ago, I had a long bout with cancer. The Lord our God graciously and wisely sent the disease. And He graciously and wisely healed me of the disease. I am thankful both for the experience of it and for God’s deliverance from it. Another time, twenty years ago, right in the middle of a long, long series of cobalt treatments when neither I nor my doctors knew whether I was more likely to live or to die — I was weaker physically, mentally, and emotionally than I ever imagined I could be — at that critical hour, a friend sent me a card. It had no comments at all. It did not even say, ‘Get well’ on it. It simply had a Scripture reference written out on it. I would not have known who sent it, had he not put his return address on it. The card was not even signed. However, when I turned to the text written out on the card and read it, being blessed of God to my heart, it did more for me and gave me greater strength and peace than all the letters, cards, and visits I received from my many friends around the world. Their words were sweet, kind, thoughtful, and greatly appreciated; but God’s Word was effectual! That word from God is found in Romans 16:20. I pray that God the Holy Spirit will make it effectual to you as you read these lines, ‘And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.’

These studies were borne from my personal experience of God’s great goodness in Christ and of the blessed power of His Word to comfort, strengthen, and rejoice the hearts of His saints. They are written for the glory of God and the benefit of His people who, as long as they are in this world, are now greatly oppressed by Satan.

As I write, I cannot avoid thinking of dear friends, saints of God, enduring great trials of faith. It may be your own heart is presently being tried, overwhelmed with sorrows, trials, or temptations that seem simply too great to endure. If that is the case, take heart. If you are indeed a believer, if you trust the Lord Jesus Christ, this is God’s word to you ‘And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.’
The Lord God promises all His elect a sure, speedy, and complete triumph over Satan. Let me show you three things clearly set before us by the Holy Spirit in Romans 16:20.

The God Of Peace

First, the Apostle Paul was inspired by the Holy Spirit to give us a suitable title for our God, ‘the God of peace’. This title for God is found nowhere except in the writings of the Apostle Paul. But what a suitable title this is for our God, ‘the God of peace’ (Romans 15:33; Philippians 4:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; Hebrews 13:20).

In the immediate context, Paul is contrasting the work of Satan, which was manifest in strife and division, with the work of God, which is peace. The church at Rome had been enduring great turmoil from men who had, by doctrine contrary to the gospel, created strife and division in the church (vv. 17, 18). ‘Only by pride cometh contention.’ Pride ‘stirreth up strife’ (Proverbs 13:10; 28:25). And the proud doctrines of Arminian, freewill, works religion, the proud teachings of self-righteousness and legalism are the things ‘contrary to the doctrine’ of the gospel which cause divisions and offences in the kingdom of God. Therefore, Paul tells us to mark those who teach such doctrines and avoid them. As we do, ‘the God of peace will bruise Satan under’ our heels, and the church of God will be at peace. That is the contextual interpretation of Paul’s words. Still, I cannot avoid asking, ‘Why did the Holy Spirit inspire Paul to give this title to our God?’

God is called, ‘the God of peace’, because He is the Author, Cause, and Giver of all peace; temporal, spiritual, and eternal. God alone can truthfully declare, ‘I make peace’ (Isaiah 45:7). Civil peace in the nation is God’s gift. Domestic peace in the home is God’s work. Spiritual peace in the heart can be given by none but God Himself. However, this title for our God arises primarily from the fact He is the Source, Cause, and Giver of ‘peace which passeth understanding’, in His saints and in His church.

His thoughts toward us were ‘thoughts of peace’ from everlasting (Jeremiah 29:11). The covenant of grace, which secured our salvation from eternity, is a ‘covenant of peace’ made between God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit before the world began (Isaiah 54:10; Ezekiel 34:25; 37:26). Because our heavenly Father is ‘the God of peace’, He appointed His dear Son to be the Peacemaker between men and God. It pleased God to reconcile all things to Himself by Christ (Colossians 1:19-22). The Lord God laid upon His Son the chastisement of our peace (Isaiah 53:5).

It is ‘the God of peace’ who, by His Holy Spirit, speaks peace to our consciences when the blood of Christ is effectually applied to guilty souls (Hebrews 9:14). We find happiness and satisfaction in this world only to the extent ‘the peace of God’ rules our hearts and minds (Colossians 3:5). The peace of God is peace which He gives in the believer’s heart. It is a peace from God that goes out in every direction to God again. It is the peace of reconciliation to God in Christ, the peace of confident faith in the wisdom and goodness of His providence, the peace of brotherly love, and the peace of a blessed hope with regard to eternity.

A Sure Promise

Second, the Spirit of God inspired Paul to proclaim a sure promise for the tried. This is not a promise to everyone who is tried. When men and women live without faith in Christ, while they live as rebels to God, there are no words...
of comfort to be found for them or promises of goodness and grace given to them. The promises of God are not for unbelievers. If you are yet a rebel to grace and a rebel against God, there is only two promises from God you can claim as your own, ‘The soul that sinneth, it shall die’, and, ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved!’ Yet this is a sure promise to every tried, tempted, troubled believer, ‘the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.’ Victory is sure; and it will come speedily! ‘The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.’ Yet a little while, and He that shall come will come. When Satan seems to have prevailed, and you are ready to give up, He will come! And when God arises to help, ‘He shall bruise Satan under your feet’ with utmost speed (Genesis 3:15; Psalm 91:13; Mark 16:18). As Christ, the seed of the woman bruised the serpent's head, so, too, we that are Christ's shall tread Satan under our feet. The Apostle does not say we shall bruise Satan under our feet, but God will do it. Yet, neither does Paul say God will bruise Satan under His feet, but rather, ‘the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet’!

Do you see what Paul is telling us? Whatever it is by which Satan now accuses you, opposes you, and distresses you, soon he who disturbs your peace shall trouble and molest you no more! If Satan was, for a time, permitted to harass our Master, why not us? Yet, as surely as our Saviour triumphed over him, so too must we! Our Lord Jesus bruised the serpent's head for us at Calvary (John 12:31-33). He conquered Satan and spoiled his house when He saved us by His almighty grace (Matthew 12:29; Mark 3:27). In delivering our souls from troubles and temptations, by which Satan accuses us, disturbs our peace, and harasses us with doubts, fears, and confusion, our God bruises him under our heels (Lamentations 3:21-33). Yet, the promise under consideration is a declaration that you and I shall ultimately prevail over our adversary, the devil. Soon we shall be out of range of the serpent's hiss as well as out of his reach. Grace shall win the day. We are, and must forever be, 'more than conquerors' through the Lord Jesus Christ. Hold out a while longer. Persevere steadfast in the faith. Be patient just a little while longer. ‘Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord.’ Soon, the Red Sea of your woes will open before you. You will pass through the sea as upon dry land. When you have reached the other side, you will

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.” —John Kent
see all your enemies dead upon the shore. Then you will laugh and sing triumphantly the song of Moses and of the Lamb. Soon, very soon, our God shall remove us from the sphere in which Satan operates.

‘The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.’ Study this promise carefully and understand its doctrine. It is God’s promise to every tried, troubled, Satan-harassed believer. Satan is under God’s control. He is not a rival to God, but a creature of God’s making. He is God’s devil. He cannot harm you. He is a roaring lion; but he has neither fangs nor claws. Christ pulled them out at Calvary and bound him with the chain of His sovereign omnipotence (John 12:31; Revelation 20:1-3). The only reason God allows him to roar against us is to keep us clinging to Christ. Soon you will laugh at Satan and sing for joy over all your troubles in this world. You will realize that Satan was never allowed to do anything that did not serve the interests of your immortal soul. He was created for that purpose (Hebrews 1:14); and, though he rebels against it with every fibre of his being, he will serve that purpose.

When the Lord God is done with our old adversary, He will cast him into the pit of fire and brimstone and consign him to the place of everlasting torment. Then, not until then, but then, we shall fully understand this promise ‘The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.’ What will happen in the meantime? How can we go on with the heartaches and troubles that are crushing upon our souls? You may be thinking, ‘I need some help now.’ You will find our third lesson in the last sentence of Romans 16:20.

A Blessed Benediction

Here, the Apostle Paul was inspired to write out for us a blessed benediction for the chosen people of God. ‘The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.’ The good-will of Christ is toward you. The good work of Christ shall be in you. If the grace of Christ is toward us, who or what can be against us? What is implied in this blessed benediction of grace? Let me show you these five things, and when I am done, tell me if you are not comforted and encouraged!

1. If grace comes from the Lord Jesus Christ, then Jesus Christ is God, because grace is the gift and operation of God alone (Ephesians 2:8).
2. All who are redeemed by the blood of Christ are supplied with grace from Christ.

Would He shed His blood for you and then withhold His grace from you? Never! (Ephesians 1:6). Every redeemed sinner has, in Christ, a rightful, legitimate claim upon all the fulness of God’s grace. Forgiving grace, justifying grace, regenerating grace, sanctifying grace, and preserving grace, all grace belongs to all for whom Christ died (Ephesians 1:3).

3. The grace of Christ is sufficient for us to meet our every need in this world, even when Satan buffets us (2 Corinthians 12:9).
4. The grace of God in Jesus Christ will bring us to glory at last. Grace is glory begun. Glory is grace complete. Both are the gifts of our Lord Jesus Christ. ‘The Lord will give grace and glory’ (Psalm 84:11).
5. The grace of God in Christ is sure to His people and just as sure is heavenly glory, too. ‘Amen’!

Amen

That word, ‘Amen’, refers equally to the title ascribed to God, the promise God will ‘bruise Satan under your feet shortly’, and the blessing of ‘grace and glory’ from Christ. To all these things the Holy Spirit says ‘Amen!’ ‘So be it!’ ‘So shall it be!’ ‘Amen!’ Read the promise this way ‘The God of peace, Amen! Shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly, Amen! The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen!’

“Some people need their faith to lean on”

This is what my wife’s oncologist said to us when we told him we were believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. He had just told my wife there was no cure for her brain cancer, and being a very nice man he proceeded to offer his sympathy. This is when I told him we were believers in the Lord Jesus, and this is when he said, “Some people need their faith to lean on.” I wanted to scream out, “No, I am not leaning on my faith; I am leaning on the Lord of Glory.” My poor, weak faith can’t hold itself up, much less can it hold us up with our present burden. Some people talk about faith as if it were their god. “Oh,” you hear them say, “I would never have made it without my faith. Oh, I am so thankful my faith was strong. Oh, I am so happy I hung on to my faith, etc.”

A faith that has itself for its object is a shadow. A faith that feels itself strong is no more than presumption. Faith looks away from itself to Jesus (Hebrews12:2). Faith leans wholly upon its Beloved as it sees Him revealed in His written Word. “Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?” (Song Of Solomon 8:5).

True faith never leans on itself!

Bruce Crabtree

NEW FOCUS  PRINTABLE EDITION APRIL 2019
I should not have thought it necessary to have offered a single observation on this word, considered in the general acceptation of it, for every one cannot but know its obvious meaning. But it may be proper, notwithstanding, to observe, that as in its literal sense, the bowels mean the entrails, so when used figuratively, it refers to the heart and the affections. Hence, it is said of the patriarch Joseph, that at beholding his brother, “his bowels did yearn upon him” (Genesis 43:30). And the Lord himself is represented as expressing His tenderness for Ephraim under the same similitude; “Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still; therefore, my bowels are troubled for him. I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord” (Jeremiah 31:20).

But when the word is spoken in reference to the person of Christ in His human nature, here it is not figuratively used, but literally; and the meaning of it is uncommonly blessed and sweet. If the reader will turn to Psalm 40:8, he will find Jesus thus speaking by the Spirit of prophecy, “I delight to do thy will, O my God! yea, thy law is within my heart.” The margin of the Bible renders it, within my bowels, meaning, that so perfectly holy and pure was the human nature of Christ, that the law of His Father was incorporated in His very being; an inwrought holiness mixed up and becoming His person and His existence. What a precious blessed view doth it afford of the Lord Jesus!

And what I beg the reader also particularly to remark, this purity, this holiness of the Lord Jesus in our nature, is, to all intents and purposes, that holiness in which JEHOVAH beholds His church in Jesus. This, I believe, is not so generally understood nor considered by the faithful as it ought; but it is what the Scriptures of God, in every part, warrant. Jesus becoming our Surety is expressly said to have been made both sin and a curse for His redeemed, that “they might be made the righteousness God in him” (2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 3:13). And what a blessedness is there contained in this one view of the completeness of the church in Jesus? So that, in the very moment that the child of God feels the workings of corruption within him, and is groaning under a body of sin and death, which he carries about with him, though he sees nothing in himself but sin and imperfection, yea, sometimes, as it appears to him, growing imperfections, yet looking to the Lord Jesus as his Surety, and considering the Redeemer’s holiness, and not anything in himself, as the standard of justification, here he rests his well-founded hope. This was blessedly set forth by the Holy Ghost: (Isaiah 45:24) “Surely, shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength; even to him shall men come, and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed.”

Extract from Robert Hawker’s Poor Man’s Dictionary
James Hervey was most practical and sober in his counselling. He never approached a person on the sick bed or one suffering from loss of a dear one or great personal problems without talking about human sin and divine grace. He never gave a seeker or suffering person reason to feel sorry for himself or feel that circumstances were being extra hard on a person. Nor did he ever sit down by an individual who was complaining about his lot and complain with him. At times, his counsel will certainly seem harsh to a modern spoilt mind who believes that sympathy with the nature of the sufferer is the best sign of a good Christian counsellor. Whilst showing strong Christian love for a soul and understanding of his predicament, Hervey never hesitated to look to God as the instigator of afflictions for a purpose often hidden in the divine love. Writing to one suffering friend at the end of 1747, he says:

You well know that all afflictions, of what kind soever, proceed from God: I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil; I the Lord do all these things (Isaiah 45:7). They spring not from the dust; are not the effects of a random chance, but the appointment of an all-wise, all foreseeing God, who intends them all for the good of His creatures. This I think, is the fundamental argument for resignation and the grand source of comfort. This should be our first reflection and our sovereign support. He that gave me my being, and gave His own Son for my redemption, He has assigned me this suffering. What He ordains, who is boundless love, must be good; what He ordains, who is unerring wisdom must be proper.

This reconciled Eli to the severest doom that ever was denounced: it is the Lord and though grievous to human nature much more grievous to parental affection, yet it is unquestionably the best; therefore, I humbly acquiesce I kiss the awful decree, and say from my very soul, let Him do what seemeth Him good (1 Samuel 3:18).

This calmed the sorrows of Job under all his unparalleled distresses: The Lord gave me affluence and prosperity; the Lord has taken all away: rapacious hands and warring elements were only His instruments; therefore I submit, I adore, I bless His holy name.

This consolation fortified the man Christ Jesus at the approach of His inconceivably bitter agonies: the cup which, not my implacable enemies, but my Father, by their administration, has given me, shall I not drink it? It is your Father, dear sir, your heavenly Father, who loves you with an everlasting love, that has mingled some gall with your portion in life. Sensible of the beneficent hand from which the visitation comes, may you always bow your head in patient submission; and acknowledge, with the excellent but afflicted monarch Hezekiah, Good is the word of the Lord concerning me (2 Kings 20:19).

All afflictions are designed for blessings; to do us good at the latter end, however they may crop our desires, or disquiet our minds at present. Happy (says the Spirit of inspiration, and not wretched) is the man whom God correcteth (Job 5:17); and for this reason, because His merciful chastenings, though not joyous but grievous, yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby (Hebrews 12:11). God's ways are not as our ways. The children whom we love we are apt to treat with all the soft blandishments and fond caresses of profuse indulgence; and too, too often cocker them to their hurt, if not to their ruin. But the Father of spirits is wise in His love, and out of kindness severe. Therefore it is said, Whom he loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth (Hebrews 12:6). Would you not, dear sir, be a child of that everlasting Father, whose favour is better than life? Affliction is one sign of your adoption to this inestimable relation. Would you not be an 'heir of the inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away'?

Affliction is your path to this blissful patrimony. Through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of heaven (Acts 14:22). Would you not be made
like your ever-blessed and amiable Redeemer? He was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and every disciple must expect to be as his master.

Perhaps you may think your affliction peculiarly calamitous; and that, if it had been of some other kind, you could more cheerfully submit, more easily bear it. But you are in the hands of an all-wise Physician, who joins to the bowels of infinite love the discernment of infinite wisdom. He cannot mistake your case. He sees into the remotest events; and, though He varies His remedies, always prescribes with the exactest propriety to every one’s particular state. Assure yourself, therefore the visitation which He appoints is the very properest recipe in the dispensatory of heaven. Any other would have been less fit to convey saving health to your enjoyment of the temporal blessings which may, perhaps, be yet in store for you.

Should you inquire what benefits accrue from afflictions. Many and precious. They tend to wean us from the world. When our paths are strewed with roses, when nothing but music and odours float around; how apt are we to be enamoured with our present condition, and forget the crown of glory, forget Jesus and everlasting ages: But affliction, with a faithful though harsh voice, rouses us from the sweet delusion. Affliction warns our hearts to rise and depart from these inferior delights, because here is not our rest. True and lasting joys are not here to be found. The sweeping tempest, and the beating surge, teach the mariner to prize the haven, where undisturbed repose waits his arrival. In like manner, disappointments, vexations, anxieties, crosses teach us to long for those happy mansions, where all tears will be wiped away from the eyes (Revelation 21:4); all anguish banished from the mind; nothing, nothing subsist, but the fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore.

Afflictions tend to bring us to Christ. Christ has unspeakable and everlasting blessings to bestow: such as the world can neither give nor take away; such as are sufficient to pour that oil of gladness into our souls, which will swim above the waves of any earthly tribulation. But are we not, dear sir, are we not most unhappily indolent and inattentive to these blessings, in the gay hours of uninterrupted prosperity? It is very observable that scarce any made application to our divine Redeemer, in the days of His abode with us, but the children of affliction. The same spirit of supineness still possesses mankind. We undervalue, we disregard the Lord Jesus, and the unspeakable privileges of His gospel, while all proceeds smoothly, and nothing occurs to discompose the tenor of our tranquillity. But when misfortunes harass our circumstances, or sorrows oppress our minds; then we are willing, we are glad, we are earnest, to find rest in Christ.

In Christ Jesus there is pardon of sins. Sin is a burden, incomparably sorer than any other distress. Sin would sink us into the depths of eternal ruin, and transfix us with the agonies of endless despair. But Christ has, at, the price of His very life, purchased pardon for all that fly to Him. He has borne the guilt of their sins in His own body on the tree (1 Peter 2:24). Have they deserved condemnation? He has sustained it in their stead. Are they obnoxious to the wrath of God? He has endured it as their substitute; He has made satisfaction, complete satisfaction for all their iniquities (Romans 3:25, 26). So that justice itself, the most rigorous justice, can demand no more. O that distresses may prompt us to prize this mercy! May incite us to desire ardently this blessedness! Then it will be good for us to have been afflicted (Psalm 119:71).

Christ has obtained for us the gift of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 3:2), to sanctify our hearts, and renew our natures. An unrenewed carnal mind, is ten thousand times more to be lamented, more to be dreaded, than any external calamities. And nothing can cure us of this most deadly disease but the sanctification of the Spirit. The divine Spirit alone is able to put the fear of God in our souls, and awaken the love of God in our hearts (Jeremiah 32:40). His influences suggest such awful and amiable thoughts to our minds, as will be productive of these Christian graces. This sacred principle subdues our corruptions, and conforms us to our blessed Redeemer’s image. How is this best gift of Heaven
disesteemed by the darlings of the world, who have nothing to vex them? But how precious is it, how desirable, to the heirs of sorrow? They breathe after it, as the thirsty hart panteth for the water brooks. They cannot be satisfied without its enlightening, purifying, cheering communications. This is all their request, and all their relief, ‘that the spirit of Christ may dwell in their hearts’ (Romans 8:9); may enable them to possess their souls in patience (Luke 21:19), and derive never-ending good from momentary evils. Before I close these lines, permit me to recommend one expedient, which yet is not mine, but the advice of an inspired apostle. If any be afflicted, let him pray. Dear sir, fly to God in all your adversity, pour out your complaints before Him in humble supplication, and show Him your trouble (Psalm 142:2). When I am in heaviness, says a holy sufferer, I will think upon God (Psalm 61:2), — His omnipotent power, His unbounded goodness, whose ear is ever open to receive the cry of the afflicted. When the psalmist was distressed on every side, without were fightings, within were fears, the throne of grace was the place of his refuge; I give myself to prayer (Psalm 109:3), was his declaration. This method, we read, Hannah took, and you cannot but remember the happy issue (1 Samuel 1:10). Let me entreat you to imitate these excellent examples; frequently bend your knees, and more frequently lift up your heart to the Father of mercies, and God of all consolation; not doubting, but that through the merits of His dear Son, through the intercession of your compassionate High-priest; He will hear your petitions, will comfort you under all your tribulations, and make them all work together for your infinite and eternal good.

In the meantime, I shall not cease to pray, that the God of all power and grace may vouchsafe to bless THESE CONSIDERATIONS, and render them as balm to your aching heart, and as food to the divine life in your mind. I am, dear sir, with much esteem, compassion, and respect, your very sincere well-wisher, &c.¹

¹ Works, Letter XLVII.

SERIOUS LISTENERS

An old preacher is reported to have said, “I preach as one who may never preach again, as a dying man to dying men.” How solemn a thought that is to those of us charged with preaching. Let us not tickle the ears of dying men with the trifles of earthly issues and vain religion.

But does this principle not apply in some way to the one who listens? Ought we not say every time we come to worship, “I listen as one who may never hear again, as a dying man among dying men”? God grant us the same seriousness in hearing as we expect in preaching!

Joseph Terrell
My Desires On A Sunday Morning

Where shall I find my God to-day?  
Where do God’s people meet to pray?  
For I would join in praise and pray’r;  
Lord, tell me who, and tell me where.

I want to go and hear of Him  
Who died to put away my sin.  
I seem to feel a heav’nly frame,  
I want to praise my Saviour’s name.

Where shall I go? Where is the place  
Where I can hear ’tis all of grace  
Salvation finish’d and complete  
For all Jehovah’s chosen sheep?

O Lord, direct my steps aright,  
Where I may catch a blessed sight  
Of Him who bled upon the tree,  
Of Him who bled and died for me.

No other sight will do for me,  
But Calv’ry’s mount, but Calv’ry’s tree  
Because I know my mighty sum  
Was paid off there by God the Son.

To God’s own house I would repair,  
Where Christ is preach’d I would be there,  
I long to hear my Saviour’s voice,  
And with God’s ransom’d ones rejoice.

Lord, I’ve been wretched all the week:  
Where do Thy chosen people meet?  
Where can I go to meet with Thee,  
Salvation preach’d both full and free?

O could I find the blessed spot,  
’Tis there I would cast in my lot,  
Where I can go and hear of Him  
Who died to put away my sin.

Because I was belov’d of God,  
I was redeem’d by precious blood,  
These are the tidings suit my case,  
Some like to have it works and grace.

How I rejoice to hear that man  
Who’s not asham’d to preach the plan,  
Redemption’s plan, both full and free,  
Redemption settled on the tree.

Arminians may say what they please,  
God will accomplish His decrees;  
His purpose was to save that man  
He chose in His eternal plan.

’Tis only those shall see His face,  
’Tis only those He calls by grace,  
Because they were belov’d of God  
Christ hath redeem’d them with His blood.

Daniel Herbert was a preacher and writer of hymns and poems. He published three volumes, entitled “Hymns and Poems, doctrinal and experimental, for the Citizens of Zion who are longing to know their Election of God, and who love Evangelical Truths.” Vol. 1, 1801; Vol. 2, 1819; Vol. 3, 1827. He was a minister at the Great Meeting House, Sudbury. He lived in Plough Lane and was buried in All Saints churchyard, on the north side of the church. The parish register contains this entry: Daniel Herbert Sen., of this parish. Died 29th Aug 1833. Buried 5th Sep 1833. Aged 82 Years, (a widower).
It is always encouraging to discover we are not alone when we face a problem or have to struggle with a challenge in life. For believers in Christ the scriptures provide practical examples of men and women who have travelled the pilgrim’s way before us, learning and experiencing what it is to be a stranger in a strange land.

When Micah said “Woe is me” at the beginning of chapter seven in his little prophecy he was declaring effectively, “What a miserable man I am. How wearisome my life has become.” It might seem strange to hear a gospel preacher make such a statement. After all, are not preachers the ones charged with comforting and encouraging the church? If they are depressed, what hope for the rest of us!

It is interesting to note what causes Micah to lament. What is it has provoked this man of God to so much grief? Simply this, he cannot find a spiritual man with whom to fellowship; an upright man, a kindred spirit, with whom to worship God!

Perhaps knowing this we might feel a little more sympathetic towards this lonely soul. Do we imagine the church in the Old Testament was strong and vibrant and faithful? Certainly, there were moments, periods when it seems a widespread recognition of the work of God in the nation Israel did occur, yet mostly it seems the Lord’s true people, the spiritual people, were only ever a remnant, widely scattered, frequently isolated, often downcast.

In many ways Micah is like us, or we like him. If we are blessed with the companionship of gospel believers, we are blessed indeed. The company of men and women redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ and holy before God by imputed righteousness, is precious. We should treasure such fellowship and the holy moments shared with the Lord’s little ones. They are a precious gift from the Holy Spirit.

Yet many of us struggle to find such fellowship. Perhaps because there is no gospel church near enough for us to attend, perhaps because age and illness have restricted our movement. So we learn to make do with personal reading or substitute listening to sermons second hand in the privacy of our homes rather than sharing lively, spiritual communion with the church of Christ.

Micah felt alone. He felt bereft of fellowship. But more, he felt withered on the inside, like the bruised, crushed and wilted grapes left behind on the vine after the harvest had been gathered. He felt rejected. He felt abandoned. He felt vulnerable and defenceless. He felt miserable.

Now some will say to Micah, “Buck up. Things are not that bad.” Or advise him to make lemonade of lemons and enjoy a half full glass. But shall we mock the prophet? Shall we
WOE IS ME - NO WAIT!

diminish his words or prescribe some pills with our kitchen table wisdom to pep him up? The Holy Spirit has left us Micah’s testimony for a reason and his message is “Woe is me”.

And yet, Micah has left us with more than complaints. He has left us with a personal testimony of faith and hope. In the midst of his trial and in the absence of comfort from fellow saints the prophet throws himself upon the promises of God and His faithfulness. I like that. Here are five encouraging words to comfort the downcast in every age. From the lonely deserts of iron-age Israel to the cul-de-sacs of our modern hectic life, Micah still speaks to our deepest needs.

1. My God Will Hear Me

Despite the godlessness of his day Micah has faith. He writes, ‘Therefore I will look unto the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me’ (Micah 7:7).

This is an candid testimony from a tried and tested soul. Troubled believers do not, cannot abandon their faith. They cling to it in the midst of the storm. Beaten down children of God do not fall from grace. They fall back upon it. Like Peter they say to their Lord, ‘Where else shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.’ Troubled one, what are you going to do? ‘I will look to the Lord’, says Micah. Weary one, where are you going to turn? ‘I will wait for the Lord’, says the prophet. He is the God of my salvation, I have reason to believe He will hear me.

Let us say this another way. Let us take Micah’s words and give them a New Testament context. I will look to Jesus, ‘the author and finisher of my faith’ (Hebrews 12:2). I will wait upon Him the ‘Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come’ (1 Thessalonians 1:10). I will trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, the God of my salvation, my Sovereign King.

When all others desert me, when my own strength fails, when I feel alone and adrift, Christ is my Rock, Christ is my anchor, Christ is my all in all. I will commit all my cares, concerns and weariness to Christ. I will turn to Him for all my need, wait on His kindness, mercy and love, and I will prove Him faithful. Can you say this? Do you have Micah’s faith to trust God, to trust He hears you?

2. My Lord Shall Be A Light To Me

Weary saint, do you feel your enemy is winning? Do you fear the devil’s deviousness? Do you struggle with the world’s temptation and despise the weakness of your own flesh? Hear the prophet again. He speaks to your case, ‘Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD shall be a light unto me’ (Micah 7:8).

I admire the prophet’s honesty. He writes not, if I fall but when I fall. He writes not of perpetual glory-days like some modern ‘prayer warrior’ constantly advancing with a trail of spiritual victories in his wake. He says ‘when I sit in darkness’. Then, in the darkness, as I sit, the LORD shall be a light unto me. Fallen, darkened soul it is to you the Lord comes as an uplifting Light, perceived more brightly and gloriously for the darkness He dispels.

3. My Lord Shall Bring Me Forth

Trials can be bitter, complicated, and protracted. Their origin and their consequences may tax our patience and understanding but the Lord’s people know there will be an end. The Lord has promised to bring us forth to the light and someday we will see all our trouble in the light of His sovereign and providential purpose. Micah declares, ‘I will bear the indignation of the LORD, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me: he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness’ (Micah 7:9).

Micah speaks of feelings of guilt and troubled conscience. The reason for our trials may
be legion. But the man rejoices, too, to see redemption and taste victory from the Lord. How Satan, our enemy, rejoiced to see the church of Christ fallen, darkened, consumed with sin. But Christ has pleaded our cause, interceded in our case, carried our judgment, satisfied justice, proved Himself a worthy Saviour and Redeemer and provided Himself as the Lord our Righteousness.

4. My Lord Will Feed The Flock Of His Heritage
And, if for a time it appears the enemies of Christ are winning, do not despair, the Lord will feed His people. He will sustain, nourish, and provide for them, and prosper His purpose for your good and His glory.

‘Feed thy people with thy rod, the flock of thine heritage’ says Micah. Christ’s people are His sheep, His flock. He inherited them from His Father in covenant agreement. They shall be fed. The rod is the preacher, minister and administer of gospel truth to their hearts. By the rod marvellous things are revealed for the Lord declares to us “I will shew unto him marvellous things”. Marvellous gospel truths of atonement, substitution, and propitiation. Marvellous accomplishments of redemption, reconciliation, and divine peace.

He will cause His people to marvel at sin removed, iniquity pardoned, holiness bestowed, salvation granted, glory promised, and heaven opened for an everlasting habitation. In our gatherings and church services we shall encounter marvellous truths, truths to confound the nations and princes of this world but thrill the people of God. The miraculous deliverance of Israel from Egypt is our evidence. ‘According to the days of thy coming out of the land of Egypt will I shew unto him marvellous things’ (Micah 7:15). He who has brought us out of bondage will bring us into perfect rest.

5. The Lord Has Supplied Every Need
Brothers and sisters, consider our incomparable God. Micah began this chapter bewailing his condition and lamenting his loneliness. But as he progresses his mood changes, he concludes his assessment of our blessed Lord and Saviour by declaring, ‘who is a God like unto thee?’

It is fitting for us to ask ourselves this very question when the trials of our lives bring us low. Every objective consideration of our Saviour’s mighty accomplishments and gracious blessings is guaranteed to comfort the soul of the weary and heavy-laden, and encourage the downcast. Our God is a Saviour who pardons iniquity, delights in mercy, and sinks our sins in the depth of the sea.

The ‘remnant of his heritage’ is a beautiful description for the chosen of God. The elect, the anointed, the blessed of the Lord, are His little flock. Though insignificant to the world we are precious to our Beloved. Dear Micah, tried, tested and lonely Micah, is sustained in his recollections of God’s faithful promises, and so shall we be. He is built up by the gospel of free, sovereign grace, and so shall we be.

Whenever we encounter a verse like verse 20 the covenant love, covenant purpose and covenant grace of God is being referenced. ‘Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old.’

Hear the promise, observe the fulfilment, of these promises in the death of Christ. Here you will discover the truth and mercy of God to the church. Meditate upon the application of truth and mercy in the power of grace in your own personal experience. This promise is yours, child of God!

Micah said, “Woe is me”, but He ends upon a triumphant note of mercy, redemption, deliverance and the unfailing faithfulness of God. This revelation thrilled and blessed him. He learned what Moses learned, ‘And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee (Genesis 17:7).’

He felt what Isaiah felt, ‘Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness’ (Isaiah 41:10).

And He believed what Paul believed, ‘For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him’ (2 Corinthians 5:21).
Recently I finished writing my book *The Covenant of Grace and the People of God*, in which I strove to demonstrate the purpose of both Law and Grace within the Covenant of Grace. This work left me with the rather soothing conviction that New Covenant Theology (NCT) with its broken-covenant teaching was a lost cause and would make no headway into orthodox theology and especially mainstream Baptist thinking. Then I received the January, 2019 issue of the *Baptist Quarterly* of which I am a life-time subscriber. The above article immediately caught my attention as I have always been a severe critic of 'Preparationism' which I always understood as persuading sinners to follow a programme of spiritual exercises such as praying, Bible-reading, hymn-singing etc. so that they might come to faith. This questionable method was made clear to me recently by a visiting Baptist pastor. He told my wife and me how he enrolled unbelievers for his church choir. I asked him how still lost sinners could praise God for the blessings of the Christian life when they did not believe in them nor had ever received them. We also asked him what evangelistic purpose he had in mind with his action. Our friend’s answer came as a surprise. He believed that in the preparational singing of God’s salvation, his choir members would begin to believe what they were singing.

It was with this background that I turned to David Wenkel’s analysis of Article XXV of the First London Confession which Wenkel claims is ‘Anti-Preparational’. The Article states:

> That the tenders of the Gospel to the conversion of sinners (John 3:14,15; 1:12; Isaiah 55:1; John 7:37), is absolutely free, no way requiring, as absolutely necessary, any qualifications, preparations, terrors of the Law or preceding ministry of the Law, but only and alone the naked soul, (1 Timothy 1:15; Romans 4:5; 5:8) as a sinner and ungodly to receive Christ, as Christ, as crucified, dead and buried, and risen again, being made (Acts 5:30, 31; 2:36; 1 Corinthians 1:22-24) a Prince and a Saviour for such sinners.

I must confess that I have always considered the First London Confession as superior to the Second London Confession and I have always held that merely preaching Law without its place within the Covenant of Grace is wrong as Law was never meant to be a stand-alone way of salvation or condemnation in either the Old Testament or the New. This, however, is the way Wenkel appears to understand ‘the terrors of the Law’ and ‘preceding ministry of the Law’ though the passage in context is clearly refuting what Wenkel makes of it. Those old-time Baptists knew their Covenant Theology and are contrasting true Covenant-Gospel teaching with mere pulpit thumping efforts to frighten sinners to the cross. However, Wenkel clearly refers to this wrong use of the Law outlined in the Article as being ‘almost certainly’ that of Moses. Here Wenkel is mistaken. The Mosaic Law carried ‘tenors’ with it which were in keeping with the Covenant of Grace given to Abraham in God’s work of preparing a people for Himself through the mediation of Christ. One cannot place the Law outside of the Covenant of Grace as it has then no meaning or purpose.

Wenkel argues for the NCT position that the Mosaic Law is not an essential part of an eternal Covenant of Grace which was drawn up by the Holy Trinity from eternity leading to the foundation of the world for the calling in of Christ’s Bride, the Church. The Law given to Moses, it appears for Wenkel, was God’s Plan A which failed. His second covenant, or Plan B, then came as a completely New Covenant which is truly for ever. This appears to be a contradiction of Article X of the *First London Confession* which declares:

> Touching His office, Jesus Christ only is made the Mediator of the New Covenant, even the everlasting covenant of grace between God and man, to be perfectly and fully the Prophet, Priest and King of the Church of God for evermore.

Here, there is no talk of two covenants but one everlasting Covenant of Grace with Christ as its Mediator, Prophet, Priest and King. Christ’s Mediatorship was from the foundation of the
world as Article IX makes clear. Nevertheless, Wenkel, who has isolated Article XXV from its context, speaks of a historical, failed Covenant and an ‘ahistorical’ Covenant (whatever that means) which is eternally successful. The Bible, however, presents the one Covenant of Grace as being historical and eternal in the aevi-eternal sense of being introduced in time for eternity. There is nothing ‘ahistorical’ about the Father’s covenant with His Son to provide a way of salvation in Christ. We see, therefore, that Wenkel is unashamedly a New Covenant Theologian who, in the terms of Isaiah, that great One Covenant Theologian, turns God’s one-and-only plan of salvation in the one-and-only Covenant of Grace preached in the one-and-only everlasting Gospel upside down.\(^1\)

If the first step is not on firm ground, the second usually also falters. Wenkel now argues himself into believing there is thus a discontinuation between a supposed Mosaic Covenant and a New Covenant. However, the Mosaic Covenant as Moses himself emphasized, followed by Paul, was added to the Abrahamic Covenant which was eternal and of world-wide application. Furthermore, preaching concerning the New Covenant in the Old Testament was continually being renewed and reformed as Moses himself testified and nearly all the other Old Testament writers. Jeremiah clearly places the preaching of the New Covenant before the Mosaic addition because of pre-Mosaic covenant-breakers. Yet NCT-friend Wenkel claims that:

This willingness to see strong discontinuities between the Mosaic era and the New Covenant era reflects the Baptists’ distinctive doctrine of credo-baptism.

Such a willingness, thrust onto the First Confession, is solely a product of Wenkel’s independent thinking. The Old Testament ends with God’s plea to remember the Law of Moses His servant and the story of John the Baptist\(^2\) who baptized Christ as part of the Covenant of Grace which Zacharias\(^3\) and no less a personage than Gabriel announced was continuing in the New Testament where the people were admonished to ‘remember the Covenant’ of mercy. The latter word used here is synonymous with grace. Wenkel’s theology of cutting up the Covenant can hardly be used as an interpretation of or as an alternative to traditional Baptist doctrine.

Next, Wenkel repeatedly wonders, though his readers do not, why the 1644/1646 editions ‘do not cite passages of Scripture that one would expect?’ He quotes Galatians 3:23-25 here, obviously quite out of context, which he believes the early Baptists should have used. We must add, ‘Providing that they agreed with Wenkel’s interpretation of what they had written.’ To a less biased writer it would appear that Galatians 3:23-25 was not mentioned in the XXV Article because it had no application there and did not illustrate the point they were making. In typical NCT manner, Wenkel explains that as our Messiah has come and we have come to faith, we do not need a Schoolmaster, Guardian or Pedagogue. He concludes therefore the Law has been abolished. But what about those who are still under the Law and have not yet found their Messiah and are still under condemnation by the law until Grace enters their lives? What about those who are no longer under the Law but see in the Law portraits of God’s eternal righteousness? One does not take all the sign-posts down because the town has been reached. There are other travellers on the way.

Wenkel believes no Gentile is under the Law of Moses, quoting Paul’s words in Romans 2:14 as ‘proof’. Again, Wenkel is cutting out Paul’s words from the context which is that all sinners are covenant-breakers,\(^4\) though historically, many Gentiles outside of Palestine and its neighbouring countries did not know the Law, whether orally or in writing, they are now put under the same gospel obligations towards both Law and Grace as unbelieving Jews. Christ thus fulfilled the one Law for both Jews and Gentiles. He did not fulfil two separate laws. The Law and the Prophets also teach Gentiles that the just shall live by faith in Christ (v. 21), thus experiencing the tenor of the Law. In Chapter 4, Paul argues this gospel story was the same in Abraham’s days, remembering that he was the father in the faith to all nations, a message Paul continues. He then speaks of the action of the Law on all men without having to refer to distinctions between Jews and Gentiles which play no part in God’s salvation. This gospel is repeated in Galatians 1-3 and beyond. When Paul speaks of those

---

1 Isaiah 29:16.
2 Malachi 4:4 ff.
3 This is the message of Luke 1 and 2, esp. 1:72.
4 Romans 1:31.
under the curse of the Law in Galatians 3:16, he is not distinguishing between Jews and Gentiles.

As to be expected, Wenkel is also amazed Article XXV does not refer to Romans 2:14, and again it must be said that as the early Baptists obviously understood their Article differently to Wenkel, his ‘proof-texts’ are non-applicable.

Now, Wenkel becomes theologically very vague in arguing that the Gentiles have an unspecified ‘moral law’ written on their hearts. What does he mean by this ‘moral’ alternative to the Mosaic revelation and from where has he obtained his evidence? We might also add, why should he think the Article XXV authors divided up the Law into Wenkel’s three parts; the moral, the ceremonial and the judicial? There is no mention of a ‘moral law’ in the Article, just as there is no mention of Galatians 3:23-25 and no mention of Romans 2:14. However, Wenkel takes all the non-applicable ‘evidence’ he has collected to argue that Gentiles, because of their supposed ‘moral law’ written on their hearts, ‘are already prepared to receive Christ’. So now we are back to the problem of ‘duty faith’ which apparently Wenkel sees as a Gentile help to salvation. He is not so inconsistent that the Jews also have this ‘preparation’. This argument comes as rather a surprise because Wenkel started off by denying a preparational use of the Law. What he really means is that he does not agree with the preparationism which he argues, but does not prove, the authors of Article XXV rejected.

Now Wenkel comes up with the idea of a ‘tension theology’ which is often used to explain the inexplicable. He sees the Baptist articles as rejecting the Mosaic Law though they yet claim that those who receive Christ must do so as ‘sinners’ and ‘ungodly’. Wenkel maintains that this was the ‘quandary’ of the First London Confession, though the Confession gives no evidence of such a quandary. It appears this is a quandary of Wenkel’s own ‘tension theology’. So Wenkel states in the confusion in which he has put himself, ‘It simply is not clear how sinners come to know themselves as sinners and ungodly’. 5 Wenkel suggests this is because we use the wrong *ordo salutis* in determining the relationship between regeneration, repentance, faith and belief. Wenkel began to get too complicated for me here but seems to conclude that ‘repentance follows faith’, which is, again, not an issue in the First London Confession so why raise it?

Now Wenkel, by way of summing up his thoughts, uses Article XXV as a spring board from which to jump into his most speculative airing of NCT theology and states:

The only way logically to explain the language of Article Twenty-Five in the LBC of 1644/1646 is to conclude that it teaches a soft or chastened preparationism through the instrumental causes of preaching while rejecting preparation as a material cause of conversion. It is possible that this instrumental preparation happens through the presence of God’s moral law and the resulting conflict in the conscience of all people – but this is not explicit.

I found this a most unclear, foggy statement. This is a highly unsatisfactory way of saying that the Article could be this, that or the other, whereas the First London Confession in no way beats about the bush but states confidentially what was believed and accepted amongst the London Baptists. Wenkel’s most personal interpretation is backed up by his ‘four salient conclusions’ which are:

1. The authors of Article XXV intentionally distanced themselves from their Reformed contemporaries who sought to use the Law of Moses to prepare sinners for conversion. Here Wenkel separates the London Baptists from the Reformed teaching of their contemporaries whether Baptists, Church of England, Independents or Presbyterians without giving any evidence whatsoever from their works to prove his case. Wenkel mentions Calvin who was no contemporary of the 1644 men and also Ames who can hardly be called a contemporary having died in 1633. The mention of these two Reformers is in conjunction with their *ordo salutis* (set stages in salvation) and not on their view of the Law. Wenkel’s novel criticism appears to be that the 1644 authors’ contemporaries were not NCT followers but the First London Baptists of the Confession were. He has not given the least evidence for such a conclusion.

2. The Article XXV authors had a mind to practical divinity in pastoral praxis on a sound doctrinal basis which is found outlined in Article XXIV.

---

5 Page 27.
In order to understand what Wenkel is getting at, we see that Article XXIV reads:

That faith is ordinarily begot by the preaching of the Gospel, or word of Christ, without respect to any power or capacity in the creature, but it is wholly passive, being dead in sins and trespasses, does believe, and is converted by no less power, then that which raised Christ from the dead.

I cannot think of a Reformer or Reformed 17th century believer who could not subscribe to this article. However, we must truly ask how these people were pronounced ‘dead in trespasses and sins’ without the gracious work of the Law, written down in God’s Word by the Spirit to lead sinful souls to Christ. This would not be ‘preparationism’ but hearing, receiving and believing the gospel through the Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. When Paul addresses the Gentiles who were dead in trespasses and sins in Ephesians 2:1ff., he tells them that their salvation is due to Christ: ‘having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace.’

Paul then lays out the tenor (not terror) of the Law in the following chapters to those ignorant of the Law that they might serve the Law in Christ.

This writer, who does not share Wenkel’s novel theology, nevertheless would argue that Article XXIV is soundly Reformed because it is Biblical and in no way contradicts the historical Reformed faith though Wenkel would seek to separate the Baptists from those exegetical, practical, methodical and spiritual doctrines.

3. The doctrine of anti-preparationalism ‘relies on an unstated but critical distinction between instrumental and material causation. The preaching of the gospel and the Scriptures are the instruments of conversion yet the act of conversion has no material cause outside of God’s sovereign act of grace that changes that which was dead to life.’ Wenkel would have done well to define what he means by ‘instrumental' and 'material' in a way more appropriate to the theology expressed in the LBC Articles. Though Wenkel admits that his views are ‘unstated’ in the Articles, he believes that they exercise the same ‘critical distinction’ he does. Wenkel, however, has not commented on the Articles themselves but on what he feels they ought to have said but did not say. There is nothing to be said about such a flimsy argument.

4. ‘The conclusions of this paper also suggest a need to re-visit the early Baptist doctrines of ordo salutis because these two early confessions point to the primacy of faith before repentance.’

Wenkel is surely wrong again on this issue as the ordo salutis which he prefers is not made an issue in either the First or Second London Baptist Confession. The First does not mention repentance and the Second in Chapter 15 on the subject speaks of ‘repentance unto life and salvation’ some thirteen times. Here surely is a belief in repentance coming before faith. In Chapter 20 there are another two references, one to faith and repentance as being begotten of God and one to ‘faith or repentance’ and the Chapter seems to deal with faith and repentance as synonyms. If Wenkel wishes to draw an ordo salutis from this, which the Confession found no reason to do, the evidence would indicate the early Baptists saw repentance preceding faith, though I would doubt whether a time period between the two has any saving significance as it is all of Grace and God grants both as free gifts. Be that as it may, the Scriptures give the clear command in evangelization ‘Repent and believe’. However, this final theory of Wenkel’s in his defence of NCT-ism is beside the point as the Baptist Confessions obviously contradict him.

Troublemakers At Frankfurt
A Vindication Of The English Reformation
By Dr George M. Ella
Price £25.00 ($35.00) + p&p
368 pages hardback

Not all the important events of the 16th Century English Reformation occurred in England. In this book George Ella shows the importance of the British exiles’ time in Europe during the reign of ‘Bloody’ Mary as they laid the foundations for the subsequent reformation of the Church in England and the doctrines that moulded its subsequent leadership in reformed theology throughout Europe and the world.

Available from Go Publications at: http://go-newfocus.co.uk/books
Purchases through Paypal or credit card.
William Cowper And Home-Schooling

Part Three: The Weakness of Public Education

Education is wrong which neglects our Christian culture

Cowper now looks at how the schools of his day tackle this problem. He finds that though pupils are taught a great deal of ‘mythologic stuff’, they learn little of God’s plan of creation and new-creation. The teacher’s task has degenerated into teaching deception rather than truth. Realising his outspokenness would reap hefty criticism, Cowper added a footnote to his thoughts on pagan mythology. “The author begs leave to explain.—Sensible that, without such knowledge, neither the ancient poets nor historians can be tasted, or indeed understood, he does not mean to censure the pains that are taken to instruct a school-boy in the religion of the heathen, but merely that neglect of Christian culture which leaves him shamefully ignorant of his own.”

Education is wrong which neglects family life

Cowper now goes on to criticise the school as an artificial substitute for the natural family. He argues that classrooms and dormitories full of boys of the same age is a completely unnatural social form. Where is the parental care and where are the loving and experienced examples set? The only models of behaviour the small boys have are the pranks and tricks of the older adolescents and the examples of the waiters at the local inns. Thus their aims in life become merely raiding local gardens, taking part in escapades against the town youths, getting drunk and visiting harlots. Westminster in Cowper’s day, it must be remembered, had a doctor permanently on call to deal with cases of venereal disease. Boys in private rooms were even known to keep and house harlots in them. Thus Cowper warns parents:

Would you your son should be a sot or dunce, Lascivious, headstrong; or all these at once; That, in good time, the stripling’s finish’d taste For loose expense and fashionable waste Should prove your ruin and his own at last; Train him in public with a mob of boys, Childish in mischief only and in noise, Else of a mannish growth, and five in ten In infidelity and lewdness men.

The poet now takes up the argument that as most of the leading lights of the past were products of the public schools, that school system must be good. Cowper tells his readers to judge the present by the present and not the past and affirms:

Peace to them all! those brilliant times are fled, And no such lights are kindling in their stead.

Cowper addresses parents and their negligence in looking after their children. He tries to understand upper class fathers who spend hours a day training their horses and dogs, not willing that any stranger should relieve them of their task. Yet these same animal-lovers send their sons off to a badly administered ‘menagery’ (Cowper’s word for the public school) to receive a far inferior dressage than
their colts and pups. Yes, he admits himself, “We love the play-place of our early days” and relates how fathers take their young sons on their knees and tell them tales of carving their names in walls and desks, of playing games and also playing truant, of how they were flogged for breaking the odd rule and how they otherwise got up to a great deal of mischief. Thus ‘folly’ in the memory of the fathers is turned into ‘frolics’ as they boast to their sons.

Education is wrong which creates social lock-picking
Cowper goes on to examines further arguments parents put forward for sending their sons to public schools such as securing a profitable future career for their offspring. Of course, such parents do not think the “small skill in Latin and still less in Greek” gained at a public school could equip their sons for their future career. Hob-nobbing with sons of the right people, however, might. This was especially true of those wishing to become a minister of the established Church. “The parson knows enough who knows a duke”, says Cowper sarcastically. The poet lived in the days when the eldest son inherited the title and land, whereas other sons had to be content with finding as rich a living as possible as a clergyman or take up some administrative office in the growing colonies. Cowper was especially scathing about the Gentlemen ‘hunting and fiddling’ pastors who climbed up church ladders by means of their royal benefactors and patrons. Of these dignitaries the poet writes,

Behold your bishop! well he plays his part—
Christian in name, and infidel in heart,
Ghostly in office, earthly in his plan,
A slave at court, elsewhere a lady’s man!
Dumb as a senator, and, as a priest
A piece of mere church-furniture at best
To live estrang’d from God his total scope
And his end sure, without one glimpse of hope!

The poet admits that there are exceptions to this general rule and names Bishop Lowth and his old school-friend Bishop Bagot as being worthy of their calling. The fact, however, that he can find so few exceptions convinces Cowper that his general observation is just.

Another argument Cowper takes up which parents usually gave for sending their sons to a public school was the spirit of rivalry there. Competition and emulation helped boys to exercise their fullest potentialities, it was argued. The poet does not agree arguing that envy, hatred, jealousy and pride become the dominant factors in competing for honours at school. True, they spur one on to try harder and work better but the end never justifies the means. What use is success to a man when he has ruined his character gaining it? And what about the failures on the way? The hurt they experience wounds them for life. Thus Cowper admits that the sturdy and the rough may be successful in such an educational environment but meek and mellow types have no chance.

The Heart Healed
And Changed By Mercy
Sin enslaved me many years,
And led me bound and blind;
Till at length a thousand fears
Came swarming o’er my mind.
Where, I said in deep distress
Will these sinful pleasures end?
How shall I secure my peace,
And make the Lord my friend?

Friends and ministers said much
The gospel to enforce;
But my blindness still was such,
I chose a legal course:
Much I fasted, watched and strove,
Scarce would show my face abroad,
Feared, almost, to speak or move,
A stranger still to God.

Thus afraid to trust His grace,
Long time did I rebel;
Till despairing of my case,
Down at His feet I fell:
Then my stubborn heart He broke,
And subdued me to His sway;
By a simple word He spoke,
“Thy sins are done away.”

William Cowper
Education is wrong which isolates children from society
The next bone of contention for Cowper is the myth that public schools fit a boy out to live a sociable adult life and play his part in a mixed society. The poet could not be stronger in his condemnation of this theory and argues against it at great length in the poem. How can one train boys to play their part in society by isolating them from it during the transformative years of their lives? He had already written to Unwin about this topic in 1780 arguing that public schools make the bold bolder but the shy shyer. He wrote:

A Public Education is often recommended as the most effectual Remedy for that Bashfull and awkward constraint so Epidemical among the Youth of our Country. But I verily beleive that instead of being a Cure, it is often the Cause of it. For 7 or 8 Years of his Life the Boy has hardly seen or conversed with a Man; or a Woman, except the Maids at his Boarding House. A Gentleman or a Lady are consequently such Novelties to him, that he is perfectly at a Loss to know what Sort of Behavior he should preserve before them. He Plays with his Buttons or the Strings of his Hat, he blows his Nose & hangs down his Head, is conscious of his own Deficiency to a Degree that makes him quite unhappy, and trembles lest any one should speak to him because That would quite Overwhelm him. Is not all this Miserable Shyness evidently the Effect of his Education? To me it appears to be so. If he saw good Company every day, he would never be terrified at the Sight of it, and a Room full of Ladies and Gentlemen would Alarm him no more, than the Chairs they Sit on. Such is the effect of Custom.

It was this argument that finally convinced Unwin not to send his son John to a public school.
Education must be interesting and useful

Cowper is now at the heart of his treatise and ready to put forward his ideas of how a child should be taught. The poet feels that unless the public schools are purged quickly and thoroughly, the best thing to be done is to put a notice outside of them saying, ‘This Building to be Let’. After showing most teachers feel their work is done after merely drumming conjugations and syntax into their pupils’ skulls whilst keeping an eye on the clock, the poet argues that most fathers would make better teachers and then their sons would have a “father, and friend, and tutor, all in one”. Boys, Cowper argues, need someone whom they trust and respect as their constant friend, adviser and admonisher. They continually need to have the tides of their emotions controlled and be instilled with the important things of life rather than solely facts and figures. Thus Cowper’s suggestion for reform is:

Perhaps a father, blest with any brains,
Would deem it no abuse, or waste of pains,
T’ improve this diet, at no great expense,
With sav’ry truth and wholesome common sense;
To lead his son, for prospects of delight,
Thence to exhibit to his wond’ring eyes
Yon circling worlds, their distance, and their size,
The moons of Jove, and Saturn’s belted ball,
And the harmonious order of them all;
To show him, in an insect or a flow’r,
Such microscopic proof of skill and pow’r,
As, hid from ages past, God now displays
To combat atheists with in modern days;
To spread the earth before him, and commend,
With designation of the finger’s end,
Thus bringing home to him the most remote;
To teach his heart to glow with gen’rous flame,
Caught from the deeds of men of ancient fame;
And, more than all, with commendation due,
To set some living worthy in his view,
Whose fair example may at once inspire
A wish to copy what he must admire.
Such knowledge, gain’d betimes, and which appears,
Though solid, not too weighty for his years,
Sweet in itself, and not forbidding sport!
When health demands it, of athletic sort,
Would make him - what some lovely boys have been,
And more than one, perhaps, that I have seen -
An evidence and reprehension both
Of the mere school-boy’s lean and tardy growth.

Learning by imitation and experience

Here, then, is Cowper’s curriculum for the home-school. He combines the best of the public school activities with those subjects which Evangelicals since the Puritans had striven, mostly in vain, to introduce into general education. The British school system had hardly changed since the Renaissance when scholasticism and philosophy were substituted by a stronger emphasis on dead languages and pagan literature. The Puritans had tried in vain to introduce science into schools. They failed, chiefly because the majority of schools were in the hands of a section of the Church alien to the Puritan spirit. Every Christian, according to James Hervey, the Evangelical pioneer, should have a microscope and orrery at home and should be keenly interested in natural history and science. Especially the importance of astronomy was emphasised by Evangelicals, as witnessed by the work of William Romaine who combined his responsibilities as a clergyman with a professorship in astronomy. Cowper, himself, had only a slight interest in astronomy but worked diligently with his microscope and was a keen botanist. Especially in later years he was always accompanied on his country walks by his ‘Solander’ i.e. collecting box. It is interesting to note that Cowper stresses that science is a handmaid of God and can be used to show God’s glory in creation. Summing up this list of subjects it is obvious that Cowper sees that learning by example, learning by imitation and learning by experiencing are far more valuable than learning by rote alone. Sport as a subject, of course, could not be left out by Cowper who always believed that exercise of the body was essential for the correct functioning of the heart and head.

Part 4 next issue

The town of Olney as Cowper would have known it. Olney was a rural market town in Buckinghamshire. Here his friend John Newton ministered as curate-in-charge of the parish church, St Peter & St Paul. Cowper spent much time resting and recuperating in Olney during a period of illness and depression. He lived at Orchard Side, the home of Mrs Mary Unwin.

This painting (left) by James Andrews is located at the The Cowper And Newton Museum in the town.
New Focus Conference 2019
That the purpose of God according to election might stand
Friday 3rd to Sunday 5th May 2019

We are pleased to announce this year’s New Focus Conference will be hosted by the members and friends at Gornal Baptist Church in the West Midlands over the weekend of 3-5 May, 2019. Preachers include Don Fortner, Allan Jellett, Jared Smith and Peter Meney. We welcome you to join us for an excellent weekend of gospel preaching and fellowship. Lorna and Jeremy Roe of Christian Bookshop Ossett will be present with a selection of new and used sovereign grace books. Friday evening’s service will begin at 7:30pm to assist people who may be travelling.

Church postcode: DY3 2AZ
Gornal has good road, rail and public transport services for those visiting from outside the area and has excellent accommodation in local hotels.

Premier Inns
Kingswinford DY6 8WT
Dudley DY1 4TA
Oldbury B69 2BH
Stourbridge DY8 1JR

Conference Schedule
Friday 3rd May
7:30pm Session 1 Peter Meney followed by tea & biscuits

Saturday 4th May
10:45am Session 2 Allan Jellett
12:15pm Tea/coffee & biscuits
12:45pm Session 3 Don Fortner
2:00pm Buffet lunch
3:45pm Session 4 Jared Smith

Hot drinks & lunchtime leftovers at the close. All done by 6:00pm

Sunday 5th May
10:45am Session 5 Don Fortner
12:00 noon Communion
12:45pm Conference end with buffet lunch