

NEW FOCUS

THAT THE PURPOSE OF GOD ACCORDING TO ELECTION MIGHT STAND

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Peter L. Meney

New Focus promotes the Christ-centred Gospel of God's free and sovereign grace. It presents the Gospel as the power of God unto salvation and glories in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.

New Focus is committed to the Protestant Reformed Faith and the advancement of conservative and evangelical Christianity.

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— Cover —

For the king's ships went to Tarshish with the servants of Hiram: every three years once came the ships of Tarshish bringing gold, and silver, ivory, and apes, and peacocks. (2 Chronicles 9:21)

— I Saw Three Ships —
West Cumbrian Coastal Path
Fiona Birks

The Particular Gospel

The heart of the gospel is the atoning death of the Lord Jesus Christ. Scripture places all the responsibility and burden of our salvation on the shoulders of our Lord. If a man is to be saved God must save him and the good news is that the Lord Jesus Christ has 'saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began'.

If I am to be redeemed from the curse of the law it must be the Lord Jesus who redeems me. If I am to be delivered from captivity to my own sinful nature it must be the Lord Jesus who sets me free. To be released from the bondage of Satan, Christ must break the chains for by my own strength I can neither settle the claim of God's law, overthrow my inherited sinful nature or escape the devil's grasp.

The doctrine of particular redemption lays all the responsibility for salvation on the shoulders of the Saviour and gives Him all the glory. Christ's death accomplishes Jonah's confession that 'salvation is of the Lord'. It fulfils the apostle's statement, 'Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures' (1 Corinthians 15:3). The doctrine of particular redemption recognises the efficacy of Christ's sacrificial death and acknowledges it is the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, which cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:7). Particular redemption gives praise where praise is due.

Christ's death was substitutionary and representative. We 'are justified by His blood', and though, 'we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son' (Romans 5:9, 10). Christ died to save, not to make salvation possible. He gave His blood to redeem, not to make redemption possible. He suffered to take away our sins. He did not create an environment for the removal of sin should a man decide he would like that to happen. God's gift of grace is much more certain than that.

If Christ's accomplishments on the cross were general and universal then praise and gratitude for salvation must reside with man since ultimately it is a man himself who makes Christ's general work personal and applicable to himself. But this cannot be since Paul tells us, no flesh can glory in the presence of God (1 Corinthians 1:29). By right the Lord Jesus must receive all the honour because it is He who accomplished our great salvation.

All whom God loved with everlasting love, chose by sovereign grace and united to Himself in the covenant of peace will be saved and brought to a knowledge of the truth through faith and hearing the gospel. These are the blessed individuals redeemed by Christ. They will all be called to spiritual life and faith by God the Holy Spirit.

Trusting Christ does not actuate some dormant, provisional work of grace. Faith is God's spiritual gift. It hears and believes the truth of Christ's effectual work spiritually. Faith brings assurance. It relies upon a powerful Saviour and His completed work. It gives solid hope of eternal glory and justifiable confidence of acceptance with God. God's people always look away from themselves to the accomplishments of their Saviour on the cross.

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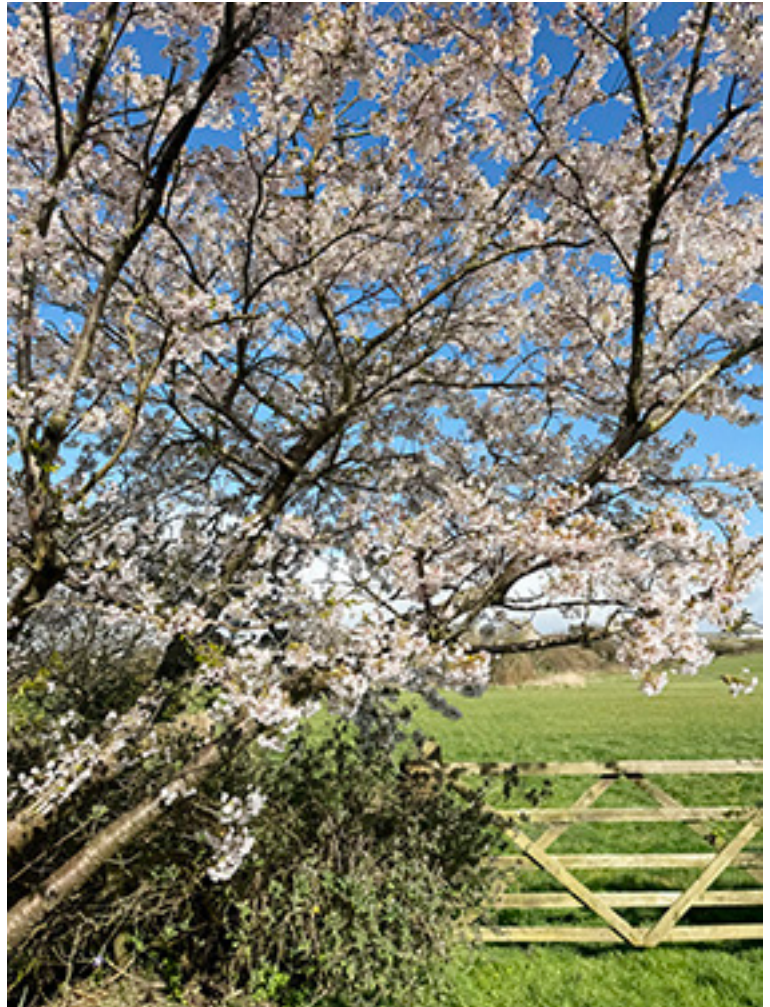
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Our Trials

Our trials are wisely and lovingly sent from God with a divine purpose. They may appear unnecessary and random but that is because we do not see the grander picture. Tests, trials and persecutions are designed to rid the church of dross, to strengthen and equip each member and to refine our trust in the Lord Jesus. We are not being made more holy by our trials but we are being made more beautiful. The gold is being burnished, jewels polished to a shine. The trials of our faith differ one from another but they ready us for the same perfect conclusion, as 'the coming of the Lord draweth nigh'.

Peter L. Meney

'Enemies Of The Cross Of Christ'



Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.) (Philippians 3:17-19)

A faithful pastor has many responsibilities. As I stand before eternity-bound sinners to preach the gospel of Christ week after week there are several things which I must do. If I would be faithful to the Lord my God who has called me, faithful to the Holy Scriptures, faithful to the souls of men and faithful to my own conscience, I must give myself whole-heartedly to these things. I must seek God's message for the hour; I must boldly deliver that message, considering neither men's approval or their disapproval of it.

The faithful servant of God must preach the gospel with simplicity and clarity. He must instruct the people of God in doctrinal truth. Christ's sheep must be fed with knowledge and understanding. Sometimes God's servant must deliver a message of reproof and rebuke for the discipline of God's family. The discipline of the church is to be done in the pulpit.

God's servants must endeavour to comfort and encourage the people of God in the faith of the gospel. At times the people of God must be challenged and stirred with regard to their responsibilities. Sometimes the people of God simply need to have their hearts warmed and cheered. And the faithful servant of God must sometimes sound a word of solemn warning.

I know some people get upset when a preacher warns a congregation in plain terms about false prophets, false doctrine and false religion. But if I am to faithfully watch over the souls of men, as one who must give account, I dare not keep silent about 'the enemies of the cross'.

The men whom Paul describes as 'the enemies of the cross of Christ' were teachers and preachers in the church at Philippi. They claimed to be true believers. They claimed that they were the servants of Christ. They claimed to be preaching the gospel of Christ. I have no doubt that these men preached what we call 'the fundamentals of the faith'. They preached the inspiration of the Bible, the virgin birth, the death, burial and resurrection of Christ and the second coming of Christ. Yet, Paul calls these men, 'the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction'.

Paul spoke in plain terms about these cunning, crafty seducers who made merchandise

of the souls of men, not because he was a bitter antagonist who loved a good fight but because he was devoted to the glory of God, the gospel of Christ and the souls of men.

These men at Philippi were bitterly opposed to Paul, and vehemently opposed to the gospel of the grace of God which he preached. They did everything they could to discredit Paul and to mar the beauty of the gospel. The way they did it was to raise a smoke screen and a cloud of dust, falsely accusing him of many evil things.

They accused Paul of being a false apostle and an antinomian. They accused him of being a divider of men. These accusations were made by these false prophets in an attempt to hide the one real issue. They themselves were 'the enemies of the cross of Christ'. They hated the God whom Paul proclaimed. They hated the Christ he preached. They hated the gospel message of the cross.

Things are no different in our day. The church of Christ is plagued today, as never before, with men in her pulpits who are 'the enemies of the cross of Christ'. They rebel against the preaching of the gospel and they despise those who preach it. They raise many false issues and make many false accusations against those who preach the gospel of God's free and sovereign grace in Christ, as an excuse for their own rebellion to the Word of God. By their many false accusations they are attempting to excuse, or at least to cover over, their own heart-enmity toward the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. These are only smoke screens, raised to hide the real issue. The real issue is just this, they are 'the enemies of the cross of Christ'. The cross of Christ is a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence to them. What causes such great uproar and bitter antagonism among devoutly religious people is simply the doctrine of the cross.

In Philippians 3:18, 19, the Apostle Paul weeps as he warns the church of God about 'the enemies of the cross of Christ'. The messenger of Christ in tears delivers the solemn warning. Yet, the enemies of Christ are unmoved; pretending to be his friends they are full of hostility toward him. Here is a preacher so heartbroken he weeps and a congregation with hearts so hard that, though he told them the truth again and again, they do not regard it.

What is the cross of Christ which men vehemently oppose?

Paul tells us that 'the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness'. He tells us that there are many who reject the gospel

because of 'the offence of the cross'. Yet, men and women talk about the cross all the time. They sing about the cross. They wear crosses around their necks. They put crosses on top of their church buildings. What then is that cross of which Paul speaks when he says, 'They are the enemies of the cross of Christ'?

When Paul speaks of the cross, he is talking about the doctrine of the atonement. Man is not at all offended by the fact that God's Son died upon a Roman cross. But the enmity of man's heart is evident when you begin to proclaim the doctrine of the cross, the doctrine of the atonement which our Lord accomplished on the cross.

Those who oppose the doctrine of the atonement are 'the enemies of the cross of Christ'. Those who accept the atonement and rest their souls upon it are the friends of the cross. Here are four words that describe the doctrine of the cross and the work of our Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross.

Sovereignty

'The Good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep' (John 10:11). Throughout the ordeal of His crucifixion and death our Saviour displayed His total sovereignty as God. Never was He the helpless victim of circumstances. He voluntarily laid down His life for us.

NEW TITLE NEW TITLE NEW TITLE

Discovering Christ In Ephesians
Don Fortner

The Apostle Paul had great love and concern for the young church at Ephesus which he had been instrumental in forming over several years. Ephesus was an idolatrous city dedicated to Diana but the gospel was gaining converts and Paul was eager to confirm them in the faith of Jesus Christ.

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DISCOVERING CHRIST IN PHILIPPIANS

Substitution (Isaiah 53:4-10)

Our Lord Jesus Christ died as a Substitute in our place. Bearing our sins in His body on the tree, He died in our place.

Success (Isaiah 42:4)

All that the Lord Jesus Christ intended to accomplish in His death, He has accomplished. All He intended to do, He has done. All He tried to perform, He has performed.

Satisfaction (Isaiah 53:11)

The death of our Lord Jesus Christ was an infinitely satisfactory atonement for sin. There is complete satisfaction in His blood. His blood satisfied the decrees of the Father, the demands of the law, the declarations of the prophets and the desire of His people.

Those who are 'the enemies of the cross' try to belittle our Lord's great work of redemption. They make it out to be a very small thing. They teach that the Son of God did something or other, which in some way or other, in some measure or other, is connected with our redemption. But to assert that the Lord Jesus Christ has effectually accomplished the redemption of His people is most offensive to them.

When Paul talks about the cross of Christ, he is talking about the gospel message of the cross (2 Corinthians 5:18-21). This message declares:

1. Free forgiveness of sin through the blood of Christ (1 John 1:9).

2. Salvation by grace alone (Eph. 2:8, 9).

3. Justification by faith alone (Romans 5:1).

This is the theme of the Bible. 'The just shall live by faith.' This makes the gospel good news. This is the cause of every martyr's blood from Abel down to this day. No man's blood was ever shed for preaching salvation by works. This was the theme of the reformation; grace alone, faith alone, Christ alone. This is the only hope for a sinner, the only assurance for a believer and the only comfort for a dying man.

4. Acceptance in a Substitute (Ephesians 1:6). The Lord Jesus Christ has stood, is standing and shall forevermore stand before God as our Substitute. In Him we have no condemnation (Romans 8:1). In Him we have no sin and are righteous (1 John 3:5).

Sometimes in the Scriptures the cross refers to that life which is the result of faith in Christ (Matthew 10:38, 39). The way of the cross is a life of self-denial. The true believer cannot, he will not, he dare not, live for himself, either

in the accumulating of wealth or the getting of fame or the enjoyment of pleasure.

The way of the cross is a life of submission, surrender and dedication to Christ as Lord. We are submissive to His will. We surrender to His authority. We are dedicated to His glory.

Those who are 'the enemies of the cross' rebel against the claims of Christ upon their lives. His yoke is a gall to their shoulders. They will not have it.

Why are some people the enemies of the cross of Christ?

What is there about the preaching of the cross which evokes such enmity and hostility from men and women? What is there in the preaching of the cross which is so offensive to them? People are not opposed to religion. They are not opposed to the idea of eternal salvation. Why then are some, 'the enemies of the cross of Christ'?

The cross of Christ is opposed to the pride and dignity of man. The doctrine of the cross is humiliating. It leaves nothing for man to boast of or glory in. The cross stands as a vivid emblem of man's hatred of God. The cross of Christ is a clear reminder and portrayal of human sin. It destroys all human notions of human ability, human merit and self-salvation. The cross of Christ makes man's religion, man's works, man's traditions, man's customs, man's moral dignity and self-righteousness a heap of rubbish.

The cross of Christ is offensive to men because its simplicity is opposed to human wisdom. The cross of Christ is a most unaccommodating doctrine. It will not bend to man's prejudice. It will not bow to man's passions. It will not give space for man's goodness. It will not allow room for man's wisdom. The gospel of Christ must be revealed. Otherwise, man will perish in his intellectual foolishness.

The cross of Christ evokes man's wrath and enmity because it puts all men and women on one level. All who enter heaven must enter by the same Door. All who go to glory must go in the same Way. Harlots and queens, drunkards and educators, whoremongers and moralists are all the same in the eyes of God. All are sinners. There is but one place of cleansing for sinners, the cross of Christ.

The cross of Christ is offensive to men and women because it demands total surrender. God has set the terms of peace before you. He will never alter them. He demands total

surrender to Christ. The cross of Christ is offensive because it shuts all up to Christ alone.

Who are the enemies of the cross of Christ?

Paul tell us that they are those men and women 'whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things'. The enemies of the cross are people who live for self. 'Whose god is their belly.' The enemies of the cross are people who are shamefully proud. 'Whose glory is their shame.' The enemies of the cross are people who live for this world. 'Who mind earthly things.'

Some who are the enemies of the cross are in the pulpits of our churches. They preach for profit; they preach for personal gain; they preach for love of ease. Therefore, they endeavour to alter the doctrine of the cross. They do not out and out deny the cross. They simply alter its doctrines to accommodate their hearers.

They preach sovereignty, but not total sovereignty. They preach about sins, but never about sin or total depravity. They preach redemption but not effectual, accomplished redemption. They preach grace but not free, sovereign, irresistible grace.

Some who are the enemies of the cross of Christ are in the pews of our churches. These people whom Paul describes as 'enemies of the cross of Christ' were members of a church which he had started. They were professed Christians. They were outwardly and by profession moral, religious people. But in reality, in their hearts, they were 'the enemies of the cross of Christ'.

While they believed the doctrine of the cross in their heads, it had no effect upon their hearts. While they talked about the cross on Sunday, it had no power over their lives. While they held to the doctrine of the cross, they lived for the world. Their religion was only a profession. There was no self-denial, no sacrifice, no dedication and no commitment to the cross.

What becomes of those who are 'the enemies of the cross of Christ'?

Paul describes the enemies of the cross as men and women 'whose end is destruction'. Their profession will be destroyed. All their hopes will be destroyed. All their happiness will be destroyed. In the end, they themselves will be destroyed.


How should we act before the enemies of the cross?

There is but one thing for us to do. We must go on preaching 'the cross of Christ'. The more I


see man's enmity toward the cross, the more I am compelled to preach the doctrine of the cross. Those points of gospel truth which are most offensive to carnal men shall be my most constant theme.

I will proclaim God's absolute, total and universal sovereignty. I will declare the total depravity, guilt and inability of Adam's race. I will proclaim God's unconditional election of His people in Christ. I will preach the blessed gospel doctrine of limited, effectual atonement by the blood of Christ. I will declare that salvation is accomplished by the irresistible grace of God the Holy Spirit. I will preach the certain final perseverance and preservation of God's elect in Christ.

Ours is the gospel of grace; pure grace, eternal grace, sovereign grace, immutable grace, effectual grace, saving grace through the cross of Christ. Let us hold high the blood-stained banner and preach the cross in all its power and glory.



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An analysis of Particular Baptist history and theology, from a Hyper-Calvinist perspective.

THE BAPTIST PARTICULAR PODCAST
Hyper-Calvinism: Defined By A Hyper-Calvinist
March 18, 2026

This Episode: How does one define Hyper-Calvinism? While there are modern and free-lancing definitions, there is also a historic definition which serves as the goal post for the label. In this episode, Jared Smith traces the historical and doctrinal developments from John Calvin during the 16th century to the tenets of Hyper-Calvinism during the 18th century.

The Baptist Particular Podcast serves as an analysis of Particular Baptist history and theology from a Hyper-Calvinist point of view.

Ignorance Of Futurity

If it is our fate to be ignorant to future events, we must not merely trace the cause to the narrow and limited faculties of the soul in its present state of existence, but we must go further, till we arrive at the Creator Himself, whose will and pleasure it is that the knowledge of futurity should be denied us. He knew the strength of man, and the extent of knowledge his imperfect nature was capable of bearing. The knowledge of futurity, like the splendour of the noonday sun, could not be steadily contemplated; it would be fatal to the happiness of man, and dangerous to his virtue. Supposing that the future events of our life marked a bright and prosperous tract; whilst we viewed this at a distance, and anticipated that happiness which we knew certainly awaited us, our present enjoyment would cease, we should no longer be contented and cheerful, but wait with impatient anxiety for those blessings which were held up

to our view. But on the contrary, was the prospect of future contingencies gloomy and marked by affliction and sufferings, the moment we read our fate, our happiness would be no more; the days which hitherto had been passed in peace and tranquillity would now rise in sorrow and depart in gloom. With a known evil impending over our heads, each morning bringing us nearer to the dread moment, we should live in hopeless misery, the prey of sorrow and despair, insensible of all the blessings around us. How infinitely merciful and wise then is that God who has shrouded futurity in darkness, gradually unfolding the veil as the events occur; so that we are never at once overwhelmed by the torrent of adversity, nor confounded by the blaze of certain prosperity! Let us then never suffer ourselves to be disappointed by the delusive hopes of happiness, nor be rendered miserable and wretched by feeling the weight of misfortunes before they arrive. Let us rather thank the almighty that our ignorance of futurity saves us from many a pang of inquietude, and delivers us from many a throb of anxious dread and fearful despondency. If we feel assured of the grace of God through the meditation of Christ, we have just reason to hope that futurity will unfold to us with joy and gladness; and as there is a just and gracious God, who orders and directs the universe, who knows all the events of our lives, and before whose view is continually present the circle of eternity; we may with safety, when we lie down to sleep, commend ourselves to His care, undisturbed as to what may happen during the night; and when the morning sun summons us to our duties, we may trust ourselves in His protection, without anxiety for the events which are to befall us during the day. And in the hour of trial, when dangers threaten and destruction seems to impend, let us still remember the goodness of God, and repose upon His protecting arm, in perfect assurance that whatever happens is for our good.

Chrisoph Christian Sturm (1740-1768)

was a German preacher and author, best known for his daily readings, *Reflections on the Works of God in Nature*. This extract, 'Ignorance Of Futurity' is the devotion for March 27th. The composer Beethoven owned a copy of Sturm's *Reflections* which he read assiduously and annotated profusely.



The Saints' Eternal Union With Christ

The everlasting love of God, the Father, Son, and Spirit, is the bond of the elect's union to the sacred Three. What may be said of the three divine persons in general, is true of each of them in particular. They have all three loved the elect with an everlasting love, and thereby have firmly and everlastingly united them to themselves. Christ has loved them with an everlasting and unchangeable love, whereby His heart is knit unto them as Jonathan's was to David. He loved them as His own soul, as His own body, and the members of it. This is that cement which will never loosen, that union knot which can never be untied, that bond which can never be dissolved, from whence there can be no separation; for 'who shall separate us from the love of Christ?'¹ 'I am persuaded', says the apostle, 'that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord'. There are several unions which arise from other branches of this everlasting love-union, which are all antecedent to our faith in Christ.

1. There is an election-union in Christ from everlasting: 'God hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world'.² This is an act and instance of everlasting love, by which the persons chosen are considered in Christ, and one with Him. Christ was chosen as an Head, His people as members with Him. Nothing is more commonly said by those who are

esteemed sound divines, than this: now how Christ can be considered as an Head, And the elect as members of Him in this internal act of election, without union to Him, is hard to conceive.

Arminius and his followers, the *Remonstrants*, have frequently urged the text now mentioned in favour of election from faith foreseen, and their argument upon it is this: 'None are chosen to salvation but in Christ; none are in Christ but believers, who are ingrafted into Christ, and united to Him by faith, therefore none are chosen to salvation, but those who are believers in Christ, are ingrafted into Him and united with Him'. For they had no other notion of being in Christ, but by faith; like some others, who yet would be thought to be far from being in their scheme. But then, among other replies, they have been told by the *Anti-Remonstrants*, 'That it is certain that we are chosen and regarded in Christ before we were believers; which is fully proved from several places of scripture, which plainly make it appear, that the elect have some existence in Christ, even before they believe; for unless there had been some kind of union between Christ and the members, Christ would not have been their Head, nor could He have satisfied for them'.

2. There is a legal union between Christ and the elect from everlasting: they are one in a law-sense, as surety and debtor are one; the bond of this union is Christ's suretyship, which is from everlasting, and in which Christ engaged, as a proof of His strong love and affections to His people. He is the surety of the better Testament, that drew near to God the Father in the name of the elect, substituted Himself in their place and

¹ Romans 8:35, 38, 39.

² Ephesians 1:4.

JOHN GILL

stead, and laid Himself under obligation to pay their debts, satisfy for their sins, and procure for them all the blessings of grace and glory. This being accepted of by God, Christ and the elect were looked upon, in the eye of the law, as one person, even as the bondsman and the debtor, among men, are one, in a legal sense; so that if one pays the debt, it is the same as if the other did it. This legal union arising from Christ's surety-ship-engagements, is the foundation of the imputation of our sins to Christ, end of His satisfaction for them, and also of the imputation of Christ's righteousness to us, and of our justification by it. Christ and His people being one, in a law-sense, their sins become His, and His righteousness becomes theirs.

3. There is a federal union between Christ and the elect from everlasting. As they were considered as one, He as Head, and they as members, in election; they are likewise considered after the same manner in the covenant of grace. Christ has a very great concern in the covenant; He is given for a covenant to the people; He is the Mediator, Surety and Messenger of it. It is made with Him, not as a single person, but as a common Head, representing all the elect, who are given to Him, in a federal way, as His seed and posterity. What He promised in the covenant, He promised for them, and on their account; and what He received, He received for them, and on their account. Hence grace is said to be given to them in Him before the world began;³ and they are said to be blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ⁴.

4. There is a natural union between Christ and His people; for 'both he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one'; that is, of one nature; 'for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren'.⁵ This is an union in time, but is the effect of Christ's love before time; 'Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same'.⁶ The nature He assumed is the same with that of all mankind, but was taken to Him with a peculiar regard to the elect, the children, the spiritual seed of Abraham, who are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. Now this natural union, which is the fruit of Christ's everlasting love, is antecedent to the faith of New Testament saints.

5. It is sufficiently evident, that there is a representative union between Christ and the elect, both from everlasting and in time, which is independent on, and prior to their believing in Him. He represented them as their Head in election, and in the covenant of grace, as has been already observed; and so He did, when upon the cross, and in the grave, when He rose from the dead, entered into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. Hence they are said to be crucified with Him, dead with Him, buried with Him, risen with Him, yea, to be made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

³ 2 Timothy 1:9.

⁴ Ephesians 1:3.

⁵ Hebrews 2:11.

⁶ Hebrews 2:14.



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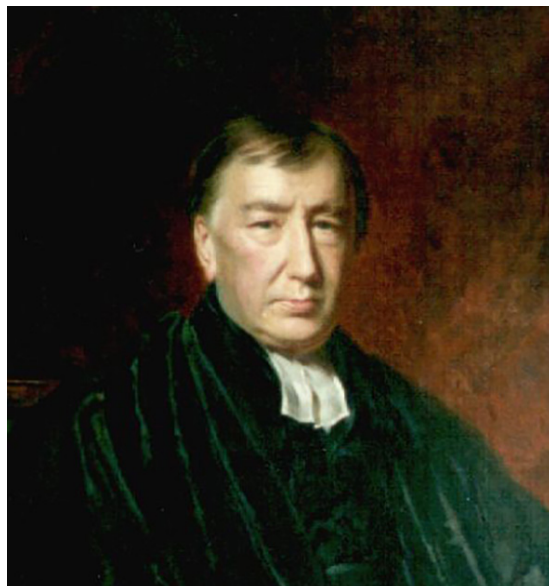
Part 1

I was agreeably pleased the other day, in beholding a party of my grandchildren at a plate of fruit. Every one of them, I perceived as I looked on, was gathering, one by one, the object of his choice. Neither did this election cease with them, until the whole, except the refuse, had been taken. How unconscious (said I to myself, as I marked their conduct,) are these children of the censure which they are passing on the world? They are, every one of them, actually engaged in preaching and practising that very doctrine of election, which all carnal and unenlightened minds are so much offended at in God.

But, as I ruminated on the subject further, I began to discover that these children of mine, (Genesis 48:5) were not the only preachers and practisers of election. It appears from the history of mankind, that the whole earth is continually engaged in the same pursuit. Perhaps there is not an individual of the human race, however diversified by nation or climate, but what, day by day, is thus occupied. And yet, strange to say, not a son or daughter of Adam, as long as they remain in the unregenerate state of an unregenerate mind, but what revolt at the doctrine; and while they are thus gratifying themselves in their own choice of things, take offence at the exercise of this freedom in God!

I have elsewhere observed (in my Poor Man's Commentary) on this subject somewhat particularly; that from the wayward capricious temper of the little child, the petulance and ill-humour of the man of grey hairs, how fully to be seen is the conduct which they manifest in all their pursuits and desires; in the object of their approbation or dislike; their predilections or hatreds. They have their choice or aversion as it respects their company, their food, their dress, their pursuits, their conversations. At their table, if through the Lord's bounty they have ample circumstances, they will spread abundance; and

will choose here or there, reject or take, as their fancy shall direct. And this, not unfrequently, without either rule or reason; without either wisdom or good sense; nay, sometimes to their sorrow, when from indiscretion they have made a wrong choice, and induced sickness and pain. And should any one upon those occasions venture to call their judgment or their right in question, what resentments have sometimes followed? Is this preaching and practising election, or is it not? But when the Judge of all the earth proclaimeth His holy will and pleasure, on this point, and saith, *I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious: and I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy*; up riseth the proud, unhumiliated heart of man, in boilings of the most fiery wrath, and the scum of bitterness runs over the pot of his malignity in deadly displeasure, against the justice of the decree. So then, according to this inverted order of things, man insists upon a right of freedom, which he denies God; and the creature claims a



Robert Hawker
(1753–1827)

ROBERT HAWKER

sovereignty, which he would withhold from the Creator! Reader! Ponder well this statement of things, and mark its correctness.

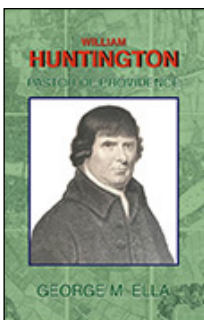
There is but One Being in the universe, who is capable of choosing rightly and whose election or reprobation cannot but be founded in unerring wisdom, and yet this Holy One, according to man's decision, shall be the only One precluded from this privilege! Can there be a more glaring and palpable proof of the desperately wicked state of the human heart!

I found my mind very powerfully led out to the contemplation of this subject. And, according to my usual custom, when at any time more than ordinarily engaged in the study of divine things, I love to consult the Wonderful Counsellor! There is somewhat always relieving to the mind, when, under exercises of any kind, the child of God can unbosom himself to Him. It is always profitable to spread our concerns before the Lord. His throne of grace is everlastingly open. He Himself is always thine. He waits to be gracious. And His people need no introduction, as at earthly courts, when God the Spirit leads out the soul upon the person of Jesus. According to Christ's own words: he may go in and out, and find pasture. Under these impressions I hastened in my visit to the Lord. He saith Himself, I am the Lord thy God, which teacheth thee to profit; which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go (Isaiah 48:17).

It struck me then while before the Lord; and it strikes me now again in the same forcible manner, that God by this very process, in causing every human being to do that daily

themselves, which they are so much displeased at in Him, hath taken the most effectual means to demonstrate His own glory and man's presumption. For while, from the first dawn of reason in childhood, in which the mind can aid, to the latest hour of old age, if all practise themselves what they dare to condemn in Him, doth not every one of them thereby sign the mittimus of his own sentence? Surely, that solemn scripture is awfully fulfilled, in which the Lord hath said; Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant! (Luke 19:22).

Nay more; the Lord's decision on this matter becomes the more glaring and pointed; because it should seem, as if it was only in this instance concerning election, that the Lord makes mankind to pass judgment upon themselves. It is God's sovereignty which is struck at, by this rebellion of man. Hence, therefore, that sovereignty takes this very method to assert and justify His right by an appeal to what they call theirs. There are no other of the attributes of God, which the unrenewed nature of man presumes to quarrel with and to arraign, but this of His sovereignty; and this only, when exercised in election. Well then, for the full conviction of the sinner on his own ground, and to silence and confound him forever, under the condemnation of his own heart, the Lord creates him into an office, of which he himself is not at the time conscious, and makes him his own judge. In the very constitution of his nature he is so formed, with dispositions of liking and disliking, of approbation and disgust, that in the exercise of the sovereignty of his own mind (and those exercises are at the same time so constructed, that no laws of God or man can control them), he is everlastingly electing or rejecting, choosing or refusing as his will directs. In this process of the human frame, the Lord forms a mode of trial, which ariseth out of the very constitution of man. Each is his own judge. He shall be tried by his own peers. His own elections or rejections are, in his esteem, his own rightful lords. These are his nobility of inheritance; his right, his just claim. These shall judge him. So then, here is a court he cannot dare impeach. Here are jurors he cannot challenge, for he himself hath impanelled them. Here is a sentence he must abide by; for it is passed by himself, and in the court of his own conscience. And as that sentence, in every instance, claims the right of election in man, what an unanswerable determination doth it bring with it to the right of election in God? And let the reader now say what shall arise,



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George M. Ella

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A VISIT TO JESUS TO ENQUIRE ABOUT ELECTION

at the retribution of all things, to prevent the everlasting condemnation of every man, on his own ground, who, while demanding the freedom of choice in himself, dares to contend the point with God?

Yes! Indeed there is a way, and a wonderful way it is, by which that sentence may be, and by which indeed that sentence hath been, in innumerable instances, rescinded; namely, when by an act of grace from that very sovereignty men have called in question, the Lord hath taken occasion to magnify the riches of His love; and by the exercise of that power, against which they had so daringly murmured, they themselves have been brought over to bless God for that very election manifested towards them, which they had before taken such offence at being shewn to others. Did God, indeed, intend such a process for purposes so blessed? Did the Lord adopt this method, among all the stores of His grace, to assert and maintain the justice of His own claim against the reproaches of men; who, while they would deny Him His right, so impudently and unjustly claim what they think their own? And is this the manner of men, O Lord God! Oh! The wonderful ways of a wonder-working God!

But here I pause, indeed I can go no further, until that I have first fallen down to the dust of the earth, before the sovereign majesty of my God, under the deepest sense of self-abasement and abhorrence! How long, and how daringly violent did I myself oppose this glorious truth; which now, through thy grace subduing my rebellion, and teaching my soul its blessedness, is become my greatest joy and delight! Lord! Thou knowest well with what bitterness of a fallen nature I contended against the sovereignty of thy grace, in thy free-will election; while, in the very moment, audaciously insisting upon my own power, in a free-will ability of serving thee! Oh! What mercy hath been shown me, in the recovery of my soul from a delusion so awful!

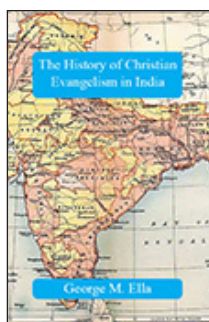
And how many are there of God's dear children, at this present moment, under the same mistaken views, as I once was? They themselves, the unconscious partakers of God's electing grace, while in judgment, contending against it! What a deception the human heart is to itself, while in an unrenewed state of nature? Yea, what darkness and corruption still lurk there, even after the Lord hath called by grace? Should these lines meet the eye of any of the latter description, and should the grace shewn to me be shewn them, very sure I am that whenever the Lord rescues them from the error

of their mind, they will stand amazed as I still do, In the recollection of former rebellion. And with me, they will be at a loss which to admire most, the Lord's forbearance, or our presumption.

On the doctrine of election, there is one very striking consideration, which, since the Lord wrought upon my mind to the belief of it, hath operated upon me, at all times, most forcibly! I mean that the whole persons of the Godhead have uniformly preached it, and are everlastingly preaching it to the church.

God the Father in His choice of Christ, as the Head and Husband of His people, calls upon the Church to receive Him, and to accept Him as His chosen. Behold! My servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth! (Isaiah 42:1). And it is worthy our highest remark, in confirmation of this leading truth, that Christ was expected by the people under this character of God's chosen. For when the enemies of Christ rejected Him as the Messiah, they still, in the same moment, acknowledged that Christ when come, would come as the chosen of God (see Luke 23:35). And as God by election chose Christ, so the Church, in every individual member, is spoken of as the same. For, speaking to the Church, the Lord saith, Ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me, above all people, Exodus 19:5 (see Deuteronomy 32:9; Isaiah 43:21; Malachi 3:17, 18; Ephesians 1:4).

God the Son, in like manner hath been, and still is, by the ministry of His word and teaching, the great Preacher in His church of the doctrine of election. Indeed, what are all the heads of His sermons in the days of His flesh,



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but so many sweet and gracious expressions, in proof, how much His soul delighted in His Father's choice of Him, and the Church in Him? Who can read the thanks, which Jesus gave the Father, upon numberless occasions of this sort, for His distinguishing grace to His people, without being led to see that the very heart of Jesus was wrapped up in holy joy, in the view of God's electing love. His whole soul seemed to be going forth with delight that the Father had hid His mysteries in grace from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes (Matthew, 11:25, 26). Nay, what was it that called forth the bitterness and wrath of the Jewish synagogues against the person of Jesus, but for preaching this doctrine? It is said that they heard the Lord, not only with temper but delight, while in His sermon He spake in general terms, that He came to heal the sick, and preach the gospel to the poor: all bare Him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth. But when this divine Preacher, who spake as never man spake, directed His discourse to the special and personal acts of election, and instanced the doctrine in the case of Naaman the Syrian, and the widow of Zidon, the whole congregation were filled with wrath (Luke 4:16-30).

And no less God the Holy Ghost, hath all along, from the first founding of the church, been uniformly preaching, and still is preaching, by the ministry of His word, and the influences of His grace, the doctrine of election. Indeed, the sovereignty of that act of the Lord, the Spirit, in setting apart Israel by ordinances, and in those ordinances signifying the special grace in Christ (see Hebrews 9.8), thereby proving to the church, that the whole was His own personal appointment, becomes an everlasting testimony to this great truth. He it was, who all along ordained services, consecrated ministers, appointed their stations, sent the gospel to one city, and forbade the preaching of it in another, confirmed the testimony of His sent servants, and shewed His marked disapprobation to those who ran unsent, (Jeremiah 1 throughout; Jeremiah 28 throughout; Acts, 13:2, 4; Acts 16:6, 7; Acts 18:9, 10; 1 Thessalonians 1:4, 5). Hence the whole persons of the Godhead have all preached; and are unceasingly preaching the doctrine of election to the church.

If I might venture, in a parenthesis, to make a short observation in this place, I would say, if it be so, as I venture to think I have fully shewn, that the glorious persons in the Godhead have thus preached, and do preach election; can that

ministry be sent of God, or founded on the divine pattern, or in the end owned of God, which preacheth it not? Is the doctrine so esteemed in God's sight, and shall it be disesteemed in ours? Have all the persons of the Godhead deemed it essential to the health and welfare of souls and will any who profess to minister to the health and welfare of souls in preaching, venture to think otherwise, keep it back, yea, deny it? Let the reader pause over these solemn questions, for they are very solemn.

Did not the Son of God make this one doctrine of Election the very bottom of all others in His gifts to men, when He declared, that the object for which all power was given unto Him over all flesh was, that He should give eternal life to as many as the Father had given Him (John 17:2). And are there any who profess to be moved by the Holy Ghost, to take upon them the office of ministers in the church, that disbelieve this truth themselves, and would teach others to disbelieve it also? Oh! the blindness and ignorance of the unhumiliated heart of man in an unregenerate state! What an awful condition must that man be in, who thus lightly esteems the sovereignty of God!

What a still more awful state must that man be in, who comes forward with unblushing confidence to preach or write against it, who must have subscribed to it before he could have first entered the ministry, and now takes pains to publish his shame, in openly denying what he then subscribed! Such a man, of whatever rank or station he may move in among men, must be beheld in the greatest abomination in the sight of God!

But to return to the view of the doctrine itself. The preaching this leading truth by the Lord Himself in His threefold character of persons, not only gives the most absolute decision to its importance, but is in the place of a thousand arguments to manifest its imperative claim that it should be preached in all the churches. And indeed, under the sanction of that high authority, it strikes my mind moreover, that such is the nature of it in its own principles, that but for God's choice of the church, and the preservation of the church in that choice, the church itself would have wanted support, neither could have had an adequate support to have rested upon, either for the time state upon earth, or the eternal state in Heaven. As this view of the subject may not be very generally considered, I will thank the reader for his indulgence, while I state it a little more particularly.

To be continued



Law And Gospel

Amongst a variety of epithets in common use to deprecate the truth of God, we sometimes hear the term Antinomian. It is applied very freely to persons who hold the doctrines of grace, by the enemies of truth, who interpret this term to mean a loose walker, in fact, an immoral person. Antinomian is a compound of two words, *Against law*, and in this, its primitive meaning, every believer who has realised the power of the gospel, enjoys the privilege in experience of being an *Antinomian*. The law and the gospel are as opposite as the poles. The law is the ministration of death, the gospel of life. The law shows up man's shortcomings, the gospel discovers the remedy for sin. The law says, do and live; the gospel says, live and do. The law can never satisfy the justice of God, nor the conscience of the sinner; the gospel satisfies both. The law speaks wrath, the gospel whispers peace. The law deprives the sinner of hope and help, the gospel reveals the way of truth and peace. Believers, brought into gospel liberty, see the law magnified and fulfilled by their surety, Christ Jesus, and discern in the gospel of the grace of God provision made for all the wants of the church, both as to salvation and conduct. The moral law discovers our sinful state, and there leaves us. The ceremonial law sets forth in type the gospel, which, revealed to faith, was made plain to the elect in Jewish days. But now that the shadows have fled away, and the true light shineth, we have the rule of faith to walk by – 'the just shall live by faith', and the apostle tells the Church of Galatia, that had apostatised from the gospel as the rule of life, and sought for justification and sanctification by the deeds

of the law, 'that to such Christ is become of no effect'. He then exhorts them as to their walk, and tells them, 'if ye be led of the spirit ye are not under the law', and as they had been called to gospel liberty, they were by love to serve another, 'and as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and on the Israel of God' (Galatians 6:16).

In a day like the present of declension from the truth, doctrine is hidden for fear of displeasing professors and alarming the profane, the next step in a wrong direction is to set forth the law as the believer's rule of life. But the gospel not only reviews the way of salvation, but gives precepts and instruction for the believer's conduct, and administers the grace that enables him to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith he is called. God's elect are created in Christ Jesus unto good works; and the rule for life and godliness is not the law, which was a covenant of works, but faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, which works by love both to God and man. 'Love worketh no ill to his neighbour, therefore love is the fulfilling of the law'.

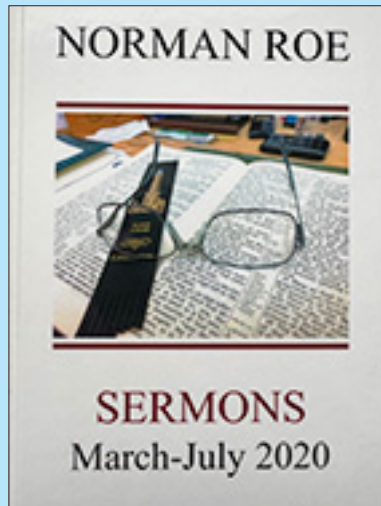
In Neal's *History of the Puritans*, three men of note in that day were branded as Antinomians – Tobias Crisp, Joseph Tennant, and John Saltmarsh – because they preached faith working by love as the rule of the believer's life, and not the law. From a small volume by the pen of Saltmarsh we have culled the following:

The gospel is both a perfect law of life and righteousness, grace and truth; therefore I wonder that any should contend for the ministry of the law, or ten commandments under Moses, which is of

NORMAN ROE

SERMONS

March-July 2020



less glory than that which is now revealed, and exceeds in glory; or should strive for the law in preference to the gospel. Nor is the holiness and sanctification by faith, such as is fashioned by the law or outward commandment, but by the preaching of faith, by which the Spirit is given to renew and sanctify the believer, making him a spiritual law of commandments in himself, and his heart, as it were, two tables for the law of love; and though Moses' law be a beam of glory in substance and matter, yet we are not to live by the light of one beam, now the sun of righteousness is risen Himself: that is fit for those that live in the region and shadow of death; it is with the law under the gospel, as it was with the light in the creation, when that which was scattered, was gathered into one body of light: so Christ now being revealed, holiness and righteousness as well as grace and love are revealed in Him and gathered up in Him. And what need we light up a candle for the children of the day to see the sun by? Why strive for a stream in the channel, when the fountain is open? Nor doth it honour the glory of Christ now revealed, to be admiring the light on Moses' face. 'The word is now made flesh, and dwells among us; and we behold, and are to behold His glory', not Moses' glory, 'the glory as of the only begotten Son, full of truth as well as grace.'

Norman Roe was the pastor of the particular Baptist churches in Ossett, West Yorkshire, and Birkenhead in England. These sermons were preached in the Ossett chapel and relayed to Birkenhead during the UK government's first lockdown for COVID-19 in 2020. The gospel proclaimed was blessed to the hearers, old and young, at the time. Following Norman's death in September 2021, the studies have been valued as read sermons in services when there was no preacher. This book contains 45 sermons preached on Sunday mornings and evenings and on Tuesday evenings during the period shown. The book is intended to provide a permanent record for those who loved to hear this ministry and highly esteemed the Lord's servant, and thereafter for those who might not be familiar with Pastor Roe's ministry but would benefit to be acquainted with it under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. A second volume has recently been published.

The volumes are published by West Wells Books and can be purchased directly from Mr Timothy Abbott, 8 West Wells Crescent, Ossett, W. Yorks. WF5 8PL.

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The law commands men to obey, to love, to fear, to be holy, that God may be their God, and they His people. The gospel commands us to love and obey, because we are the people of such a God. The law commands us in the power of God as a Lawgiver and Judge, the gospel in the love of a Father. The law commands by promise and threatenings, blessings and cursings; the gospel overcomes by love, gives the power, and then commands, by promises, exhortations, and reasons for duty, rather than threatenings; by setting forth privileges and promises, and power on God's part, and love on Christ's part for us and in us, and in love urges us into doing and working, till love reflects love again. Christ is held forth not only as the surety of His people, but also as their example for obedience. So the gospel is not only the security of the sinner's salvation, but operates as the pattern of love, and by imitation rather than command.

To Know God Is Eternal Life

To understand God's activity in establishing a People for Himself, we must study Christ's work in revealing a universal, practical knowledge appertaining to salvation which fills the earth historically, geographically and spiritually. Whether we are thinking theologically, ecclesiastically or educationally, we find the redemptive knowledge we need in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. When Isaiah says that 'the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea',¹ and Habakkuk echoes this (2:14) these prophets are speaking of the world-wide spread of the gospel and the way God reveals Himself to His chosen flock.

The gospel reveals God's knowledge to us and causes us to know God. Paul sees the knowledge we have been given by God as the link between the first physical creation of the earth and the second spiritual creation of the rebirth, telling us in 2 Corinthians 4:6, 'For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of the Lord Jesus Christ'. The First Birth was the cradle wherein the Elect are made knowledgeable of their salvation through Jesus Christ, leading thus to the second birth which fits them for Heaven.

To know God is to have that knowledge to which all knowledge points. This is the awareness of God and His purpose in Creation in choosing out a People for Himself. 'Knowledge' is not that which is knowledgeable gained by man but that which is given Him through knowing God that he might serve Him righteously. Such knowledge is a gift of God's grace alone.

Those who misunderstand me will cry, 'George, you are a Gnostic.' This would be a wrong understanding of the situation. A Gnostic feels he can climb up to God via his own knowledge, his inherent Duty-Faith gained through accepting the teaching of a 'well-meant' Gnostic, Fullerite, Arminian, Free-willer or any other perverter of true knowledge and a denier of God's sovereign revelation. A Christian believes that the only knowledge

worth knowing is that freely imparted to Him by God. This can only occur when God reveals Himself to those whom He has chosen to receive that knowledge. Proverbs tell us that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge and fools despise wisdom and instruction.² Indeed, they hate the only true knowledge which comes through knowing the Lord and following His counsel.³ Sadly, we still have such Scribes and Pharisees governing our churches today.

One pioneering student of the doctrine of the knowledge of God was the Scotsman John Durie (c.1599-c.1680). His age had the advantage over ours of having theological-minded scientists who sought to synthesise all knowledge rather than simply catalogue different aspects of knowledge into separate branches, as if the one had no connection with the other. If one reads *The Hartlib Papers* gathered by Samuel Hartlib and John Durie one comes across many such men and women.⁴ We Reformed evangelicals have been wrongly brought up to believe the so-called 'doctrines of grace' whereas 'grace' is not split up into doctrines. We have one all-inclusive, grace-revealing doctrine of salvation, given us through knowing God. Indeed, many modern Christian teachers continually lag behind true scientific knowledge. In their educational activities, they isolate Chemistry, Physics, Mathematics, Astronomy, Medicine, History and the Arts from one another just as many 'teaching-elders' and pastor-hirelings isolate forgiveness of sin, justification, adoption, righteousness, sanctification and atonement from the knowledge of God. Separated from the essentials which bind them, they can never be appealed to as true knowledge and a means of discovering the Knowledge of the Lord and all His works. This knowledge is essential to understanding one's own place in the world and God's electing purposes as the only-wise God who is the sum of all knowledge.

² Proverbs 1:7.

³ Proverbs 1:29 and context.

⁴ Now under the supervision of Prof. Howard Hotson, St. Anne's College, Oxford. The papers were formerly available on two CDs from Sheffield University but seem to be added now to the Public Domain.

¹ Isaiah 11:9.

TO KNOW GOD IS ETERNAL LIFE

So, most scientists, theologians and church leaders today are inferior to true scientists in their knowledge- engineering as the knowledge of God through Jesus Christ is the only way to true knowledge. To know God includes knowing oneself and everything else worth knowing which the Lord has provided for our salvation. Christ thus tells us that the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven are only known to His flock. 1 John 5:20 teaches that only God's flock can say: 'And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life'.⁵

So there is no such thing as bad knowledge as all knowledge is good in the hands of those given the ability to use it in God's service. A misuse of God's revealed knowledge is sin. It crowns ignorance and strives to dethrone God.

Many 16th and 17th century theologians, scientists and educators such as Sir Francis Bacon (1561-1626) happily distanced themselves from those theologians who relied on Systematic Theologies to describe God's actions in eternity and time. They rejected the idea of splitting up the doctrine of salvation into exclusive compartments which cannot be understood in isolation. This is a complaint we might level against the so-called Christian Creeds or Articles which deal with election, forgiveness of sins, atonement, sanctification and perseverance as if they were all extras to the person and work of Christ instead of being His very Essence. One only has to think of the electing mercies of God in Christ to see how many so-called Reformed Creeds tend to leave out election in particular outside of Christ's work in general though the Bible makes it plain that we are elected in Christ who is all-knowledge alone. One cannot divide the indivisible. This would lead us to the fatalism of Zwingli's *De Providentia* (1530) and Calvin's theory that God is the author of sin stated in his letter to the Genevan Council dated 6 October, 1552, repeating what he had written in his 1551 *Institutes*.⁶

Francis Bacon felt that all theologians should be trained as practical scientists and all scientists trained as practical theologians. The

two belong together. This we find in the works of such as William Romaine, James Hervey, Johannes Kepler, Isaac Newton, Robert Boyle and Carl Linnaeus who allied science with the Scriptures. Most of the founders of the Royal Society sought to synthesise the two. Many scientists, theologians and philosophers such as Kant, Feuerbach, Hobbes, Locke, Berkely and Hume have been associated with Bacon in striving to think universally and not in studies of a cataloguing nature but they have all failed as they have all concentrated on but a fraction of Bacon's teaching on knowledge and de-synthesised his findings making them useless as a pathway to essential knowledge. This essential knowledge, Bacon, taught, was to be found solely in the Word of God. To believe God's Word is to enter into knowledge.

It is an impossible task for fallen man to understand or accept any knowledge of God until it is revealed to him. Here we must not deal with man's fallible, fallen nature, but with God's infallibility, omniscience, omnipresence and His immaculate nature in His never-changingness. Again, this is not understood through man's climbing up the alleged evolutionary ladder but it is through God's descending down to meet man in his totally fallen state and lifting him up to see and know the God-Only-Wise.

The method of cataloguing Christian doctrine into what is called 'Systematic Theology' was the method of the rationally minded Roman Catholic Institution who claimed to be the heirs of God's spiritual, physical and territorial rule and that Aristotle was their prophet. Calvin did us no service in collecting the scattered and very different views of the knowledge of God from the works of His contemporaries and making a list of them as a didactic catalogue of what one should believe in his *Institutes*. The gospel cannot be divided and must be accepted in its wholeness as the knowledge of God given freely to those who, hitherto, had no knowledge of Him.

Solomon the Wise told his son: 'My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; Then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding. He layeth up sound

⁵ Matthew 13:11.

⁶ See Letter 301 p. 372ff.. See my chapter on 'God is not the author of sin' p.224ff. in my book *The Covenant of Grace and the People of God*, Go Publications.

wisdom for the righteous: he is a buckler to them that walk uprightly. He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints. Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path.⁷

Wisdom is very often personified in the work of the Messiah in the Old Testament, a teaching continued in the New. Paul tells us that Christ is 'the power of God and the wisdom of God'⁸, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.⁹

Indeed, the entire Bible points to the Messiah, the Son of God, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, as the Giver of saving knowledge.

Jesus is the key to true knowledge. This is explained in Matthew 16:15ff. which has been challenged and re-translated by the Roman Catholic Papacy for centuries, though the Vulgate clearly teaches what is really meant. Luke 11:52 shows that such Pharisees do not have the key. Jesus asked the disciples whom they believed He was, Peter answered, obviously on behalf of all the disciples as Matthew 18:18 shows, 'Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God'. Christ then told Peter that flesh and blood had not revealed this to his disciples but solely the Father. He then played on the meaning of Peter's name, meaning a small stone or pebble, to show what a rock His statement was. 'Thou art *Petros* and upon this rock (*Petra*), that is Peter's confession, I shall build my church.' To those who share this Heaven-given confession, Christ gives the key of the Kingdom of Heaven, the key being Himself. This passage reminds us of Isaiah's Messianic words in chapter 22:22 of his book where the prophets says: 'And the Key of the House of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut and none shall open'.¹⁰

In Isaiah 9:6, Isaiah shows this 'key' is Christ's government of His people.

So, I end with the departing words of Peter in his second epistle:

'Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and forever, Amen.'

7 Proverbs 2:1-11.

8 1 Corinthians 1:24.

9 Colossians 2:3.

10 Revelation 3:7 emphasises this, too

Three things are certain ...

Three things are certain, whether you believe them or not:

First, it is certain you are a fallen sinner, and consequently exposed to the curse of God's holy law: for God's word declares, 'all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God'. In this you are included.

Second, it is certain, that your immortal soul will soon be called out of time into eternity, to stand before the judgment seat of Christ; for we must all there appear; and you must be there.

Third, it is also certain, that without a divine change of heart, effected by the invisible power of the Holy Ghost; and without a living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, you must be eternally banished from the presence of God. Thus speaks the King of kings, 'He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned'.

Can you read the above verses as expressive of the desires of your inmost soul? If so, it is well. But if you are a stranger to these things in your soul's experience, then I must tell you, sin has deluded you: Satan has blinded you: and, if grace prevent not, the law of God will condemn you.

The Gospel Magazine August 1856

The Baptist Particular

An online resource of historical, doctrinal and pastoral material curated by Jared Smith and freely accessible:
<https://www.baptists.net/history/>

Biographies from George M. Ella

John Gill And The Cause Of God And Truth

William Huntington Pastor Of Providence

Available from Go Publications at: <http://go-newfocus.co.uk/books>
Purchases through Paypal or credit card. Also available from Amazon

The Life Of Joseph Hart

Part 5: The Year 1758

Hart opened the new year with a hymn that has aptly been described as ‘an epitome of vital and experimental religion’, ‘Lamb of God! we fall before Thee’. Many a good man has regarded it as his creed, and has recited it on his death-bed with streaming eyes and quivering

lip – deriving comfort from every sustaining sentence. Fitting companions to it are, ‘Oh the pangs by Christians felt’, and hymn 19, which contains the verse,

Our good Guide and Saviour
Hath helpèd thus far;
And 'tis by His favour
We are what we are.

Few hymnists can approach Hart when he is upon the subject of sorrow.

Boast not, ye sons of earth,
Nor look with scornful eyes;
Above your highest mirth
Our saddest hours we prize.
For though our cup seems fill'd with gall,
There's something secret sweetens all.

Then there is that other cheering reminder:

Trials may press of every sort,
They may be sore, they must be short.

It should steadily be borne in mind that many of the hymns were intended simply for private reading – No. 24, for example, ‘A Dialogue between a Believer and his soul’, being quite unsuited for public worship. No. 26, ‘The Narrow Way’, reminds us, along with other hymns, that Hart was saturated with John Bunyan. The Christian’s way, as Hart sees it, is choked first of all by ‘two dangerous gulfs’ – Dead Sloth and Pharisaic Pride. The pilgrim is confused by the beckoning finger of Jack o’ Lantern and the cries of untrustworthy guides. At every turn he encounters new dangers and new foes; and these dangers passed, these foes overcome, he is confronted by the last foe of all, the ‘ghastly phantom, death’. The sequel is an answer to the question, ‘If this be the way, who can hope to attain the prize?’ ‘Be not afraid’, says Hart, ‘One is at your side, even though you neither feel nor see Him. Therefore, whatever foe oppose, you are absolutely safe.’

When all these foes are quell'd,
And every danger past;
Though death remains, he but remains
To be subdued at last.

We may sum it all up with, Only dastards doubts their God.

1. Lamb of God, we fall before Thee,
Humbly trusting in Thy cross;
That alone be all our glory;
All things else are dung and dross;
Thee we own a perfect Saviour,
Only source of all that's good:
Every grace and every favour
Comes to us through Jesus' blood.

2. Jesus gives us true repentance,
By His Spirit sent from heaven;
Jesus whispers this sweet sentence,
'Son, thy sins are all forgiven.'
Faith He gives us to believe it;
Grateful hearts His love to prize;
Want we wisdom? He must give it;
Hearing ears, and seeing eyes.

3. Jesus gives us pure affections,
Wills to do what He requires;
Makes us follow His directions,
And what He commands inspires.
All our prayers and all our praises,
Rightly offered in His name,
He that dictates them is Jesus;
He that answers is the same.

4. When we live on Jesus' merit,
Then we worship God aright,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
Then we savingly unite.
Hear the whole conclusion of it;
Great or good, whate'er we call,
God, or King, or Priest, or Prophet,
Jesus Christ is All in All!

To 'The Author's own Confession' reference has already been made. Hymn 28 concludes with the oft quoted

Meanwhile that foe can't boast of much
Who makes us watch and pray;

And in No. 32 Hart once more dwells lovingly on the recollection that Jesus was once a helpless babe in a little Syrian town, concluding with the tremendous stanza:

No less almighty at His birth
Than on His throne supreme:
His shoulders held up heaven and earth
While Mary held up Him.

In hymns 33 to 36, which were written on or near Good Friday, 1758, Hart endeavours to touch the human heart by the recital of our Lord's sufferings, and in hymn 42 he deals with the subject of election, the doctrine which he had so stoutly championed even in his unregenerate days. Hymn 48 is the ouch for that gem of gems, the verse commencing, 'But they that in the Lord confide', a verse which sweetly harmonizes with the concluding lines of another hymn that has endeared itself to multitudes:

Fly to the throne of grace by prayer,
And pour out all your wishes there;
Effectual fervent prayer prevails
When every other method fails.

In No. 58 Hart once reveals some of the secrets of his own heart. His great and unwearied internal enemy, he tells us, was 'Pride, accursed pride', that ubiquitous enemy whose appalling power had so forcibly impressed him at the time he was compiling the notes to his 'Herodian'. Even after he had become enlightened, he found it present at the most unexpected times:

This moment, while I write,
I feel its power within;
My heart it draws to seek applause,
And mixes all with sin.

This hymn was a favourite with the militant minister and hymn-book compiler, John Stevens, of Meard's Court, Soho, who naturally changed part of the third verse into:

From sinner and from saint
I meet with many a blow.



Hart On Perseverence

Dear NEPHEW,

I am glad the Lord has so far wrought on your soul, as to make you concerned for its everlasting state; and I sincerely wish you may hold out to the end and be saved. As to your fears of falling back again, there are no signs that you will fall, but rather the contrary; for none depart from God while they have any fears of departing from Him. You do well to hear the gospel at all opportunities as the means appointed for the good of souls; but always endeavour to look through all means to the God of grace, and depend on His strength, and not your own. When you are comforted, bless God for the encouragement; and when it is otherwise, trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon the God of your salvation. Remember the Lord will cast out none that come to Him, though they come ever so poor and helpless. The alteration of your frames from warm to cold, from lively to dead, is what all Christians experience; and therefore let not that make you cast off your confidence. Remember we are made partakers of Christ if we hold fast our profession to the end. The just shall live by faith; but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. Fear not; be of good courage; wait on the Lord, and He shall bring it to pass. When you are weak, then you will be strong, if you look out of self to Christ Jesus, whose strength is made perfect in weakness. Be often in secret prayer. And remember the trial is, not what frames of mind you may be in, but whether you endure to the end. The Lord strengthen, settle, and stablish you. If I can be of any service to you, write as often as you please. Our love to you and yours. From your loving brother in Christ,

Joseph Hart

‘Looking For That Blessed Hope’



Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ (Titus 2:13).

One of the greatest prospects we have as the Lord's people is the promise of Christ's personal return to earth for His church. Following His resurrection the Lord Jesus ascended into heaven from the Mt of Olives, near Bethany, where He 'was taken' into the clouds. We may suppose being 'taken' means the Saviour was bodily conveyed by angels, the chariot and horses of the Lord, into His Father's presence where He now is seated in glory.

In like manner

As the Lord disappeared from sight two men in white, again, likely angels, addressed the disciples saying, 'this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven' (cf. Psalm 47:5). By this testimony we understand that Jesus Christ will someday appear again in the clouds.

He will return as He departed in the same human flesh and with the same human nature, yet full of glory. He will descend to the earth in person as He once ascended in person. 'He will descend with a shout', says Paul, 'with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God' (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

We shall see Him face to face

It is the 'blessed hope' of every believer that soon we shall see Jesus as He is, face to face, in all His glory, and in seeing Him that we shall be like Him. John tells us, '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 (1 John 3:2).

Again, 'Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world' (1 John 4:17). Gone will be our aches and pains, sicknesses and weariness, trials and tears. Gone will be our sinful nature and troubled

LOOKING FOR THAT BLESSED HOPE

hearts. We shall be welcomed into our eternal glory, there to dwell with our blessed Lord and Saviour.

A motivating hope

Paul delights in the theme of the Saviour's return as he writes to his young preacher-friend Titus. For Paul the great promises of grace and glory revealed in the gospel of God motivate God's people to service and holy living.

It is the gospel that teaches the church to deny 'ungodliness and worldly lusts', to 'live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world'. Grace, not law, is what regulates and rules the believer's life and 'the grace of God that bringeth salvation' teaches us to look forward in eager anticipation for the return of Christ, our great God.

An assuring hope

Christ's church and people are daily, 'Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour', Jesus Christ. The blessedness, or happiness, of our hope rests in no small measure upon confidence borne of faith, that we are completely and perfectly ready for Him when He comes.

There could be no present blessedness if we were not presently prepared to meet our God. And since it is the church that has this blessed hope then all the church must be perfect and complete for His return.

Christ's covenant work

We know our perfection is not in ourselves, yet we believe it is real, just the same. It is the perfect holiness of thorough justification. The making of His people righteous is accomplished fully and gifted freely by the Lord Jesus to all God's elect. This was our Saviour's covenant work, the work He finished on the cross. He has taken away the sin of all for whom He died. He has imputed His righteousness to us, heart and soul, He created us anew, filled us with His Spirit. He is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption (1 Corinthians 1:30).

Let this be emphasised to every believer. We are a new creation which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness (Ephesians 2:10; 4:24). Let this gospel standing, these benefits of adoption into the family of God be preached and believed for the comfort of our souls. If any sin remains on our conscience, unwashed by the blood of Christ, the enthusiasm of our hope must be diminished

in this world and our expectation of Christ's coming cannot properly be called blessed.

Complete in Him

Christ is not coming to make us righteous, righteous and holy is what we now are in Him. Our Lord Jesus Christ is coming for those who are complete in Him (Colossians 2:10). Certainly, we cannot now claim this in our flesh but neither can we deny it in the new man, what Peter calls 'the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible' (1 Peter 3:4). At His appearance these bodies will be changed and we shall have a new body like unto His body.

'Only believe'

Nevertheless, we are clean, right now in our spirits before God, 'holy and without blame before Him in love'. To deny this is to deny the success of Christ's death and the sufficiency of His blood to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. To doubt it is to give place to the devil's temptation.

Christ's church is completely pure and clean by the cleansing blood He shed to ransom our souls. Our confidence is warranted by faith. Our assurance is justified by the resurrection of our Saviour from the dead. Every child of God, regenerated by the Holy Spirit, justified by the blood and righteousness of Christ, is as really and truly saved now by Christ, as is the Church in heaven.

The last, lost soul

Here is a final thought. The churches' numerical completeness is also in view as we anticipate that blessed hope. By the time of Christ's coming every elect child of God will be called and converted, quickened and renewed by the Spirit of God and the preaching of truth. This is a great motivation to preach the gospel. We preach for the salvation of sinners and we preach to hasten on the 'glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour'. Let us be found looking for that blessed hope every time the gospel is preached.

Somewhere, someday, under the preaching of God's free grace a single soul will be converted and the church of God, 'the great congregation' will be entire. What we look for in Christ's appearing is the glorious realisation of every divine promise and the fulfilment of every blessed hope. Christ's church has grounds for present joy as we anticipate our eternal life and personal, intimate enjoyment of Christ's glory, seated together with Him in heavenly places.

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 people for whom access to sovereign grace preaching was difficult. We hope that New Focus Church will help meet that need.

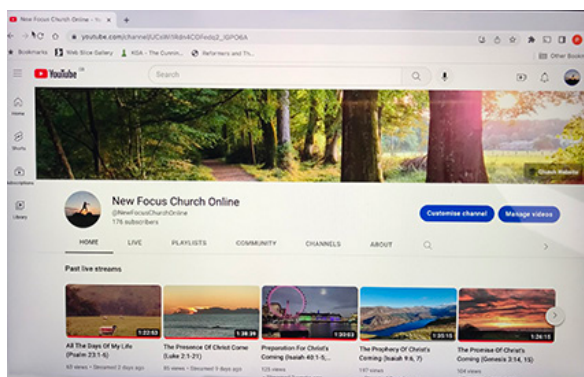
Our online congregation meets each Lord's day at 5:30 pm in the UK on the church's YouTube channel ...

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.

Go to YouTube and type in **New Focus Church Online**



New Focus Church Online YouTube channel

In addition to our broadcasts we have a church website where notices concerning forthcoming services can be found. There is an introduction to the passage being preached and a note of hymns to 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.

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?"