Law and Gospel

Gospel preachers are, says Paul, ‘ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life’ (2 Corinthians 3:7). The letter of which Paul speaks is the Law, so called because it was written in letters graven on stone tables. The Gospel is what Paul means by ‘the spirit’ because it speaks of spiritual things and is applied by God the Holy Spirit.

A matter of life or death
Paul distinguished between the Law and the Gospel. He called the Law the ministration of condemnation and death, and the Gospel the ministration of righteousness and the Spirit. ‘Ministration’ means ‘bringing’ or ‘conveying’ so God’s Law brings judgment and death while God’s Gospel conveys righteousness and spiritual life.

No mixing of Law and Gospel
Paul is warning us not to mix Law and Gospel. Each has its own role. The Law’s role is to condemn, the Gospel’s gift is to bring mercy. The Law brings all men and women under sentence of death for their own sin, and for Adam’s sin, while the Gospel bestows knowledge of everlasting life to all to whom it comes with power. Our Lord Jesus calls His Gospel the Gospel of life.

No righteousness by the Law
The Gospel is superior to the Law. There was a glory of sorts in the Law when it reflected God’s holiness and God’s glory, seen in Moses’ face that glowed. But it was temporary and never supplied a way of righteousness. Paul says, ‘Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth’. The glory of the Gospel infinitely surpasses the glory of the Law.

Preach the Gospel!
Christian ministers have a duty to speak clearly of the Gospel of life and liberty. The Gospel brings righteousness by imputation, and justification by the free gift of God. All peace and comfort for believers comes by faith and from knowledge of what the Lord Jesus Christ accomplished for His people by His substitutionary atonement, and as our Mediator in the covenant of grace.

Look to Christ alone
If we look for sanctification from our personal obedience to the Law, or seek spiritual comfort under the Law, or even try to employ the Law as our guide in our Christian life, walk and conduct we shall be sorely disappointed. ‘The just shall live by faith’, and Paul tells the Colossians, you have ‘received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him’.

Isaiah 27:6  He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root: Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit.

Eulophia Tabularis Orchid
Courtesy: Richard Schadle
'He that is of a merry heart hath a continual feast'
(Proverbs 15:15)

Every believer in Christ has a continual feast, therefore has always reason to be of a merry heart. When he is not he lives below his privilege, and forgets his loving Lord's command. Though we daily find enemies to our spiritual joy, yet none can destroy the ground of our rejoicing. That is fixed as a rock; permanent as the mountains; and standing fast for ever and ever.

Paul gives us from experience this as the Christian's motto, 'As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing.' Though with him daily crying out. 'Oh wretched man that I am', according to the flesh: yet you have the same reason always to thank God, and rejoice in Jesus as he had. Though in yourself cause for mourning and humiliation, yet continual matter of joy and rejoicing in the Lord Jesus.

William Mason
And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away (Isaiah 35:10).

Recently, I read a sermon by a Scottish preacher named Andrew Gray. He lived from 1633-1656, leaving this world when he was only 23 years old. He was only a very young man when he preached the sermon. The title of his message was ‘Returning to Zion’. I cannot tell you when I have read a message that was more delightful, or of a greater blessing to my soul. It was so good that I read it several times. Let me share with you some of the things I gleaned from his message. I hope my gleanings will be a blessing to you, and inspire you to think with joyful anticipation about going home to God our Saviour. I hope these thoughts make you think about heaven and the things awaiting us there. May God the Holy Spirit give us grace to set our hearts upon heaven, where Christ sits on the right hand of God. May our hearts be made to long for those glorious mansions that are yonder provided for us by the Lord Jesus.

A Description
Let me first give you a brief description of heaven according to my own limited understanding of divine revelation. Heaven is a place of rest without rest.

This is clear from Hebrews 4:9 and Revelation 4:8.

There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.

Heaven is a place where the soul is always satisfied yet never satisfied. The psalmist says, and we say with him, ‘I shall be satisfied, when I awake with thy likeness!’

There we shall always see God in Christ. Yet, we shall ever want to see more of Him. We shall always embrace Him, yet want to embrace Him more; always feed on Him, yet want to feed on Him more. In heaven there is both satisfaction and hunger. Heaven is full of mysteries.

Heaven is a place where joy and love eternally flow into our souls, while admiration and praise eternally flow out to our God and Saviour. All the saints’ language in heaven is,
‘Hallelujah! Praise to the Lamb who sits on the throne.’ Oh, what shall it be to be taken within the gates of that blessed city to hear heavenly music? What shall it be to enter into rest, yet never rest from Immanuel's praise? What will it be to be satisfied with great satisfaction yet ever hunger and thirst for Christ without lack of satisfaction?

**Heaven’s Employment**

Second, think for a few minutes about the employment of God’s saints in heaven. There are five things to constantly occupy God’s saints in heaven; admiration, praise, joy, love, and gazing upon the blessed face of the incarnate God. These activities will occupy God’s people as we worship our Saviour; the Lamb who died, the Lion who reigns, the God who is, who was, and who is forever!

There is not a look that is not fixed on our all-glorious Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ. Not a movement of the tongue that is not spent in commending Him. Not one step that is not bent on following Christ. Not one stir of the hand that is not occupied in serving Christ. Not one thought that is not filled with loving Christ! What makes heaven such a blessed, lovely home? Is it not Christ, who is precious to our hearts? The Lamb is the light of that place (Revelation 21:23). Heaven would be a dark house if Christ were not there. The Lamb of God; crucified, risen, reigning, glorious, He is the light of that house.

Do you see what this means? Heaven is the everlasting world of light, adoration, holiness, perfection and ceaseless worship to which God’s saints are rapidly moving. If you only knew the charms of that place it would make you long to join us there in eternity. All the three persons of the Blessed Trinity cry, ‘Come up hither!’ ‘Come up here to us who are here.’ All the angels and saints cry, ‘Come up here to us who are here.’

Will you be taking up your lodging there? Only if you are made clean every whit; totally righteous, completely holy, and without blame before God by the blood and righteousness of Christ. Only if you are robed in spotless garments of salvation and righteousness by faith in him. Joseph Hart wrote,

Hail! Thou dear, Thou worthy Lord!  
Holy Lamb! Incarnate Word!  
Hail! Thou suffering Son of God!  
Take the trophies of Thy blood.

**Heaven’s Excellence**

Next, let me direct your thoughts, as best I can in this feeble frame, to the excellence of heaven. We know that heaven is a pleasant place. But what makes it pleasant, except that it is a place covered over and filled with the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valley?

What a great sight John had when the angel talked with him and said, ‘Come up hither, and I will show you the Bride, the Lamb’s wife’, and carried him to an exceedingly high mountain, and showed him the holy city, the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:9, 10).

What is it that makes heaven such an excellent place? It is the soul-satisfying vision of God we have there in the person of His dear Son, our Mediator, in all His glory! There we shall see God face to face! It is written, ‘They shall see his face! What could be more excellent and glorious? What could be more rewarding and honouring? What could be more joyous and satisfying?

Here we see Christ dimly, as ‘through a glass darkly’. There we shall see Him face to face. What will be the Bride’s thoughts when Christ first takes her in His arms? Who can imagine such things? ‘This is my Beloved! He has brought me now into His banqueting house! His banner over me is love!’ Oh, what shall our thoughts be when Christ takes us into His arms? I think we shall fall apart! Oh, what shall it be to be with Christ in heaven?
Six Questions
Here are six questions I must have answered. As I meditate upon the excellence and glory of heaven, I cannot help asking these six questions of my Saviour. I hope you will be asking them as well, as I relate them to you.

The first is this: shall this tongue, that has so often taken my Saviour’s name in vain and so often polluted the holiness of God, ever be made like the tongues of angels, to express the greatness and glory of Christ?

The second question is this: shall these eyes, that have been the windows through which so many sins have come into my soul, ever see the Spotless One who sits on the throne of glory?

When I see Christ I would blush to look Him in the face, were it not for the fact that He has declared ‘sorrow and sighing shall flee away’! When we see His face, His transforming face, where shall we turn our eyes? A sight of Christ will make us eternally wonder. Do you not groan, my brother, my sister, for the sight of Christ? Soon, we shall see Him as He is!

The third question is this: shall these ears, that have listened to so much foulness and enjoyed so much vanity, ever hear those songs above?

We must hear either the eternal shrieks of the damned in hell or the songs of the choirs of heaven. Oh, how sweetly they sing! For now comfort yourselves with this, the day is coming when you shall no more hang your harps on the willows because you are in a strange land, but you shall eternally cry out, ‘Worthy is the Lamb! All praise to Him who sits on the throne’!

The fourth question is this: shall these feet of mine, that have pursued endless futility and folly, ever follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth?

The fifth question I ask is this: shall this heart of mine, which has been a house of many idols, ever be made the unrivalled dwelling-place of my Saviour?

The last question I ask is this: shall these hands, that have been the instruments of so much evil and iniquity, ever embrace and hold that matchless Holy One who sits yonder on the throne?

What will we do when we first get Christ in our arms? We might well imagine our first day in heaven will be the most glorious. But that will not be the case. Though we have never seen our Husband before, the longer we are with Him in heaven’s glory the more we shall love Him and the more we shall know His love for us!

What will we discover in glory? There is no outcast there, no desertion, no unbelief, no misunderstanding of Christ, no questioning His wisdom, no doubts about His ways, no misinterpreting of His will, and no displeasure with His purpose. When we go through the gates of the New Jerusalem we shall pass over the graves of desertion, and jealousy, and unbelief, and all our idols, and we shall never return to them!

What a pleasant day it will be when faith and hope shall yield themselves to love and sight. Faith and hope are our attendants here, but love and sight will be our eternal attendants above. Faith and hope fight the battle here, but love and sight will sit at home and divide the spoil in heaven. Faith and hope embrace Christ through the veil, but love and sight embrace Him face to face. Soon, we shall leave both faith and hope, but we shall never weep for leaving these dear, blessed companions.

One more thing we will forever leave behind when we leave this world is repentance. In heaven we shall have nothing to repent of!

Six Struggles
Here are six great struggles I have with regard to heaven and going home to my God and Saviour.
I have a constant struggle here with sin, unbelief, hardness of heart, indifference, and spiritual ignorance. I confess, with Agur, ‘Surely, I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man. I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy’ (Proverbs 30:2, 3).

Still, I am comforted with this: as soon as I enter the gates of that blessed city all my clouds will dissipate immediately. I will never again have a wrong thought of God throughout all eternity. Then, I shall begin to say to myself, ‘Is this me, the ignorant and brutish man?’ I am often under much desertion. I never try go to my God in prayer but that I find an absent God, a hidden Christ, and a quenched Spirit. Often, more often than not, I cannot even speak to Him in prayer, but only groan before Him.

Still I find comfort in this: there is no desertion in heaven. There are none in glory-land who cry, ‘How long, Lord, wilt thou hide thy face from me?’ (Psalm 13:1). This is almost too much for this sinful soul to grasp, but it is a blessed fact. I cannot tell you how I rejoice in it! In heaven, I shall never again find it hard to speak to my God. I shall never again grow weary of serving Him. I shall never again find it difficult to worship and praise and commune with my Beloved!

I must also acknowledge this fact for I do not want to pretend things are different with me than they really are! I want to be honest. I do not want to be a hypocrite! I sometimes struggle hard with assurance. I sometimes question whether I will go home to heaven with Christ when I leave this world, or perish in hell.

How I wish it were not so, but I am often like John Newton when he wrote,

‘Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought,
Do I love the Lord or no,
Am I His, or am I not?

Perhaps the struggle itself is terribly evil. Perhaps I should never have the struggle. But I do, and it is real. I often have terribly painful questions concerning the reality of my faith. Oh, how long to trust Christ perfectly! Completely! Without doubt! Without unbelief! But, even with regard to these things, my God gives me great consolation and hope. It is not the measure of my faith, or the quality of my faith, or the evidences of my faith that gives me hope, but Christ, the solitary Object of my faith! Oh, what comfort there is for my soul in this! There will be no more doubting and unbelief in heaven. When I cross over the threshold of Heaven’s Gate, I will bid everlasting, ‘Farewell’ to all unbelief, doubts and questions!

I have another, painful complaint, a bitterness in my soul that is well nigh unbearable. My love for Christ is so horribly little that I often fear I have no love for Him at all.

Yet, bless God, honesty will not allow me to say, horrible thought, I do not love Him. Oh, no! When I hear my Saviour say, ‘Lovest thou me?’ I hang my head with shame, but confess, ‘Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee.’ ‘We love Him, because He first loved us.’ I take great comfort and delight in this: soon, I will love my Saviour perfectly! As soon as these eyes are closed in death, as soon as I have gasped my last breath in this weak, mortal, sinful frame, I will love Him who is altogether lovely as He ought to be loved!

Here is another terrible, heavy burden in my soul, a burden from which I find no relief in this world, a burden that makes me a little anxious to go home: so long as I am in this world, I know that I shall never prevail over my many idols, and get them forced out of my heart. I flee idolatry constantly, but can never leave it altogether behind. I struggle to keep myself from idols; but find the struggle a constant, uphill battle.
Still, when I think of going home, when I think of heaven, I find comfort, even in the face of this. All my idols will be slain before I get home. In one day, at once, all shall be slain as I behold the Lord Jesus standing at the right hand of God to receive me. My Saviour demands all my heart, and deserves it. Blessed be His name, soon He shall have it! In heaven’s glory there will be no rival in my heart’s affections to Him!

And I have another great struggle in my soul: I fear I know very little, if anything, of true prayer. Prayer is often found on my lips; but I often question whether prayer is ever found in my heart! John Newton wrote,

If I attempt to pray,
And lisp thy holy name;
My thoughts are hurried soon away,
I know not where I am.

Soon I shall be like Him
In heaven, when I get home, I shall never again have this struggle. Then, I will never again have need of prayer. All my soul’s desires will be fully satisfied at once. Then, I shall see my God and Father glorified, my Father’s will fully performed, His kingdom come, and my Saviour satisfied. I will forgive even as I am forgiven. I will love even as I am loved. And I shall be like Him, when I see Him as He is (1 John 3:2).

As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness (Psalm 17:15).

Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure (1 John 3:1-3).

Come up to Us
The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, the three persons of the Blessed Trinity, are each crying out, ‘Come up here to us who are here!’ And the joys of heaven, if they had a tongue, would cry out, ‘Oh, come up here!’ And that sweet and blessed transcendence in the face of Christ cries out, ‘Come up here!’ Does not your soul’s need cry out, ‘Go up there’?

Some of us may be in eternity before long; and that is just fine, for eternity is sweet if we go to heaven. I remember a word in Job (Job 9:25) ‘My days are swifter than a post; they flee away as the ships.’ For the believer death cuts all the cords that tie us to this world, but it makes the everlasting knot that binds us to Christ. Death is our friend. Our death day will be our coronation day.

Someone once said, ‘Death is Christ’s messenger to bring you home, sent to you either with a letter of commendation to speed you on or with a love letter in his hand to make you shout for joy. Oh, therefore, let us love Him and long to be with Him.’

And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away (Isaiah 35:10).

All the ransomed of the Lord will return and come to Zion. All will return with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads. All will, upon their return, find joy and gladness. ‘And sorrow and sighing shall flee away!’ Oh, happy, happy, blessed day! Soon, ‘sorrow and sighing shall flee away’!

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful’ (Revelation 21:1-5).
Strange and mysterious is my life;  
What opposites I feel within!  
A stable peace, a constant strife;  
The rule of grace, the power of sin;  
Too often I am captive led,  
Yet often triumph in my Head.

I prize the privilege of prayer,  
But O what backwardness to pray!  
Though on the Lord I cast my care,  
I feel its burden every day;  
I’d seek His will in all I do,  
Yet find my own is working too.

I call the promises my own,  
And prize them more than mines of gold;  
Yet though their sweetness I have known,  
They leave me unimpressed and cold;  
One hour upon the truth I feed,  
The next I know not what I read.

Thus different powers within me strive,  
And grace and sin by turns prevail;  
I grieve, rejoice, decline, revive,  
And victory hangs in doubtful scale;  
But Jesus has His promise passed  
That grace shall overcome at last.

John Newton
Part 2

The Gospel Of Free-willism

To counterfeit means to imitate something authentic, with the intent to steal, destroy, or replace the original, for use in illegal transactions, or otherwise to deceive individuals into believing that the fake is of equal or greater value than the real thing.

Counterfeit

To counterfeit means to imitate something authentic, with the intent to steal, destroy, or replace the original, for use in illegal transactions, or otherwise to deceive individuals into believing that the fake is of equal or greater value than the real thing.

Counterfeit Gospels

The Gospel Of Free-willism

I admit that fallen man has a free will to act as he likes. This fact is not open to question. Nor, however, is the fact that fallen man’s will is only to live sinfully. Thus, as our philosophers tell us, man’s freedom of the will is only freedom in a cage. Scripture declares that ‘All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God’ (Romans 3:23), and Jesus tells unbelievers that they neither know Him or know the Father (John 8:19). So, how can such people feel they can be their own agent in their salvation? They are cut off from God and do not know His plan of salvation which calls for no sinful human agency. The great preacher of the New Covenant, Jeremiah, proclaimed that the human heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. God who is all holiness does not look for a co-agent there.¹ Jeremiah faithfully denies the free-willism of unbelievers which cannot see good when it is there because they do not recognise God. Nevertheless, he proclaims by God’s grace ‘Blessed is the man that trusts in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is.’² This heritage of faith, Jeremiah tells us is a gift from God as one reads in the opening verses of chapter seventeen. This is the merciful, loving teaching of the ever-new Covenant. Left to his own will, man is lost.

The confusion of our evangelical leaders illustrated

The dangers of the disastrous gospel of free-willism became most apparent to me a few days ago on receiving a review article by the editors of an American magazine. It had been published some years previously but was now distributed free of charge by the editors to those whom they thought might be interested in their whims and fancies. The review essay was concerned with a book named Whosoever Will: A Biblical-Theological Critique of Five-Point Calvinism edited by David Allen and Steve Lemke and was by C. Fred Smith. In his review, Smith uttered words which showed that he had left the Christian path way behind him, writing:

The Calvinist error is to assume that specific sinners were purchased at the cross, rather than that a general opportunity for redemption was purchased for all. An analogy will help here. Many communities contract with a cable television provider. The community provides the right of way for the cable to be installed and offers tax breaks or other incentives for the company selected to provide cable services. The service is available to everyone in the community,

¹ Jeremiah ² This heritage of faith, Jeremiah tells us is a gift from God as one reads in the opening verses of chapter seventeen. This is the merciful, loving teaching of the ever-new Covenant. Left to his own will, man is lost.

Freedom in a cage

The confusion of our evangelical leaders illustrated

The dangers of the disastrous gospel of free-willism became most apparent to me a few days ago on receiving a review article by the editors of an American magazine. It had been published some years previously but was now distributed free of charge by the editors to those whom they thought might be interested in their whims and fancies. The review essay was concerned with a book named Whosoever Will: A Biblical-Theological Critique of Five-Point Calvinism edited by David Allen and Steve Lemke and was by C. Fred Smith. In his review, Smith uttered words which showed that he had left the Christian path way behind him, writing:

The Calvinist error is to assume that specific sinners were purchased at the cross, rather than that a general opportunity for redemption was purchased for all. An analogy will help here. Many communities contract with a cable television provider. The community provides the right of way for the cable to be installed and offers tax breaks or other incentives for the company selected to provide cable services. The service is available to everyone in the community,
but not everyone has cable. Cable service has not been purchased for every address but has been made possible for every address. By analogy, the local government is like Christ, making cable service (like salvation) available to everyone. The service is advertised - which is like the general call - and some choose to buy the service - like exercising faith in Christ. The fact that not everyone buys the cable service does not mean that the local government failed in its endeavor to provide the cable service. In the same way, if Jesus died for everyone but not everyone was saved, then that does not mean that the atonement failed. Jesus provided a service (eternal salvation) for every soul, if some do not buy in (exercise faith), that is no reflection of the success or failure of the provision.  

What Smith seems to be saying is that Christ provides a service which any man can buy, making man his own Saviour if he clinches the deal. On the other hand, he believes Christ rejects those that are not prepared to pay for the privilege of being redeemed. He is apparently arguing that God demands man’s will as the buying price for his salvation and that the fallen sinner is able to exercise this free will salvagingly himself, should he want to do so. However, Smith’s gospel is highly self-contradictory. Though he emphasizes the buying potentialities of fallen sinners he also claims that Christ has provided a service which any man can utilize at his own will and free of charge. Here, salvation is described as a take it or leave it matter. Thus, Smith’s counterfeit gospel contains a confusion of errors which stand in stark contrast to God’s Word. The Scriptures teach us that it is man’s will which brought him damnation and that he has no will which could possibly be an agent in salvation.

Man’s will is no criterion for salvation at all

Indeed, man’s will is not a criterion at all in the saving process which brings with it repentance and faith in Christ. There is no self-redeeming ‘deal’ with God through man’s agency in the gospel. The wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life. Surely God’s ‘sovereign will’ here quite obviously cancels out the fallen will of man. Furthermore, the Bible is most explicit concerning who ransomed (paid the price for) Christ’s Bride as we find in 1 Corinthians 6:20 and 7:23:

For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.’ and ‘Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men.

Both the Old and New Testament abound with the gospel that Christ’s own are His purchased possession through the vicarious shedding of His blood in the redemptive act. This we see from Ephesians 1:7; Ephesians 1:13, 14; Colossians 1:14; Hebrews 9:12; Galatians 3:13; Isaiah 49:26 and many other passages. Such verses show that God has ransomed those whose body and spirit belong to Him and they should serve their Redeemer and not follow the free-will fables of men. Sadly, these free-will fables of man have taken over so many of our once Reformed, evangelical churches. However, a church preaching a free-will gospel is foreign to God’s true Israel and belongs to those who fall by the wayside like the unbelieving Jews in the Wilderness.

The folly of free-willism is their understanding of faith

This free-will essay under scrutiny, shamefully penned by supposedly evangelical leaders, makes man’s will the sole criteria for accepting God’s provisions and reminds me of the Sunday School of my childhood in the Bradford Heap Lane Mission which I began to attend at three years of age, taken there by my six-year-old sister. This Sunday School in those days was
affiliated with the Church of the Nazarene but became an FIEC church under the name of the Bradford Home Mission in my teens. At that time the church tended to exercise duty-faith teaching. There we sang hymns such as ‘I have decided to follow Jesus’, or ‘I can, I will, I do believe’. Then, as a converted teenager, I was shocked to hear my brethren in Christ singing such ‘hymns’ as Frank Graham’s Wesleyan ditty, ‘I settled it all long ago’. Here, the dismal rational theology of sinners who supposedly can bargain with God is exposed in all its foolishness. I quickly understood that free-willism makes a Christ of itself. However, some of my Sunday School teachers were devoted Christians and very kind to us poor children who delighted to sing:

Heap Lane Mission, oh its mighty fine.  
It’s for children under ninety-nine.  
All are welcome, seats are given free,  
Heap Lane Mission is the place for me.

When I revisited the Mission as an old-age-pensioner, I was delighted to find the chapel under a sound ministry and had found larger premises under the same fine pastor at Idle near Five Lane Ends.

Nowadays, many Christians have sadly not improved in their beliefs as did Heap Lane and otherwise mature Christians are continually telling me that it is all up to me to be saved, somehow thinking I cannot be saved because I believe God did it all without my help. One continuous critic of my writings in various magazine articles published in the U.S.A. and Britain actually argues that I minimize man in condemning free-willism as a saving factor! Those who are slaves to their own will tend to blow up their own effigies to god-like proportions and tell us that our triune God is a mere bargaining partner in their salvation.

Free-willism is a philosophical argument
Austin Farrer’s philosophical analysis in his book *The Freedom of the Will* caught my attention as a young Christian. I learnt from Farrer that as the idea of a free-willism is a mere human philosophy, it is only open to rational arguments, which are the arguments of fallen reason. What the Scriptures say in contradiction is of no interest to the rationalist. What is flesh is flesh and what is of the Spirit is spiritual. Actually, free-willism has not even a rational leg to stand on. To make a rational decision is to know what one is deciding about. To this end, one needs to know all the factors involved in the decision making. As natural man in his fallen state does not and cannot know God, it is utter folly for him to believe he can argue for or against God’s provisions for salvation. Such decision-making is beyond his capacities. Sinners, of themselves, have no knowledge of a reality other than that which damn them. To gain a knowledge of God’s plan of salvation God must reveal the Author and Finisher of faith to him in a sovereign act of grace. ‘By grace ye are saved and that not of yourselves. It is a gift of God.’ This grace is entirely sufficient for our salvation without our interference as 2 Corinthians 12:9 tells us.

Modern Free-willism is Rome’s old error
Yet fallen man insists he has the right and ability to determine his own fate, whether God-wards or not. Thus, the papal declaration of Paul VI given on the seventh of December, 1965, declares in its 16th statement:

In the depths of his conscience, man detects a law which he does not impose upon himself, but which holds him to obedience. Always summoning him to love good and avoid evil, the voice of conscience when necessary speaks to his heart: do this, shun that. For man has in his heart a law written by God; to obey it is the very dignity of man; according
to it he will be judged. Conscience is the most secret core and sanctuary of a man. There he is alone with God, whose voice echoes in his depths. In a wonderful manner conscience reveals that law which is fulfilled by love of God and neighbour. In fidelity to conscience, Christians are joined with the rest of men in the search for truth, and for the genuine solution to the numerous problems which arise in the life of individuals from social relationships. Hence the more right conscience holds sway, the more persons and groups turn aside from blind choice and strive to be guided by the objective norms of morality. Conscience frequently errs from invincible ignorance without losing its dignity. The same cannot be said for a man who cares but little for truth and goodness, or for a conscience which by degrees grows practically sightless as a result of habitual sin.

Here we have the duty-faith of free-willism outlined exactly. This idle papal philosophy ties up nicely with the doctrine of Allan, Lemke, and Smith. It is man's own pipe-dream and has nothing whatsoever to do with the reality of God's revelation to man. That law which these writers claim is knowledgeable to man in both its testimonies to Christ and condemnation of man's sin is a law which only Christ can and did obey in his vicarious and substitutionary atonement for the dead. The ability to follow the Law so that one evolves (the argument of the papal declaration) to an understanding of and acceptance by God is to rob Christ of His great work on the cross and make Christ's of all men.

Modern evangelical Reformed free-willers are more radical than Rome
Those who still call Bible-believing Christians who deny man's ability to help save himself 'Antinomians' and 'Hyper-Calvinists' in their magazines and websites have apparently become more radical even than the Roman Catholic church. They have erased out the Law which both condemns sinners and yet points them to Christ from their gospel of man's abilities. They have rejected the entire Mosaic Law with its evangelical tenors emphasised by Moses and the Prophets, namely, 'The just shall live by faith'. Yet they often profess to believe in a reduced law of Five Tulip commandments followed legalistically in a Neonomian manner.

However, these five rulings, good as they are, are not legal rules but offers, promises, inducements, affirmations, and opportunities of grace. Tiptoeing through the tulips, as the song goes, neither expressed the whole gospel tenors nor Calvin’s whole teaching. One can hold to them fanatically as a legal system and still be lost. Such a misuse of the Law, which was purposefully added to the Covenant of Grace to be a tutor leading to Christ is true Antinomianism indeed and has nothing whatsoever to do with the New Covenant of Grace preached by Moses and the prophets. Indeed, in rejecting Moses and the prophets, they reject Christ. Indeed, when Christ rebuked his followers as on the road to Emmaus and gave them gospel teaching, he began with Moses and proceeded through the prophets because they spoke of Him. Luke chapter sixteen clearly teaches that Jesus taught that if His Jewish critics had read Moses and the prophets aright, they would believe in Him but they had neither ears nor eyes for the gospel of saving grace.

Free-willers reject God's Law outright
Naturally, without the condemning Law sinners feel that they can do what they like and have the power to do so. These Neonomians now criticise gospel-believers for accepting the whole Law and its tenors as an essential part of the Covenant of Grace and have, to a
frightening extent, left their former Fullerism for New Covenant Theology (NCT) teaching. This, of course, is the natural development of fallen man. Paul in Galatians chapter three says 'God forbid' to this folly. Several of these turn-coats such as David Gay have written a number of books against those who uphold God’s Law as an essential part of the Covenant of Grace yet they still maintain in their magazines, books and on their web-sites that those who do not follow them in their abandonment of God’s revealed Law do not preach the gospel to sinners. If they mean their own man-made gospel, they are quite right! These people argue that they have discovered the truth behind the New Covenant as if a true Biblical understanding of the New Covenant originated with them. They forget that Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, David and all the Old Testament writers preached the New Covenant over three thousand years before the NCT erased it. Jeremiah, a true proclaimer of the New Covenant if ever there was one, preaches it throughout the fifty-one chapters of his book but especially in chapter thirty-one. Here, he proclaims God’s Covenant as an ancient ordinance for the salvation of His People, viewing it in its past, present, and future aspects. As the spokesman of the Covenant, he declares God’s Word: ‘Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.’ Thus one sees what the NCT with its broken Covenant is rejecting: the eternal love of God for His people, emphasised in the Old Testament and built on in the New. Without the Old Testament, there would be no New Testament. Of course, the NCT mistake the Old man-made, unratified Covenant of the unbelieving Jews in the wilderness, condemned by God, for the glorious ever-new, ever fresh, ever renewed Covenant gospel of the Old Testament which is Jeremiah’s preaching theme for his day and all generations. They are thus Post New Covenant preachers, strangers to the Covenant of Grace.

Sinners have forfeited all rights to salvation

Indeed, many such opponents of true New Covenant teaching, who are nearly all nominally evangelical Reformed pastors, tell us that all fallen sinners have a right to salvation and thus can rightly be trained to gain it. Such nonsense was perpetuated in a supposedly Reformed magazine entitled ‘Reformation Today’. Not even the old Arians believed such rot! The whole teaching of Adam’s fall is that such rights were lost when sin entered into man’s being. Anyone reading the Old Testament, especially Jeremiah, must come to the conclusion that man’s free-will leads to the old broken Covenant of unfaithful Adam and his unfaithful descendants. God’s eternal Covenant has solely to do with our sovereign God’s ever-new love and mercy for His people.

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that (faith) not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.

Dead to salvation unless quickened by grace

I thus, from my earliest Christian days, after experiencing God’s redeeming, sovereign grace for myself, realised that man was dead to salvation unless he was saved by grace alone and it was committed to me to preach this gospel and none other. I quickly learnt the folly of those who preach a fallen free-will which is to be redeemed through their dutiful, self-decerning, obedient agency in becoming a child of God. This is a counterfeit gospel indeed, forged on the anvil of man’s own fallen mind.

Endnotes
1 Jeremiah 17:9.
2 Jeremiah 17:5-8.
4 Romans 6:23.
5 Ephesians 2:5, 8.
6 Total depravity; Unconditional election; Limited atonement; Irresistible grace and the Perseverance of the saints. They are usually recited mantra-fashion without associating them with the work of Christ, especially concerning election which they usually treat in a Zwinglian manner only. They are excellent in the hands of a mature Christian but dangerous as a substitute for the full gospel which saves. Tulip theology was planted long after Calvin’s death in times of great theological strife. It is thus wrong to call them the Five Points of Calvinism, useful as they are in the right hands. So, too, the interpretations given to this Tulip are legion. The Tulip idea only works for English speaking people.
7 See Paul’s argument in Galatians 3.
8 Galatians 3:21ff.
9 Jeremiah 31:3.
10 The meanings of the Old Testament and LXX terms for ‘new’.
11 Ephesians 2:8, 9.
Because Words Matter ...

SALT

We meet with so many portions of Scripture where this word Salt is used, and in senses so very different from each other, that it merits our more particular attention. I shall beg to set before the reader some of the Scriptures where we meet with it, in order that we may have a better apprehension of the design of God the Holy Ghost in the use of it. I shall begin with those which speak of its destructive quality.

Salt that destroys
The first account we read of salt is Genesis 14:3; where mention is made of the Salt Sea in the vale of Siddim; and this is probably what elsewhere is called the Dead Sea, forming the spot where once stood Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities of the plain, which the Lord destroyed by fire, and over which Jordan in the seasons of its overflowing pours itself. It is said even to the present hour to send up such steams of a sulphureous nature, as to kill every bird attempting to fly over it.

The next account of salt is in the instance of Lot’s wife made a pillar of salt (Genesis 19:26). We read in the prophecy of Ezekiel also concerning the miry places, and the marshy places, which were never to be healed, but to be given to salt (Ezekiel 47:11). And the prophets Jeremiah and Zephaniah have much the same expressions concerning the perpetual barrenness of lands given to salt, (Jeremiah 17:6; Zephaniah 2:9). The psalmist saith in Psalm 107:34, that the Lord turneth a fruitful land into saltiness, (so the margin renders it) for the wickedness of them that dwell therein. These instances may be sufficient, in the view of the Scripture, concerning salt, where its use is marked in a way of destruction. Let us now look into the holy volume again for passages where an opposite quality is described, as resulting from the appointment of it.

Salt that heals
The first account we meet with where salt is directed to be used in the way of a blessing is in Leviticus 2:13, ‘And every oblation of thy meat-offering shalt thou season with salt; neither shalt thou suffer the salt of the covenant of thy God to be lacking from thy meat-offerings; with all thine offerings thou shalt offer salt.’ So again when the prophet Elisha sweetened the waters of Jericho, he did it by casting a cruse of salt into them; and this was done by commission from the Lord, for the prophet added, ‘Thus saith the Lord, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death or barren land’ (2 Kings 2:21). And that salt was considered in the light of a blessing it is said (2 Chronicles 13:5), ‘that the Lord God of Israel gave the kingdom over

Extract from Robert Hawker’s Poor Man’s Dictionary
Israel to David for ever, even to him, and to his sons by a covenant of salt.’ Hence we find also that Jesus called His disciples the salt of the earth, as if to intimate that His grace in them preserved the earth from universal putrefaction (Matthew 5:13). And elsewhere the Lord said, ‘have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another’ (Mark 9:50). And His servant Paul figuratively recommended the church that their speech should be always with grace seasoned with salt (Colossians 4:6).

Every offering seasoned with salt
From both those views of salt, according to the holy Scripture, in being appointed as a figure of evil and of good, it becomes a very interesting enquiry to know yet somewhat more particularly the mind of God the Holy Ghost respecting the use of it. And if I do not greatly err, that service in the church concerning the salt of the oblation, throws a great light upon the whole. We there read that every oblation of the meat-offering was to be seasoned with salt. The salt was never to be wanting; with all offerings the salt was to be offered. And what gives a strong leading feature to the whole was this, that this was called ‘the salt of the covenant of JEHOVAH’ (Leviticus 2:13).

Now if we first consider the property of salt, that it is to save from corruption, we discover that the salt, which was never to be omitted in the offering, was the grand object the Lord had regard to in the whole. It is expressly called ‘the salt of the covenant of thy God’. Supposing then that this figuratively sets forth the Lord Jesus Christ, we instantly perceive that such is the importance that His person, blood, and righteousness, should be in and with all our offerings, that there can be no coming to the Father but by Him. Where Christ is not, there is no savour; it is His blood which gives a fragrancy and a perfume to our most holy things. And if Jesus be the salt of the covenant of our God, and with all our offerings He be first and last presented, both the Alpha and Omega, in our view, as He is in the view of God our Father, then is that Scripture blessedly fulfilled which the Lord delivered by the prophet: ‘For in mine holy mountain in the mountain of the height of Israel, saith the Lord God, there shall all the house of Israel, all of them in the land, serve me. There will I accept them, and there will I require your offerings, and the first fruits of your oblations, with all your holy things. I will accept you with your sweet savour; and ye shall know that I am the Lord’ (Ezekiel 20:40-42). Observe, your ‘sweet savour’ and the Holy Ghost by Paul, calls Christ’s sacrifice a sweet-smelling savour (Ephesians 5:2).

Further considerations
There is another consideration in the view of the subject which serves to confirm the doctrine yet further, namely, the universal use of salt. It is essential to all the purposes of food. It not only ministers to give a taste to the several articles of meat, but to preserve animal life from leprosy, and similar diseases. What is called curing of meat, that is, salting it, hath much signification of a spiritual nature in it. I do not presume to say as much so as to decide upon it, but I venture to believe that the term of ‘curing of meat by salt’ took its rise from the circumstance of the divine cure of our nature by the salt of the covenant. Job saith, ‘Can that which is unsavoury be eaten without salt?’ (Job 6:6). Much more may it be said, Can our poor nature be accepted but in Christ? Can our nature be cured and preserved from everlasting corruption but by the Lord Jesus?

Once more—salt is of the Lord’s own providing; it is among the natural productions of the earth. There is indeed a process of art now used for refining salt, and making it
minister to various ways of usefulness; but the rock salt in its own pure nature is not of human production nor contrivance; like the earth itself, it is of JEHOVAH’S forming. ‘The earth is the Lord’s and the fulness thereof’ (1 Corinthians 10:26). Such then is Christ, JEHOVAH’S own providing for curing the souls of His people. So that in the salt of the covenant we offer nothing of our own for acceptance, but what God hath first given to us. JEHOVAH is very jealous of His honour. ‘An altar of earth shall thou make unto me: and if thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone, for if thou lift up thy tool upon it thou hast polluted it’ (Exodus 20:24, 25).

Fourthly, if the reader will consult the context concerning this meat-offering with the salt of the covenant, he will find that it was an offering also made by fire unto the Lord, see Leviticus 2:13-16. Hence the salt of the covenant was not simply to cleanse and render pure for acceptance, but it was to sprinkle the offering made by fire. Hence therefore, when the offering was offered with the salt of the covenant, and the Lord gave token of His acceptance by consuming the sacrifice with fire, this formed a confirmation of the divine favour. This is beautifully explained in Leviticus 9:24, ‘And there came a fire out from before the Lord, and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering and the fat, which when all the people saw they shouted and fell on their faces.’ Here was both God’s acceptance of the salted offering, and testimony at the same time given that the consumption of the sacrifice became the salvation of the people. The fire that consumed the one would, but for the acceptance of the salted sacrifice, have consumed the other. Well might the redeemed shout for joy while they fell on their faces with the lowest reverence.

A savour of life and a savour of death
Now if the reader will pause over the subject, and by looking back take a retrospective view of the whole, he will perceive that salt in the church of God had a twofold dispensation: and, like Him whom it evidently prefigured, it became ‘the savour of life unto life, or of death unto death’ (2 Corinthians 2:16). Jesus was set for ‘the fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be spoken against’ (Luke 2:34). Where Jesus is like the salt of the covenant, He will preserve from putrefaction, ‘That little leaven shall leaven the whole lump’ (1 Corinthians 5:6). Like the tree of Marah, Jesus makes the waters sweet (Exodus 15:25). Like the cruse of salt at Jericho, though salt in its own nature will make sweet water brackish, Jesus will heal the spring, and make it wholesome. In short, where Jesus is there is the salt of the covenant — ‘Destroy it not, there is a blessing in it’ (Isaiah 65:8).

On the other hand, ‘if the gospel be hid it is hid to them that are lost’ (2 Corinthians 4:3). Where Christ, the salt of the covenant, is rejected, that land, that people, that family, is given up to perpetual barrenness: it never can be healed. Oh, for grace to know our mercies, and truly to value them! For He that now saves from corruption, will one day be the everlasting condemnation of those that reject Him. ‘For (he saith himself) every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt. Salt is good, but if the salt have lost his saltiness’ (if Jesus be not the savour of life unto life) ‘wherewith will ye season it?’ (who can then give acceptance to the sinner?) Christ ‘becomes the savour of death unto death’ — graciously therefore He adds, ‘have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another’ (Mark 9:40; Mark 9:50).

Going Home
By Don Fortner
Price £23.95 ($30.00) + £3.95 p&p
206 pages hardback

These seventeen chapters are all about heaven and this is the best book I have ever read on the subject. As I read the fifth chapter, “Heaven: The Place of Satisfaction” my heart was blessed indeed.

It is certainly a superb exposition on the subject of heaven, and how God saves sinners in preparation for it. But you will find the book deals, too, with all aspects of a believer’s attitude towards death, the confident assurance of joy to come, and many helpful scriptural comforts for the experience of dying.

I believe this book will prove to be very instructive for ministers of the gospel, and those involved pastorally with the Lord’s people. It will be most helpful, too, to God’s saints who live with eager expectation in hope of eternal life with God our Saviour in our heavenly home. Oh, the glory that awaits all of God’s blood-bought children!

Extract from Foreword by Pastor Earnie W. Lucas

Available from Go Publications at: http://go-newfocus.co.uk/books
Purchases through Paypal or credit card. Also available from Amazon.
The Princessa Sofia Hedwiga carrying the young missionaries Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg and Heinrich Plütschau to India happily reached Cape Town on 16th April, 1706 where the crew and passengers stayed for some weeks. There were many damages to be repaired and food and water needed to be stock ed up. The weather was pleasant and the missionaries immediately contacted the native Africans whom they found most friendly. They were not impressed by the witness of the Germans in the city but found fellow believers among the Dutch. Ziegenbalg wrote in his first letter home to say that the Germans had given up their faith on leaving Germany and there was no German pastor in the city. They had an opposite experience on becoming familiar with the Dutch colonists. They were busy catechizing native children in the gospel and carried their Bibles with them openly in their hands to testify to their faith. Ziegenbalg writes that they love to talk to him about their joint faith. They had also many good theological books and accepted a copy of Freylinghausen's *Fundamental Principles of Divinity*, a work recommended by Louis Berkhof in his *Systematic Theology* for bringing piety into dogmatic theology.

Ziegenbalg was delighted to meet African children who were being catechised by the Dutch but was sad to see that the Dutch enslaved the Africans and did not allow them to be baptised even if they were taught and showed a true delight in the gospel. Ziegenbalg was appalled by this racist tyranny and misuse of the Great Commission. It was as if the Dutch were keen on introducing the natives to Christian doctrines to keep them docile but not keen on introducing them to Christ.

From South Africa to India
Ziegenbalg and Plütschau continued their journey on 8th May but the Sofia Hedwiga was driven helplessly by fierce winds eastwards, westwards and southwards in bitterly cold weather, thunder, lightning and hail. The ship’s main mast was broken into three pieces and the foremost was shredded a few days later. Now the ship floundered to one side and water poured over the decks and everything in the ship was thrown in disorder.

After May 21st passage became calmer and as the coasts of Madagascar and Mauritius were passed. Ziegenbalg had leisure to write letters home and start on a book concerning true wisdom, inspired by the boat’s name ‘Sofia’.
Writing from Tranquebar on 25th September, 1706, he states that he had only time to write 26 chapters so could not post the book off during the journey as it was only half finished! On 13th June the party passed the Tropic of Capricorn for the second time on their zigzag course and the climate became warmer and on June 22nd they passed the Equator. Then the ship lost trace of its exact position and drifted on until 5th July when panic almost overcame the crew and passengers as there was still no land in sight and the ship found itself amongst treacherous rocks looming out of the sea. A strong wind now drove them mercifully out of the danger area towards the coast of Ceylon but storms prevented them from going on land. However, on 9th July, they finally reached the Malabar Coast and Tranquebar.

An Unwelcome Start in India
On arriving at Tranquebar on 9th July, 1706, Ziegenbalg and Plütschau found unexpected difficulties awaiting them. The captain had been angered by the Christian testimony of the two missionaries on board, especially at their protests when he made immodest advances to lady passengers both single and married. He refused to allow them to leave the ship even after all the other passengers had disembarked and the cargo had been stored on land. The Captain told Ziegenbalg and Plütschau that missionaries should learn to have patience. After three days prevention from going ashore, a German Captain named Mincke visited the Danish ship and persuaded its captain to place the two men in his care. The captain of Ziegenbalg’s vessel seemed to think that the two arrested passengers would fare even worse under Mincke’s ‘care’. However, Captain Mincke turned out to be a most friendly man and quickly put Ziegenbalg and Plütschau on a boat set for the shore. The waves were most troublesome and soon the native vessel was about to capsize in the stormy waters but many brave native Indians sprang into the raging waves from the shore and steadied the boat, bringing it safe to harbour. Sadly, the enraged Danish Captain, now himself on land, seeing he had been tricked, flew at the native youngsters who had helped the missionaries, beating them wildly with a long, thick stick. He then turned on Ziegenbalg but Captain Mincke took hold of the aggressor’s arm with a powerful grip, removed his stick and led the Captain away. Though the bully cursed and threatened he was no match for the big German.

Now, hoping all was well, Ziegenbalg and Plütschau looked forward to settling down with the natives who had proved so helpful and kind. Their first communications with the natives were in Danish as they had not yet learnt Tamil and Portuguese. One of native Indians, a fine young man of noble blood, offered himself as a helper and servant. He was to be the missionaries’ first teacher in the Portuguese language and Tamil, their first interpreter and their first convert. The friendly Indians now gathered around the two missionaries and asked them who they were and for what purpose they had come to Tranquebar, and showed clear signs that the missionaries were welcome. Ziegenbalg and Plütschau had been called to the Indians who were now welcoming them so they realised they had found a new home from home.

Puzzling statements found in Ziegenbalg’s correspondence
It is at this point in Ziegenbalg's written testimonies since his departure from Copenhagen until his establishing himself as a missionary that Ziegenbalg’s accounts become puzzling to me and apparently self-contradictory. When writing to the King and the authorities at large, Ziegenbalg describes events as if everything went according to plan with no opposition. Plütschau’s reports were much blunter and explicit. However, we know that Ziegenbalg’s correspondence was, at least in this initial period, heavily edited by his, at times, ‘over pietistic’ friends and some correspondence was even suppressed. So, too, Ziegenbalg’s letters were immediately translated by his supporters into English.
studying German in several universities and teaching in that language for over fifty years, I still find Ziegenbalg’s German extremely difficult so I understand the difficulties of those who have rendered his works into English. On reading English translations of Calvin’s works, I found the translators had put words and thoughts into Calvin’s head which he had never uttered. We also know, however, that Ziegenbalg was most cautious in writing anything which might hinder the work in India and support from abroad. Another feature of Ziegenbalg’s character is hinted at with great respect by Plütschau. Ziegenbalg during the first years of his work in India was quite immune to the negative attitude of the East India Company. He could ignore it and forget it. He was so intent on reaching the Tamils and mixed races with the gospel and so stable in his faith that the Lord would conquer any opposition, that he just did not think about opposition at all. This ‘stickability’ was not Plütschau’s who after five years worrying about such matters resigned from the Mission field. Then even Ziegenbalg became more critical of the behaviour of the Norwegian governor and his henchmen.

Protests from the Danish and Norwegian authorities
Scarcely, however, were the troubles with their sea captain on land over when further opposition arose on the part of the Tranquebar Danish and Norwegian authorities. Whilst still on the dockside, the Vice-Commandant of Tranquebar, Krahe, approached Ziegenbalg and Plütschau with anger on his face and had the missionaries thrown into a tiny, dark cell which was so hot and stuffy that one could hardly breathe. There they were left from morning until late evening without food or drink though their thirst was great. At last Commandant Hassius, a Norwegian of German stock and a graduate of Wittenberg University, appeared with four officials and two chaplains and, though he knew all about Ziegenbalg’s mission, asked for documentary proof that the missionaries had a right to land at Tranquebar, telling them that as they were not merchants, there was no place for them in the town. Ziegenbalg showed Hassius his credentials from King Frederick and the Danish-Halle Mission but Hassius ignored them protesting that he saw no use in their missionary efforts and they were not welcome in Tranquebar. He then had the two missionaries led to the market place where he left them to take care of themselves though the King had commanded Hassius to welcome and look after the missionaries. Ziegenbalg and Plütschau comforted each other with the knowledge that the Lord who had brought them thus far would help them in their plight.

Ziegenbalg and Plütschau find friends amongst the Europeans
Soon a friendly Dane approached them and asked if they were looking for lodgings. On hearing this was the case, he said that his father-in-law would be glad to receive them. The Dane gave his name as Attrug and his profession as secretary to the East India Company, so he was a very useful first connection. However, Attrug told them they would never receive help from the Tranquebar authorities who were convinced that they had been sent as spies by King Frederick to report on the officials’ behaviour. Attrug’s father-in-law told the missionaries that he had a tiny house in the poorer part of the town which they could use. ‘It is to the poor people that we are called’, confessed Ziegenbalg. The neighbours in the dockside area were the down and outs of the town and mostly the offspring of Portuguese and low caste Indians who were looked down upon by most sections of the public.

Life as missionaries begins in earnest
Now happy to be with the poor, casteless people of Tranquebar, Ziegenbalg and Plütschau within a few days, and with the help of their new Tamil friend, composed a statement as to the intentions of the missionaries. This included thirty-six Christian objectives and prayers for the conversion of the Tamils and also the Lord’s Prayer. This was first composed in Portuguese and then translated into Tamil to be distributed amongst the Indians and Euro-Indians in the locality so all would know that the missionary enterprise had begun. At the same time Ziegenbalg started on a Tamil dictionary with transcriptions in Latin characters and explanations in German adding words and phrases daily for their own use.

Through the help of a school-master interpreter who understood some German, Dutch, Danish and Portuguese, the latter language being the lingua franca of the area, the two friends realized that most of the natives could speak both Portuguese and Tamil so they struggled to become fluent in both languages.

To be continued
It is always a delight to observe the Lord Jesus coming to the defence of His friends. In the opening verses of Mark 7 a group of scribes and Pharisees from Jerusalem accused the Lord’s disciples of breaching some detail of the Jewish religion concerning hand-washing. In all likelihood they had, but the Lord would have none of it. He at once turned these allegations back upon the accusers exposing their own hypocrisy. How dare they accuse anyone of breaking the commandments of men while they themselves blithely ignore the commandments of God.

A lesson for us
Some might question the relevance of this passage for faith today when it seems to dwell on matters peculiar to Jewish religion and ritual. However, all the Lord’s parables, miracles and doctrine are designed to teach His followers, and instruct His church, with enduring lessons about our faith. Nor shall we be disappointed here. The Lord’s words, ‘This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me’ brings us all within reach of His message. Lip-service religion is what the Lord detests, yet we must acknowledge its widespread presence in our churches today.

Think what you are saying
Hymn singing and prayers, reading Scripture and even preaching, readily lend themselves to the possibility of honouring the Lord with our lips while remaining distant from Him in our hearts. I wonder if much of our congregational singing does not make liars of us with its pious assertions of devotion. Are our affirmative ‘Amen’s’ after public prayer uttered merely by custom? There is no place in divine worship for lip-service religion, yet much of what is said and done in our gatherings is undertaken carelessly and expressed thoughtlessly.

New birth necessary
We could, of course, say much about our approach to worship. There are many things we ought to pay attention to, such as thoughtful preparation, punctuality, concentration and a humble attitude while coming into the presence of the Lord. But there is a much deeper significance here, too. It is possible to worship God outwardly with every appearance of propriety while in fact our souls are dead to Him, and our hearts are stoney cold. True worship is spiritual worship and spiritual worship is possible only where a soul has been born again.

God is not mocked
Surely this was the lesson for the disciples then, and for us now. Worship is a spiritual act and must be offered by faith. Anything else is sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. These men with their precise rules and religious pedigree might impress other men, but they did not impress God. Nor did they deceive the Son of God. They came splitting hairs about hygiene but the Lord looked into their hearts and saw all the dirt, filth and wickedness they never could wash out and which must forever damn them to hell.

Jesus Christ crucified
To worship aright is to worship in spirit and truth and that means to worship God as He requires. It is approaching Him upon the merit of Jesus Christ crucified for sin; by the Way He has ordained. It is pleading Christ’s blood to cleanse us from sin, and God’s righteousness imputed to justify. It is to offer our gratitude, and attribute all honour to Jesus Christ alone under cover of atonement, divine satisfaction and complete reconciliation. Such worship is forthcoming only from those whom Jesus Christ has redeemed and God the Holy Spirit has quickened.

This being so, everything in our worship ought to be directed to honouring the Lord with our hearts, as well as with our lips. We come to honour Him, not to lift up men and women. We come to praise and thank the Triune God for accepting us in Jesus Christ, not to revel in our accomplishments and abilities. Worship is for God. It isn’t for me.

Hymn writer John Burton once wrote,

1 I often say my prayers;  
   But do I ever pray?  
   And do the wishes of my heart  
   Go with the words I say?  

2 I may as well kneel down  
   And worship gods of stone,  
   As offer to the living God  
   A prayer of words alone.  

3 For words without the heart  
   The Lord will never hear;  
   Nor will he to those lips attend  
   Whose prayers are not sincere.  

4 Lord, show me what I need,  
   And teach me how to pray;  
   Nor let me ask Thee for thy grace,  
   Not feeling what I say.
A Dialogue between a Weak and a Strong Christian

S. Poor doubting soul, what is the matter?
Where are you seeking to be better?
Come, wounded soul, the Lord can heal:
Tell me, my friend, what do you feel?

W. I feel sin's rankling plague within,
And feel no sense of pardoned sin,
My sin is more than I can tell,
Oh! what can I expect but hell?

S. Poor doubting soul, read Peter's story,
You'll see how sinners get to glory;
'Tis not by works which they can do,
No 'tis a Saviour they must view.

W. But I am blind and past all feeling:
Ah! whither can I go for healing?
And I'm so dead, and naked too;
Ah! where can such a sinner go?

S. If thou art blind, and dead, and naked,
This does not prove that thou are hated;
No, no, my friend, it proves to me
That God designs to set you free;
For all are blind, but all don't know it!
For all are dead, but all won't own it;
And if it is made known to you,
That is a mercy known by few:
Then don't despair, be not mistaken,
For though you grieve to feel so dead,
There's life for you in Christ, your Head.

W. Ah! could you know what makes me moan,
I think you'd sing another tone;
I'm worse by far than you conceive,
My heart's so hard, I can't believe.

S. But what's too hard for you and I,
Is not for God, you can't deny;
The blind shall see, the lame shall walk,
The dead shall live, the dumb shall talk:
This will Almighty Jesus do
For wretched sinners; — why not you?
Feed not those doubts, suspend thy grief
Christ saved once a dying thief.

W. Oh! would the Lord but look on me,
And lead my soul to Calvary;
Salvation there was freely given,
This was the poor thief's way to heaven.
But ah! the Lord withholds His grace,
He will not let me see His face,
His promise seems of no effect;
Surely I can't be God's elect.

S. Ah! when the sun forgets to rise,
And saved souls forget to prize
Redeeming grace and dying love,
And lay aside their harps above,
Then may Immanuel deny
The groaning, sighing sinner's cry:
But oh! my friend, this comfort take,
Jehovah saves for Jesus' sake.

W. Oh! would the Lord but once reveal
His hidden love, and make me feel,
And let these broken bones rejoice:—
Lord, let me know I am thy choice.

S. Christ sees thy ways, and Christ will heal,
He'll make thy soul the cure to feel,
And then you'll see all things done well,
Approve the way Christ saves from hell:
No creature righteousness will do,
Christ will be all in all to you;
Christ lived, Christ died, Christ rose again,
This is the poor lost sinner's claim.

W. If all is true that you advance,
It makes my very soul to dance;
I'll venture on Him who can tell
But Christ may save my soul from hell?

S. Ah! venture there, thou canst not fail,
The blood of Christ, it must prevail,
Thou canst not perish at His feet,
In Jesus Christ thy soul's complete.

W. How know you that, my Christian friend,
How know you what will be my end?
What! are there none who fall from grace
And die in darkness and disgrace.
The Kingdom Of God Triumphant
By Allan Jellett
Price £17.95 ($23.95) + £3.95 p&p
198 pages hardback

The book of Revelation can sometimes appear difficult to understand with its visions and plagues and symbolism. Too many writers have used this fact as an excuse for far-fetched and bizarre notions about the end times. This in turn has made some believers wary of delving too deeply into the message John gave to the Church for its blessing from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

Pastor Allan Jellett has produced this book from a series of sermons from the book of Revelation. In it he provides an overview and interpretation of the prophecy to comfort and encourage the Lord's people, and to remind them that whatever happens in this world, be it in the personal lives of the saints, or the struggles amongst the nations of the earth, the Lord God is sovereign. He is in control and the Kingdom of God is now, and ever will be, triumphant.

Available from Go Publications at: http://go-newfocus.co.uk/books

Troublemakers At Frankfurt
A Vindication Of The English Reformation
By Dr George M. Ella
Price £25.00 ($35.00) + £3.95 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

Discovering Christ In Leviticus
An excellent study from the late Don Fortner is now available through New Focus Magazine.

Price £29.95 ($39.95) + £3.95 p&p
634 pages hardback

Available from Go Publications at: http://go-newfocus.co.uk/books

The Kingdom Of God Triumphant
By Allan Jellett
Price £17.95 ($23.95) + £3.95 p&p
198 pages hardback

The book of Revelation can sometimes appear difficult to understand with its visions and plagues and symbolism. Too many writers have used this fact as an excuse for far-fetched and bizarre notions about the end times. This in turn has made some believers wary of delving too deeply into the message John gave to the Church for its blessing from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

Pastor Allan Jellett has produced this book from a series of sermons from the book of Revelation. In it he provides an overview and interpretation of the prophecy to comfort and encourage the Lord’s people, and to remind them that whatever happens in this world, be it in the personal lives of the saints, or the struggles amongst the nations of the earth, the Lord God is sovereign. He is in control and the Kingdom of God is now, and ever will be, triumphant.

Available from Go Publications at: http://go-newfocus.co.uk/books

S. Ah! fall you may ten times a day,
But oh! such falls will make you pray;
But fall to hell, it cannot be;
Christ died to set the prisoner free.

W. But I am still in prison bound;
Can I amongst the elect be found?
Oh! would the Lord but set me free,
And tell me he has chosen me.

S. Oh! let not Satan thus beguile;
Although the Lord don’t seem to smile,
He’s made you feel the plague within,
And died to pay your debt of sin;
Christ shed his blood, Christ did atone,
Christ is the Way, and Christ alone;
I think this truth you can’t reject,
It never was by God’s elect.

W. But who can fathom God’s decrees?
God takes and leaves just whom He please.
I’ll wait in hope, and who can tell
But Christ has saved my soul from hell?

S. Wait where you are, and I’ll engage
Your pardon’s clear in every page:
Read but your Bible, there you’ll see
Salvation is entirely free,
The lost, the helpless, and undone,
’Tis such were saved ’ere time begun:
In time God makes this blessing known,
You soon shall call the Lord your own;
And while we’re stationed here below,
May Christ be all we strive to know.
Let’s praise Him for His mercies past
We surely shall be saved at last.

W. I thank the Lord I met with you,
For what you say I know is true;
I then was blind, but now I see
That grace is full and grace is free,
’Tis free for you, ’tis free for me,
’Twas settled in eternity;
Then we must stand, we shall not fall,
Since Jesus is our all in all.

Daniel Herbert (1751-1833) was a Methodist and writer of hymns and poems. He published three volumes, entitled “Hymns and Poems, doctrinal and sentimental, for the Citizens of Zion who are longing to know their Election of God, and who love Evangelical Truths.” The above ‘dialogue’ is from volume 1.
New Focus Church Online
That the purpose of God according to election might stand

New Focus Church is an online fellowship of believers who love the doctrines of free grace but perhaps struggle to find local gospel ministry, or a regular opportunity to share with likeminded believers around the Word of God. During the Covid-lockdowns we realised there were many people for whom access to sovereign grace preaching was difficult. We hope that New Focus Church will help meet that need.

Our online congregation meets each Lord’s day at 5:30 pm in the UK on the church’s YouTube channel ...

New Focus Church Online

... and you are welcome to join us from anywhere in the world for a time of worship, ministry and prayer, privately in your own home, or together with friends and family.

Our worship is serious, thoughtful and recognises the majesty of the One whom we gather to worship and praise. We believe that lifting up the Lord Jesus Christ in gospel preaching is the essence of the church’s worship and continuing purpose in this world. All our services are conducted using the KJV of the Bible.

In addition to our broadcasts we have a church website where notices concerning forthcoming services can be found, an introduction to the passage being preached and hymns that will be used in the service. There are also links to past services and other resources visitors might find useful. Our website address is:

NewFocus.Church
(There is no .com or .co.uk at the end.)

We also value the great privilege and opportunity broadcasting on YouTube provides for reaching casual listeners worldwide who may be unfamiliar with church-going and who discover our services, dare we say, accidentally. We trust the Lord may be pleased in His good providence to introduce the gospel of sovereign grace to new hearers by this means.

Come and join us on Sunday, or if you know someone who can’t get to church or just needs some extra fellowship, send them our link. Pray with us that the Lord will use these services to send His gospel to a new generation of people and that the old paths may yet lead men and women to a knowledge of Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.

Go to YouTube and type in New Focus Church Online

Service times in different time zones are available on the NewFocus.Church website on the Upcoming Service page. “What time is that where I am?”