FOCUS

THAT THE PURPOSE OF GOD ACCORDING TO ELECTION MIGHT STAND

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There is something disarmingly wonderful about forgiveness. Shame on me when I take it for granted, accept it casually or worst of all, abuse it.

We all sin. God, our Judge, tells us we do. If we say we don’t we call Him a liar. We all sin and we all need forgiveness, we need it daily, hourly, constantly. As long as we are in this world, in this fallen flesh, we shall always need forgiveness.

The Lord Jesus Christ forgives sinners. The woman who washed the Lord’s feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair was a great sinner, but in repentance and faith she kissed the Lord’s feet and anointed them with oil. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven (Luke 7:48).

The Saviour once asked, Whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Rise up and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins, (he said unto the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise (Luke 5:23, 24).

To be forgiven by a friend or partner is to be forgiven by a sinner. To be forgiven by God is all grace. Jesus Christ forgives sinners. Amazing fact! If God is merciful to us then every sin, everything that separates and divides, every devious, dishonest, indulgent, wicked deed and design is forgiven in the blood of Jesus Christ. How amazing is that? How humble that fact ought to make us!

David slept with another man’s wife. Then he had the man killed to cover up his actions. Adultery, betrayal and murder. Yet David was forgiven in Christ by the grace and mercy of God.

History records Delilah as a devious woman. Her name is forever linked with betrayal. Yet she was only following her lover’s lead. Samson had already betrayed his God, his people and his family when for lust he compromised his Nazarene vows. Yet Samson was forgiven in Christ by the grace and mercy of God.

Peter, for fear of his life, forgot his bold talk and promises and denied his Lord three times in quick succession. At the moment his Friend needed him most Peter was denying Him with oaths and curses. Yet Peter was forgiven in Christ by the grace and mercy of God.

Saul of Tarsus, the chief of sinners, could see the big picture. Stoning and murdering an occasional leader of the new Christian faith was not going solve the problem. The whole group had to go. Today we would call it genocide. He tried to wipe out the entire church. Yet Saul was forgiven in Christ by the grace and mercy of God.

The unnamed woman of John 8. I like to call her Joy. Joy was taken in the act of adultery. A woman married to a couldn’t care-less man. She was abandoned, exploited, ashamed, and publicly harangued. She had not much to be joyful about, except for one thing, Jesus Christ did not condemn her. She was forgiven in Christ by the grace and mercy of God.

At the cross was a centurion. He was tasked with the crucifixion of three prisoners. A hardened soldier and a leader of brutal men. Yet before that day was out he was glorifying God and confessing Christ’s righteousness before his troops. This man saw the Son of God’s shame and through it perceived His glory. Jesus declared, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do (Luke 23:34).

The Psalmist knew he needed forgiveness of sin. He wrote, there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared (Psalm 130:4). Fellow sinner, hear this, If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

I do not value God’s forgiveness because I do not grasp the extent and nature of my sin, to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little (Luke 7:47). A censorious spirit and self-righteous pride persists in my heart. Only when we know the breadth, depth and height of pardon by sovereign grace and the cost of the blood by which forgiveness comes will we be found Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, ... even as Christ forgave you (Colossians 3:13).
Is Your Preaching Gospel Preaching?

All true preaching is limited to the declaration of the Gospel. It is by the preaching of the Gospel that the Word of God is declared to men (1 Peter 1:25). The preaching of the Gospel, the preaching of the Word of God is the declaration of a Person, the declaration of the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the King of Israel, the sinner’s Saviour. It is declaring the record that God has given concerning His Son (Romans 1:1-3).

- It is the declaration of a unique Person; a man who is like no other; a man who lived like no other, spoke like no other, and died like no other.
- It is the declaration of a man who is Himself God.
- It is the declaration of the eternal Surety of a chosen people.
- It is the description of the God-man, who came into the world to seek and save that which was lost, who came into the world to save sinners.
- It is the description of Jehovah’s Servant, the Christ, who finished the work that He came to do.
- It is the declaration of Jesus the Saviour, who saved all whom He came to save, who loses none who were given to Him by the Father, but raises them up in the last day.
- It is the declaration of the Man, that wonderful Man who lived among sinners without sin, who was made sin for us and is made the righteousness of God unto us.
- It is the description of that Man who was and is the Friend of sinners.
- It is the declaration of Him who “shall not fail”, for whom failure is never a possibility.
- It is the description of Him who died, and was buried, and rose again that He might be Lord of both the living and the dead.
- It is the description of Him who is, at this moment, seated on the right hand of the majesty on high, ruling with absolute sway over everything that wriggles and writhes in the whole universe, ruling in calm repose (Numbers 23:9).
- It is the description of Him whose very words are spirit and life.
- It is the description of Him about whom every line, every word, every jot, and every tittle of the Bible is written.
- It is the declaration, the description of Him who satisfied the law and justice of God for His people so fully, so infinitely, that the Judge of the all the earth declares them never to have sinned, and accepts them fully as sons and daughters!
- It is the declaration, the description of Him who is made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption.
- It is the description of Him for whom heaven opens and the voice of God declares “this is my beloved son, hear ye him”.

Don Fortner
Most everyone I meet is assured that he knows Christ. They have been led down the Romans Road to salvation. They have been told that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, that He died upon the cross for their sins, and that He rose from the dead the third day. Then, they were told that if they would repeat what someone called “the sinner’s prayer”, they would be saved. They did as they were told; and they are sure that they know the Christ of God.

Have I described you? Is that your experience? If so, you must be shocked every time you read the testimony of John the Baptist in this passage. Here is a man who knew the Lord Jesus intimately as a man, his first cousin, but declares twice, “I knew him not”. Remember, the one speaking here was John the Baptist, our Saviour’s first cousin. Yet, he says, “I knew him not”. What are we to make of that?

We know that John the Baptist knew Christ. I repeat, He was John’s first cousin. Yet, twice he said, “I knew him not”. What do you suppose that means? What is the significance of that statement? That is the question I want to answer. What did John mean when he said, “I knew him not”?

**John’s Message**

In this passage the apostle John is giving us his inspired account of the ministry of John the Baptist. The Baptist’s message was the proclamation of God’s Christ. He was sent as Elijah to prepare the way of the Lord. The first thing John the apostle tells us about that great prophet is that he was “a man sent from God”. “There was a man sent from God, whose name was John” (v. 6). The only man who can preach the gospel to us is that man who is sent of God with His message (Jeremiah 23:32; Romans 10:15).

What reason we have to bless God for His goodness in sending a man to tell us about our Saviour, the Lord Jesus, proclaiming His great salvation (Isaiah 52:7). John the Baptist was sent “to bear witness of the Light” (v. 7). Being a prophet of God, he had only one purpose in life, one function, one work to do, and was useful for only that one thing. He came “to bear witness of the Light”, to point sinners to Christ, who alone is the Light of the world. And he would not be turned aside from that one glorious work. It consumed his life. What a witness he bore of the Light! He declared Christ as the shining Light of the world (v. 5). John the Baptist proclaimed...
that all the fulness of grace is in Christ alone (v. 16). Then he asserted that all grace and truth come to men only in, by, and through the Lord Jesus Christ (v. 17). In verse 18 the apostle tells us that John the Baptist openly asserted that Christ, who is alone the Revelation of the Triune God, is the eternal Word with God in heaven, even when he was here upon the earth. And the first Baptist preacher to walk the earth declared Christ’s pre-eminence and pre-existence as our eternal Saviour (v. 30).

Now, look at verse 29. John the Baptist saw the Lord Jesus walking by. When he did, he called for all who heard his voice to behold Him, trust Him, and follow Him who is the Lamb of God. Our Lord Jesus Christ is “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Revelation 13:8). Scripture is filled with pictures, prophecies, and descriptions of Christ as the Lamb of God (Exodus 12; Leviticus 9:3; Isaiah 53:7; Revelation 5:6). He is the Lamb who is God and the Lamb of God’s own providing (Romans 3:25). God always gives what He requires, requires only what He gives, and always accepts what He gives.

John the Baptist declared that this Lamb, by the virtue of His sacrifice, “taketh away the sin of the world.” That is to say, He is taking away the sin of the world perpetually, now and forever, by an eternally perpetual and effectual act. As the sun shines and the spring runs without interruption, so Christ takes away the sins of His people scattered through all the world perpetually! Let that be the perpetual picture we have of Him. As we multiply sins, He multiplies pardons (Zechariah 13:1; Isaiah 55:7).

All this John the Baptist preached “that all men through him might believe” (v. 7). Gospel preachers are men sent of God, preaching the grace and glory of God in Christ the Redeemer, as instruments by whom others believe. “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” In verse 30 John again declares the supremacy and glory of Christ. All this was done and all these things were spoken, after he had baptized the Lord Jesus.

“Knew Him Not”
Then, in verse 31 he throws us this curve. “And I knew him not.” He repeats the same words in verse 33. “And I knew him not.” This is John the Baptist’s recollection of meeting Christ in the flesh. When he said, “I knew him not,” he was not saying I had not yet met him in person. John the Baptist was not only God’s prophet, he was the Saviour’s cousin. He had been brought up with him. His mother, Elizabeth, who called the Lord Jesus her Lord when she welcomed Mary into her home, had (we may be sure) often told John about Him. Surely, she would have described the Saviour’s wondrous birth many times, as she spoke to her son, whom she knew was to be His forerunner. Elizabeth must have often reminded John of how He leaped in her womb for joy when Mary came to her with her Lord and His Lord in her womb (Luke 1:39-45).

Though we have no record of it, it is likely that John and the Lord Jesus were often together as they grew up. There is no question that John knew who the Saviour was, and that he was convinced that He was the Christ of God. When the Lord Jesus came to be baptized by him, “John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?” (Matthew 3:14).

After The Flesh
What, then, is the meaning of John’s twice repeated statement to the Pharisees, “I knew him not”? If you will look back at verses 26 and 27, you will get a hint. John said to the Pharisees, “I was once in the same boat you are in. Though I knew much about the Son of God by the instructions of my parents, though I was, like you, looking for the Messiah, the Christ of God, of whom the prophets spoke, though I knew I knew Him after the flesh, I did not know Him.”

He was saying, “Until he was revealed to me by God the Holy Spirit, I had not beheld Him, but now I do. I knew Him not; but now I know Him. He walks among you. He is the One with whom you have to do; but you know Him not. You do not need to be concerned about who I am. You need to be concerned about who He is! I am nobody, just a voice, a noise in the wilderness; but He who walks among you is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Do not concern yourself with me and my baptism; concern yourself with Him and His baptism.”

These things are “written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope” (Romans 15:4). May God the Holy Spirit, who caused them to be written, use them for that end.

There is no doubt that prior to his birth implanted in his mind and heart was the message of the Messiah. I would not attempt to explain this; but John the Baptist was a prophet from his mother’s womb; and he knew Christ by special revelation, even when he was in her womb, leaping for joy because of his incarnation (Luke 1:41, 44; Jeremiah 1:5).

John’s knowledge of Christ was a miracle of grace, which is basically the meaning of his name, John, “God has graced, or Jehovah is
gracious”. Yet, when John says, “I knew him not”, he was in fact saying that it had not yet been revealed to him that this man, his cousin, was the Christ; but now He had been revealed to him as the Lamb of God and the Son of God.

Christ Revealed
How was the Lord Jesus revealed and made known to John the Baptist as the Christ, the Lamb of God and the Son of God? The fact that he emphatically declares, and declares twice, “I knew him not”, is of paramount importance, because John uses it as the background for the explanation he gives in verses 33-34 of how he came to recognize that this man from Nazareth is the Son of God, the Messiah, the One for whom he was sent to bear witness, and to prepare the way.

John is saying, “Though I knew Him not, I now know Him by the Word of God, by the Spirit of God, and by the faith God has given me.” He recognized Christ for who He was based on the Word of God (vv. 31-34). He once knew Christ after the flesh, but no more. Now, he knew Him after the Spirit (2 Corinthians 5:16).

By The Word Of God
First, John knew Christ by the Word of God. God Himself had described the Lord Jesus with such clarity that there could be no mistake as to who He was once He was revealed. He said, either by an articulate voice, or by a divine impulse on his mind, or by the revelation of the Spirit, “Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.”

This is a plainly revealed fact: Faith in Christ is conveyed to chosen, redeemed sinners by God the Holy Spirit through the Word of God (Romans 10:17; James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23-25).

The Word of God, the gospel of Christ, is the power of God unto salvation, the catalyst God uses to give sinners life and faith in Christ. It is the power of God unto salvation in all who believe (Romans 1:16).

The Book of God repeatedly asserts that regeneration and faith in Christ, all gifts of God the Holy Spirit and operations of His irresistible grace, are communicated to chosen, redeemed sinners through the instrumentality of gospel preaching. The Lord God plainly declares that it is His purpose and pleasure to save His elect through the preaching of the gospel (Romans 1:15-17; 10:13-17; 1 Corinthians 1:21; Ephesians 1:13; 1 Timothy 4:12-16; Hebrews 4:12; James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23-25).

Perhaps you think, “What if one of God’s elect is in a remote barbarian tribe in the jungles of New Guinea where no gospel preacher has ever been?” I can see how that would create a problem, except for one thing: There are no problems with God! He knows exactly how to get His prophet to the people to whom He has purposed to show His mercy. Just ask Jonah!

We preach the gospel with a sense of urgency, knowing that sinners cannot believe on Christ until Christ is preached to them. Yet, we preach with confidence of success, knowing that our labour is not in vain in the Lord (1 Corinthians 15:58). God’s Word will not return to Him void. It will accomplish His will and prosper in the thing it is sent to do (Isaiah 55:11). Every chosen, redeemed sinner must be regenerated and called by the Holy Spirit. And that work will be accomplished through the preaching of the gospel.

The Spirit Of God
But, if we would know Christ, there must be more than the Word of God. We must have the Word made effectual to us by the power and grace of God the Holy Spirit. Look at the text at the head of this chapter again. Not only did John the Baptist have the testimony of God’s Word, he had God’s Word confirmed to him personally by the Holy Spirit. He saw, as God said he would, “the Spirit descending and remaining on” the Lord Jesus. Is this not the work of God the Holy Spirit? Is this not exactly what he has done for us in the blessed operations of his saving grace upon us and in us? (See John 14:22-23; 15:26; 16:8-11, 13-15).

Gospel Preaching
Then, as soon as Christ was revealed, he saw, he beheld Christ, he knew him by the gift of faith. This is what he tells us in verse 34. “And I saw, and bare record (confessed) that this is the Son of God.” Read Zechariah 12:10. In the new birth, in the conversion of sinners, this is always the divinely ordained equation: the Word of God, the Spirit of God, and faith in Christ. All are the gifts of God’s grace. All are necessary. And all are made effectual to the saving of our souls by the grace of God.

The words of John the apostle, explaining the experience of John the Baptist, were prophetic of every believer’s experience of grace. When John baptized the Lord Jesus and saw Him owned by God the Father with a voice from heaven and the Spirit descending on Him as a dove, he understood that “the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld his glory, the glory as the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (v. 14). He recognized this man from Galilee for who
He was, based on the Word of God and by the revelation of God. And he saw in the baptism of our Lord the symbolic picture of righteousness fulfilled by the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ as the sinners’ Substitute (Matthew 3:13-17).

As if to reiterate this truth, John tells us that those first men who were found of Christ, who found Him by the faith He gave them when He made Himself known to them, experienced the same thing (vv. 35-37, 40, 41, 43-45, 49).

SoVereign Election
There is yet another distinction concerning the revelation of Christ by the Spirit, through the Word. In verse 26 John the Baptist said to the Pharisees, “I know him whom ye know not”. Looking at this entire chapter, and others like it, we see that Christ is revealed to those sinners He has chosen, redeemed, and called (Acts 2:39; 13:48; Galatians 1:15-16; 1 Thessalonians 1:4-5; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Corinthians 5:16).

We preach Him, and preach Him, and preach Him so that when He comes to His chosen, His redeemed, His called, they will immediately recognize Him for who He is, and cry with old Thomas, “my Lord and my God!” We preach that those who hear can say, “I knew Him not, but I now know Him, because the Word of God has described Him so fully that none other will fit the description, because the Spirit of God has revealed Him in me, and has given me faith to know and trust Him!”

When He comes to His own, their testimony is that God has hung flesh on His Word and “we behold his glory, as the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth!” We keep on preaching Him so that every nook and cranny of the believer’s existence will be immersed in Him (Romans 11:36). We preach Him so that every turn of providence, every happenstance, circumstance, and every occurrence will be seen as His hand of love and tender care (Romans 8:28; Colossians 1:16-17).

I often hear people extolling preachers for being so “practical”, for teaching “practical truths” on how to live the Christian life. They talk about how their pastor preaches in an understandable manner, showing them what to do and what not do in order to be “real Christians”. But in all the preacher praise and promotion I hear, seldom do I hear a man praised because he preaches Christ fully and clearly in all His redeeming, saving glory.

The Bible may be used to show men and women what to do and what not to do. It is full of moral principles. Peoples’ lives will be radically changed, if they abide by the principles that are taught in the blessed Book. They will probably never be sent to the penitentiary. Moral teachings, however, focus on you. They fix the mind and the eye on self and looking at self. But they will never cause anyone to know Christ in grace or in providence. We preach Christ and Him crucified so that sinners might see Him and know Him, “that all men through him might believe” and worship Him whom we preach (1 Corinthians 2:2-5; 2 Corinthians 4:5-6).

Can you say, with John the Baptist, “I knew him not,” but now I know Him (2 Corinthians 5:16-17; John 17:3), because the Spirit of God has opened and applied to me the Word of God, giving me faith in Him who is the Christ of God”? Oh, may God the Holy Spirit grant you grace to know my Saviour!
Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called (Romans 8:30).

Effectual Calling

Some have complained of my great warmth in advocating the doctrines of grace; but it is unavoidable—it is necessary. For first, when a man is in earnest, and honest, he cannot help being warm; and secondly, a “preacher must ever bear in mind that his auditory is not only to be instructed and admonished, but terrified”, as Luther has remarked.

Preaching, to be effectual, as far as means go, must be searching; it must not be “daubing with untempered mortar” — it must wound.

“I have known Dame Nature”, says an old divine, “run for it, under faithful preaching, whilst a poor sensible sinner has been broken down and melted under it.”

The poor ranter, though a mistaken fanatic, is a respectable character in comparison with him who professes to be an ambassador of Christ’s, and yet is never moved to warmth in expounding His Master’s Word, and in protesting against error.

I know that the feeling of many is that I am too precise in doctrine, too speculative, and too narrow in my views. “Let us be more expansive, more charitable, more catholic; let us have the Word, without ‘Election’, ‘Particular Redemption’, &c.”, say some. My answer is, I am most thoroughly for expansiveness, charity, catholicity: but I have yet to learn how the Word can be preached without continually, invariably, and unmistakably holding up to view its peculiar features. You might as well ask me to paint a landscape without trees, water, hills, sky, fields, &c., as ask me to “preach the gospel without electing love or predestinating grace, &c.” These are, as it were, the energies of the gospel; they are the revelations of Christ’s counsel with the Father and the Holy Spirit—the titles of His glorious victories over death, hell, and the grave—the heirlooms left to His family, the contemplation of which was to cheer and comfort them amidst the suffering entailed upon them throughout their earthly pilgrimage. Preach the gospel without these? Impossible! And he that will attempt it, will find to his cost, that he has run when none has sent him!

But to come to our more immediate subject, viz., effectual calling. I would first describe what it is, and show its indispensableness; secondly, prove my position by Scripture and argument; thirdly, notice objections.

I. What Is Effectual Calling?
The term “call”, or “calling”, or “called”, is used in the Scriptures in two chief senses, the one denoting an external call, the other an internal: e.g. Matthew 20:16, and Romans 8:30. The one is sufficient to render man without excuse, yet insufficient for salvation, Acts 17:27; it is made by nature, or conscience, or the Word; the other is made by the Holy Spirit efficaciously influencing the heart. The one
is the result of generation, if I may so speak, the other of creation. By the one a man is induced to say to himself, “I ought to do this”, “I ought not to do that”, but there it leaves him; by the other a man is enabled to do what the Lord commands, and not to do what the Lord forbids, by flinging himself upon Christ.

They are as different from one another as your or my birth, by the medium of our parents, was from the creation of Adam. By the one, man followed the course of nature; by the other, God commanded and it was done

Effectual calling is the result of the operation of the Spirit of God, whereby we are convinced of the sinfulness of sin, as sin, and of guilt and wrath; whereby our understandings are enlightened in the knowledge of Christ, our will bowed, and our heart inclined to embrace Christ as our Saviour, and obey Him as our Lord and King.

Effectual calling is resistless calling, i.e. a calling which, though resisted in the first instance, cannot finally be resisted. It is a calling from self and earth, to God and Christ and heaven; from sin and vanity, to grace and holiness. In short, effectual calling is that invitation by God to the elect sinner which results in conversion, and terminates in glorification. It is of this the apostle speaks in our text. It is no mere solicitation, but an act of glorification. It is of this the apostle speaks in

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Ah! be assured, heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people. Is there not, then, an indispensableness for effectual calling?

Let us examine the Scriptures.

II. Proofs From Scripture And Reason

Our text, Romans 8:30, is clearly upon our side: for mark the connection. The “calling” here is the connecting link of a chain stretching from eternity to eternity. The “called” are the foreknown or the predestinated, the called are the glorified. But is every man glorified? Is every man that is called glorified? Nay, it is only they who are predestinated to this peculiar call, the internal and resistless call, who are glorified.

A vain and dishonest attempt has often been made to get rid of this passage by saying that the calling and predestination spoken of here are simply a desire on the part of God that men should be conformed to the image of His Son, but by no means guarantees the conformity of any. An honest and reflecting mind is astonished and disgusted at the impudence or ignorance of such deceitful handling of the Word of God as this. How the devil will twist and turn to avoid the arrows of God and the flaming Sword of the Spirit! Anything but predestination for proud, inflated, yet fallen man! The most arrant nonsense, the veriest trash, the most insane rhapsody, and the very gambols of a mountebank, will all be tolerated by poor deluded man; but God’s word in its awfulness, and grandeur, and dignity, and majesty, and glory, will be scouted and abhorred by him until he is changed! O man! Art thou not fallen? But to the refutation of this flimsy sophistry.

If God were to content Himself with these desires or commands, no man could be saved: for as all men are ruinously fallen, and at enmity with God, no man could conform himself to the image of Christ. In case, then, of any man being thus conformed, he must have had extraordinary help. It is folly to say, “All men have this extraordinary help”; for if they have, why are they not all conformed to the image of Christ? Perhaps it will be said, “Because all men do not use their help.” This, again, is rank folly: for what power has one man more than another “to use his help”?

But those spoken of in the text are they whom God predestinated, i.e. determined, fixed, ordained beforehand to be conformed to the image of His Son. Is there anything like
mone desire without efficacious call here? Any mere wishing and wounding without settled purpose, or pre-arrangement in all details? I trow not. It is those, then, whom God has marked out as His chosen vessels of mercy, that are to be conformed to the image of His Son. It is those that are "called" with an effectual call in time, and "glorified" in eternity.

I would refer you to Ephesians 1:19, 20. You will perceive by this scripture that it is by no ordinary operation, or providence of God, that a man believes, but by the working of His mighty power, the same power which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead. Did God's act prove a failure at the resurrection of Christ? If not, it cannot but effect a similar result upon every individual on whom it is put forth, whether in a physical or a spiritual resurrection.

Look into John 6:37 All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.

On this passage it is only necessary to remark that the word "come" means the same as "believe" or "receive" (as the context clearly shows), and that this believing has attached to it the possession of everlasting life (see John 6:40 and 6:47). Those given to Christ, then, shall believe on Him unto everlasting life. It must, then, be by an effectual calling; for if it were a calling, or solicitation, or invitation, or exhortation, left to the sway or caprice of the human will, a will that is fallen and depraved, or to a will assisted by the Spirit of God in some measure, which assistance might or might not prove efficacious, how could Christ say, "they shall come, or believe, unto everlasting life"? If there were no other text and context than this in the entire Bible to prove effectual calling, we might undertake to conquer all opponents as far as logical argument goes.

Now read John 10:16 And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.

Mark here, this "must" imports a duty not to be dispensed with. Christ had received a commandment from the Father (verse 18), and this "shall" is that effectual working whereby He subdues all things to Himself. Elisha Coles says, "The sheep, of themselves, lie as cross to this work as other men, e.g. 'What have I to do with Thee?' cries the possessed Gadarene (Mark 5:7); but being a sheep of Christ, he must come, he must be made willing."

Look at Jeremiah 24:7, and 32:38-40; Ezekiel 36:26, 27; Psalm 110:3.

Now, I ask, if God will give a new heart, must we not have it? If God will take away the resisting principle, must we not let it go? If not, we change God's truth into a lie. His omnipotence into weakness, and His glory into the idol of man's free will.

Some, no doubt, would interpret such passages as conditional offers of God to men, e.g., "I will give you a heart of flesh, I will take away your heart of stone, if you are not unwilling, or if you have no objection, or if you ask Me, &c." But what outrageous mockery is this! What tampering with God's truth, what impertinent obtrusion of wretched man's amendments and suggestions is here! Can a heart of stone ask or pray to God? Can a heart that is enmity against God be willing for God to improve it? Can the devil love? Or can man who, by nature, is worse that a devil (James 2:19) be willing for God to work holiness in him? No! Most assuredly no!

But in the passages we have just quoted there is a declaration or promise of God, by His mighty power, to do that for poor man which he cannot do for himself; they are God's absolute promises, with no ifs, no peradventures, no conditions whatever attached to them, but sheer dead lifts to the poor lost and undone sinners given to Christ from all eternity! "I will, and they shall", is language that needs no explanation to any but professors "dead in trespasses and sins". "I will work, and who shall let it?" says the Lord Almighty (Isaiah 43:13; and if God has declared of any people under heaven, "they shall not depart from Me", we defy all the Arminians in the world to show us how that people can be lost!

Now for a few arguments to prove effectual calling,

1. Calling Must Be Effectual From The Nature Of God

Whatever God does He must be supposed to have before determined to do, otherwise He would be deficient in wisdom; and whatever
God determined to do He must accomplish, otherwise He would be deficient in power. It is not possible, as has been observed already, that God should by His mighty concurrence influence any creature to act, and yet that creature suspend its acting, hence we argue that nothing can resist God when He comes to convert a soul.

Some will say, “But the Jews resisted the Holy Spirit.” To whom I reply, you must first prove that God wanted to convert them, ere your objection can be entertained. Every man who hears the gospel preached, and remains unchanged, may be said to resist God (but this is evidently speaking after the manner of men), for he contends God’s Word; but this by no means proves that man can resist the mighty power of God when put forth with the purpose of converting him. For as God works in all, without exception (Acts 17:28), and yet few are converted, it follows that as all are equally fallen, those who are converted must have had other than the ordinary power of God applied to them.

2. The Will Of God Cannot Be Dependent Upon The Will Of The Creature

If God does not effectually call, He must be supposed as saying, “I will that all men should be saved, nevertheless, it must finally be, not as I will but as they will!” This is, in fact, to take away the will of God, for He can have no absolute will if it is possible to frustrate it.

If God does not effectually call, then Jehovah’s election, Christ’s redemption, and the Holy Spirit’s sanctification, may all miscarry! which is horrid blasphemy to suppose.

What folly and impertinence it is to liken God in His will to save man, to poor Darius, who though he set his heart on Daniel to save him, could not!

3. If God Needed Help, Man Could Give Him None, So God Must Do The Whole Work Himself

The natural man is “without strength”; and even if we should suppose the flesh able in any respect to give assistance, the Holy Spirit would none of it, for what concord hath Christ with Belial? (2 Corinthians 6:2). Such mixtures are an abomination to the Lord!

4. The Ordinary Observation Of Man Proves That God Must Effectually Call

The miracles and sermons of Christ Himself produced no lasting effect upon the majority of those who saw and heard them. Neither prosperity nor adversity, neither sacraments nor judgments, produce any change upon the vast mass of the professing world; we see this with our eyes; it is palpable and patent to every man of common observation. See what different effect the reading of the Scriptures, or the hearing of the Word, has upon some in comparison with others! And what can be the reason? It is an insult to one’s understanding to say, because the one will, and the other will not hearken, and take it to heart, and improve his opportunity; for it is proved to a demonstration that all are alike fallen, and at enmity with God by nature. How then can one child of wrath, with a heart of stone, without strength, an enemy of God, receive, and another not receive, the gospel? Why common sense, even, answers, because of some extraneous influence upon one that has been withheld from the other. Yes, it is God that makes the difference.

III. I Now Come To Some Objections

Objection.—God is often represented as complaining of the unwillingness of people to be converted; and Christ is represented in a like manner, and hence it may be argued that grace may be effectually resisted.

Answer.—You must first get rid of all that has been Scripturally and logically advanced, ere this objection can have any weight. But it by no means follows because God and Christ complain, &c., that they have been disappointed or frustrated in their design. It is highly absurd to suppose God, or Christ as God, to complain at all. God is essentially happy. It matters not to His happiness whether all men are lost or saved. But we are to suppose in those figures of speech that God and Christ are speaking of the wicked hardening themselves against the external call in the ministry of the Word.

Objection.—Men are exhorted not to grieve the Holy Spirit, hence it may be inferred they may effectually resist, &c.

Answer.—This by no means follows. Men “grieve” the Spirit when they resist His Word preached by His ministers. The saints themselves “grieve” the Spirit by their occasional indulgence of the flesh and of the mind; but this no more militates against effectual calling, than the occasional follies of a child nullify the yearning affection of a doting parent.

Objection.—There are many passages in the Bible such as “if thou wilt”, “if thou wilt hearken”, “if thou wilt do it, thou shalt, &c.”, from which we may infer there is a plea for free will, and a plea against effectual calling.

Answer.—A conditional assertion or observation asserts nothing. It by no means
follows that because God commands, or because God proposes, man is able to obey or to do. But it will be objected: But would it not be ridiculous to say to a blind man, “If thou wilt see”; or to a deaf man, “If thou wilt hear, thou shalt, &c.?" To which I reply in the words of Martin Luther, this is nothing but carnal reasoning, and seems to aver thus: because the nature of words, and the common use of speech among men seem to lead to such conclusions, therefore when God speaks He is to be interpreted after a like fashion. But do men never use the phrase, “if thou wilt”, “if thou shalt”, &c., in any other sense than the ordinary? Yea. How often do parents play with their children when they bid them come to them—do this or that—for the purpose of showing them their inability, and to induce them to call for the aid of the parent’s hand?

**Conclusion**

Now, it is in this sense that God speaks both to the world and to His people with His "ifs" and His proposals, such as, "Behold, this day do I set before thee the way of life and the way of death", &c. The world thinks when God uses such language that of course it follows power must be in man, and like the self-conceited lawyer in the gospel, to whom Christ said, "Do this, and thou shalt live", goes away with the idea that it can and may live by its works and deeds; whereas, on the other hand, the people of God when they hear such language, and are taught of God, know they cannot do this or that to inherit eternal life, and so cry out to their Father to undertake for them.

The apostle Paul replies to all objections of this kind in one sentence, viz., "By the law is the knowledge of sin", which I may simplify thus. The command, “Do this, do that”, and the offer, “If thou wilt do this, thou shalt live, &c., are nothing but the Law of God to test man, and to show unto him his weakness and impotence. Now man by nature is blind and corrupt, yet he is full of self-conceit; to remedy this, God employs those means of “do this”, “do that”, “if thou wilt”, &c., to make it manifest who continue fools, and who are willing to be wise. The fool takes it for granted that because God commands, he is able to obey! The wise sees he cannot, and cries out for help, and so acknowledges his ruin. In short, in all such passages, man is admonished and taught what he ought to do, not what he can do; and woe be to him who is so blind as not to see thus far, for till he sees thus, he cannot understand the use of Christ!

It is a never-ending question with free-willers, “If we can do nothing, to what purpose are so many laws and precepts, so many threatenings and promises?”

We reply to all such, “By the law is the knowledge of sin” (Romans 3:20). “The law entered that sin might abound” (Romans 5:20). This is the answer of inspiration: how different to that of carnal reason! Reason would answer thus: “The law is given that we obey it, and show our diligence and strength, and free-willpower, and that we may co-operate with it unto righteousness, &c.” But what does God say? This, viz.: “The law was given to prove man’s impotency, to give him a knowledge of his sin; it was added because of transgressions, not to restrain them either, but to cause transgressions to abound”, i.e. to make them manifest where they were not manifest, and to make many acts and deeds that were considered righteousness appear in their true colours—those of sin! (Romans 3:20; Galatians 3:19; Romans 5:20).

Here are thunderbolts against free-willers, “If we can do nothing, to what purpose are so many laws and precepts, so many threatenings and promises?”

Wretched man! get thee to thy place! put thy hand upon thy mouth, and thy mouth in the dust, and let us hear no more of ineffectual or tentative calling or salvation! Those who are called of God are “the called according to his purpose”, are the privileged and blessed subjects of His mighty power, and must be saved with an everlasting salvation!

_How we find that there are two principles within us continually at war, and how they ever wrestle for mastery. But whatever suits and pleasesthe flesh will surely make the soul lean, and bring on deadness and barrenness.

The more we taste of the pleasures of sin, the more we are blinded and intoxicated by them and the more anxious to enjoy them in this time state, whether we go to heaven or not. Right hands and right eyes are dear to us, and self denial is a continual cross._

**William Tiptaft**
Because we do not hold the doctrine of legal responsibility before God, therefore it is we are charged with holding the atheistical doctrine of irresponsibility, and which charge, like all the rest of the charges brought against the people of God, is utterly false. Our law responsibility to God demanded of us perfection of obedience. Having failed in that, and, in addition to that failure, having committed positive sins against God, we thereby are made obnoxious unto eternal wrath; and there was a responsibility which Christ alone could take; Christ hath taken that responsibility, and being brought to receive him as the end of the law, there our legal responsibility ceases. We are no longer responsible, there is nothing more to be responsible for. Doth the law ask anything more? Doth justice ask anything more? Doth holiness ask anything more? Hath not Jesus magnified the law, and established it? And do we thus, through faith, make void the law? Yea, we establish the law. And as we do not hold the doctrine of legal responsibility, so there is another doctrine which we do not hold; namely, that men are responsible to God for their eternal salvation. The word of God represents the Saviour as being responsible for the salvation of men. He says, "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold"; them I must die for. Something more than that. Them I must redeem. Something more than that. Them I must make a way for to come ultimately into heaven. Something more than that. "Them I must bring, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd." Therefore we do not hold legal responsibility, and we do not hold that man is responsible for his own salvation; for how can we be responsible for that which is not committed unto us? And if my salvation be committed unto me, then I know what the result must be; for if Moses could not obtain an earthly Canaan because he rebelled by the way, how much less can we attain to the heights of eternal glory by anything we can do! We bless the Lord, therefore, that He hath laid help upon one that is mighty; that Christ hath carried out in his Humiliation our law responsibility, and that in His exaltation He carries out His new covenant responsibility. But doth it therefore follow, I say, that we hold the atheistical doctrine—for so I call it—of irresponsibility? Certainly not. The truths of the gospel, as so many talents, are committed unto us, and we profess to trade with those truths, we profess to trade with those talents, and we are responsible to God for the use we make of the truths of the gospel; we are responsible to God for the kind of profession we make of His name. If we make an unhallowed profession, a hypocritical profession, or a false profession, then we shall at the last be dealt with according to the profession we make. So that we are thus responsible to God for the use we make of the truth which we profess, and for the profession which we make of His name. Every one of us must give an account of himself to God. It is under the feeling of this responsibility that the apostle saith here, after enumerating mercy after mercy, blessing after blessing, belonging to the people of God, showing that all these shall come upon the persons to whom he is writing, if they continued in the faith grounded and settled, and were not moved away from the hope of the gospel. So, then, those men who are pointing us out as holding the doctrine of irresponsibility, I say it is our comfort to know that they are wrong, and that they misrepresent us; and so the sin lieth not with us, who are degraded and lowered in the eyes of the public, but with those men that charge us with that which we, through mercy, stand clear of. We thus bless God for laying our legal responsibility upon One who was able to bear it; we bless our God that Jesus is the Surety of the new covenant. Am I to become joint surety with him? When two sureties are required, what is the reason of that? Why, because the persons to whom they are sureties are not satisfied with one; if they are satisfied with one, surely they will not seek a second. And shall the Lord, after finding such a Surety for the safety of the people as Jesus is, then seek to the people themselves? What, seek to the man that needs a surety himself! The man who needs the surety himself to become surety for his own salvation! Why, this doctrine is as absurd, is as unreasonable, as it is untrue and unscriptural. I trust, therefore, we know where our responsibility was; Jesus has ended it; and that we know also where our responsibility now is.

James Wells
The evangelist John was the youngest of the Lord’s apostles. In his lifetime heresies arose concerning the divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ. By divine inspiration John wrote his gospel to combat these heresies and carefully emphasised both the Lord’s divine and His human nature. One of the ways he accomplished this was by highlighting the different names of the Saviour. In the opening chapter of his gospel John attributes at least fifteen different names to the Lord. They are:

1. The Word (v. 1)
In the beginning of God’s purpose to save His people and because of His will to bless His church in accordance with His eternal decree of election, the eternal Word stood forth to speak in the everlasting council of the Triune God.

   Here is John’s first name for the blessed Saviour. The Lord is so called for His role in speaking for and on behalf of the elect of God in the covenant of grace and council of peace. Here we behold the Saviour, the Word with God, discussing, covenanted, agreeing together the terms and responsibilities of salvation for the chosen people of God.

   Isaiah reveals something of that glorious dialogue when he declares, Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me (Isaiah 6:8). These words may speak of Isaiah’s own calling but resonate with a deeper, more significant, appointment and voluntary sacrifice.

   Zechariah, speaks of the living Word and confirms the counsel and advocacy that took place between the Father and the Son, Even he shall build the temple of the LORD; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both (Zechariah 6:13).

   So, also, in creation the Word spoke into existence all things out of nothing that are created. Thus when read as we often do, “and God said”, we ought to think of Jehovah the Son declaring the will and purposes of God to men. In this Christ may justifiably be called the Word. He speaks, interprets and reveals His Father’s mind. He did so in Eden, then throughout the Old Testament, and also in the days of his flesh; and now the Word speaks in heaven for His church and saints.
2. God (v. 1)
The second name John gives us is God. The eternal Word was and is God. The Word was God! This fully accords with what John has written elsewhere.

For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one (1 John 5:7).

Truly and properly the Word is God, He is not merely the voice of God but God in the highest sense. He is variously called; Jehovah God, our God, your God, their God, my God, God with us, the mighty God, God over all, the great God, the living God and true God

3. The Life (v. 4)
The Word who is God is also The Life. Christ is the origin, fountainhead and source of all life. He is Himself Life. He does not receive His life from the Father but possesses essential, divine life in Himself. Furthermore, all derived life comes from The Life. All natural, spiritual and eternal life comes from Christ. All creation; whether redeemed men or reprobate men, angels or demons, the Devil himself, possess life from Him.

This is a title taken by the Lord when He describes Himself as the Way, the Truth and the Life.

4. The Light (v. 7)
Here is a lovely name! As all life comes from Christ so, too, does all light. And what is true for nature and visible light is also true for wisdom, knowledge and all truth. How can science be opposed to God when the Word created, the Life sustains and the Light reveals all truth? Your God is too small! Your science too shallow. Pompous people talk as though they have outwitted the One in whom all wisdom, truth and knowledge dwell. It is an old story! Fallen man is blinded by Satan and cannot naturally comprehend the light. The light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not (John 1:5), and again, He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not (John 1:10).

5. The Only Begotten of the Father (v. 14)
Now John introduces us to the Son of God. Begetting is the usual description of human generation in the Bible, but here the Son is the “only begotten” of the Father. This speaks of the unique union between the Father and Son in the divine nature but also of mutual love and respect in the eternal Father-Son relationship.

6. Jesus Christ (v. 17)
In verse 17 John the Baptist and John the Evangelist both emphasise the divine calling and purpose of the Saviour. Jesus is “Saviour” or Deliverer from the Old Testament name Joshua, and Christ is “anointed”. This demonstrates that the Saviour was anointed or appointed to the great redemptive work in His role as Mediator of the covenant of grace as Prophet to, Priest for, and King over His people. The Messiah of the Old Testament dispensation is the Christ of the New Testament. The Gospel of God’s grace and truth came by Him.

7. The Lord (v. 23)
Now John reminds us that Jesus Christ is Lord! This name is often used in Scripture. It speaks of Christ’s pre-eminence and leadership and of His people following. The appointed Saviour is worthy of praise, respect, obedience and trust. Many people claim to “believe in Jesus” but we are reminded that believing on Him unto salvation is a profound and significant experience. It means acknowledging the unique Lordship of God’s anointed Saviour. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house (Acts 16:31).

But, Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity (Matthew 7:22, 23).

8. The Lamb of God (v. 29)
What a suitable name for God’s suffering servant! How innocent and harmless is the gracious Lamb of God. How useful to feed and clothe His people with spiritual blessings. How appropriate a sacrifice for sin. Christ is pictured extensively as the passover lamb and in the lambs of the daily sacrifice offered morning and evening. He was slain in type, in the morning of the world, from the foundation of the world, and in fact, in the evening of the world, when He came.

In the “counsel of peace” peace and reconciliation was formed, agreed to, and settled; Christ was appointed the peace maker, which He agreed to be; and in consequence of it was sent and obtained peace by the blood of His cross, which is published in the everlasting Gospel, called therefore the Gospel of peace.

John Gill
Thus are sins committed daily, washed daily in the blood of the Lamb to remove them. By continual looking by faith to Him whose blood has continual virtue, His people are cleansed from all sin.

9. The Son of God (v. 34)
Now John the Baptist testifies that the One who stands before Him is the reason and purpose for His ministry. This Jesus Christ, the essential, eternal Son of God; sent in the fulness of time, having assumed human nature, is none other than the Son of God. By divine revelation John confesses the God-man.

10. Rabbi / Master (v. 38)
The Lord is our Teacher. Two disciples of John the Baptist, Andrew and perhaps John the evangelist, observing the high admiration with which their master spoke of Jesus, bestow upon the Lord similar suitable reverence. Who knows but that one and another might discern the reverence with which we speak, graciously & carefully of the Lord. May our words and respect be employed to attract others to our Saviour.

11. Him of whom Moses in law and the Prophets did write (v. 45)
Now we are reminded we are in the presence of the long anticipated, eagerly expected Messiah. Philip tells Nathanael that this man, Jesus, is the One of whom all the Old Testament spoke. He is the seed of the woman, that should bruise the serpent’s head; the seed of Abraham, in whom all the nations of the world would be blessed; the great prophet, like unto Moses whom God would raise up and whom the people would follow. The prophets had described His virgin birth; the location in the town of Bethlehem; His sufferings, His resurrection, His ascension.

12. Jesus of Nazareth (v. 45)
And who is this Great One? Philip gives the Saviour’s usual title by which He was then known. The man is called Jesus, from the town of Nazareth. Nazareth was the town of Christ’s childhood and early life though He rarely visited after His ministry began. When He did He was not well received. On one occasion the people of the town tried to kill Him. However, He was known by this name throughout His ministry and this title was written upon cross.

Though Nathanael scorned the town, “Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?” Yet, the Saviour being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and willingly adopted the “despised” name as His own.

13. Son of Joseph (v. 45)
As was supposed. Joseph being married to His mother, Mary. Jesus spoke much of His Father in heaven but little is mentioned of Joseph. In His early ministry this identification with Joseph persisted. The miraculous events of the incarnation appear long forgotten.

14. King of Israel (v. 49)
... and Son of God. Nathanael seems a man of keen Bible awareness, and of genuine faith. He is waiting for the fulfilment of prophecy and promise. What excitement must have filled the hearts of these men. Perhaps similar to that of Simeon and Anna at the time of the Lord’s birth. Now thirty years later Christ’s true identity is being re-discovered.

Nathanael is likely referring to Psalm 2:6, 7 in so speaking of Christ. Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.

Here we see Christ’s kingly role. He is a king going forth to conquer; ruling and reigning in power and authority. This is true spiritually in the church over whom Christ is the head, and also in the world where the Sovereign power of God is manifest in all the affairs of men.

15. Son of Man (v. 51)
Finally, we have Christ’s own preferred name for Himself. This speaks of the humanity of the One John has been emphatically presenting as divine. He is the God-man. The Son of God and the Son of Man, the Seed of woman.

The reference to angels ascending & descending speaks of heaven’s glories being revealed in and through Christ’s human body and nature while in the world.

Amen
There is one last point worthy of mention concerning the Lord’s quoted words in verse 51. The phrase “Verily, verily” may be translated “Amen, amen” and is used frequently by the Lord. Its great force is derived from the authority of Christ’s own great name for John elsewhere tells us it means “The faithful and true witness says ...”.

And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God (Revelation 3:14).

Thus these various names of the Lord Jesus Christ reveal His true nature, power, glory and purpose in salvation. They come with all the authority of divine truth upon which our trust can safely be placed. Jesus Christ, Son of God and Son of Man, our Lord and Saviour, Amen.
A PRAYER FOR INSENSIBLE SINNERS

O Lord, the great Almighty God, who quickenest the dead, and callest those things that are not, as if they were! there is nothing-impossible with Thee; but the things that resist all the skill and power of men, are (with the greatest facility) brought to pass by thine almighty arm. Thou, the living God, canst speak life to souls that are dead in trespasses and sins; and canst make even such as lie in the grave of their habitual corruptions, to hear the voice of the Son of God, and live. It is the great work of thy eternal Spirit, O Lord, to convince the world of sin; and to make inconsiderate careless sinners to know themselves, and be concerned as they ought, about the welfare of their souls. O that these poor insensible creatures who have sinned, till their consciences are seared and past feeling, may find mercy from the Lord, and may yet come to feel in themselves the irresistible power of thy grace! O that Thou wouldest open their eyes to see their case: and soften their hearts to bewail their sins and to turn their course, that they may flee from the wrath to come! Blessed Lord, awaken them with thy terrors, before they be overtaken by thy judgments! O break in upon their souls by thy mighty convictions, to bring them into bitterness for their sins; and let thy quick and powerful word pierce their hearts, to make them inquire in earnest, what they must do to be saved.

O that they did but apprehend their case, and know their transgressions! that, instead of continuing unconcerned (as if nothing were amiss with them), and indulging themselves in pleasures (as if they were in the happiest condition), they were struck down into the deepest heaviness and consternation, refusing to be comforted! O that they might go mourning all the day long, yea, even roar for the disquietness of their hearts! O God of all grace! be Thou pleased in mercy to show such seeming severity; to write bitter things against them, and make them confess their former iniquities: make them to feel now the weight of all their sins, that they may not feel it eternally, when past a remedy. Direct and empower thy messengers, O Lord, to speak to the convictions of their minds: enable them to cry aloud, and not spare, and to show thy rebellious creatures their transgressions and their sins. Yea, make thy word in the mouth of thy servants as fire, to inflame and rouse the consciences of such drowsy sinners, that they may come to perceive what a lost condition they are in; and be restless in themselves, till coming unto Christ they find rest unto their souls. O Thou Almighty God! do marvellous things worthy of Thyself, in taking away that which blinds the minds, and hardens the hearts, of such stupid creatures; and bring them out of the worst lethargy and deadness; that they may understand themselves, and seek after God, and follow the things which make for their peace, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Benjamin Jenks

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Post-enthronement problems
After Cromwell’s enthronement, his time was much taken up by the wars with Roman Catholic Spain, but his elevation, as Queen Christina of Sweden foretold, began to earn respect for him abroad. Thurloe’s State Papers include a letter from the English ambassador in Spain now informing Cromwell that Spain was eager for a treaty between the ‘King of England and the King of Spain’. The matter was most delicate as Durie and Pell at the time were campaigning for ecclesiastical and political agreements with England in Protestant Switzerland, Germany and Holland. Roman Catholic France had put a price on their heads. Spain, strongly supported the Roman Catholics against the Protestants in these countries and especially Switzerland. Memories of Charles I’s cooperation with Roman Catholic states were still fresh amongst Reformed people in England and Cromwell now began to feel the winds of opposition again as he bargained with papist Europe. Just as these problems appeared to have been solved for Cromwell by Durie’s and Pell’s diplomacy, war broke out between Denmark and Sweden, the very two nations that Cromwell hoped would lead the Lutherans into union with the Reformed churches. Denmark strove to take Sweden’s north German territories from her and thus the war began to involve Germany, too. Cromwell gave the Dutch the blame for causing the trouble as the Protestant Netherland states ruled by the Duke of Orange, son-in-law to Charles I, were campaigning to oust Cromwell and place Charles II on the throne. Once again, no one spoke of ecclesiastical and educational reforms anymore in England as the great question was how involved Britain would become in

1 The two close friends and thoroughly Reformed Christians had been sent out personally by Cromwell. Durie’s task was to promote church union with England and Pell’s task was to foster political union.
the Continental wars. Cromwell now snubbed those former Anglicans and Independents on whom he had been relying to put through ecclesiastical and educational reforms and the State Agency for the Advancement of Religion and Universal Learning, proposed by Durie and now headed by Hartlib, lost its parliamentary support. Germany, Holland and Switzerland all complained that Cromwell had broken peace transactions with them. Durie published more than sixteen pamphlets urging Cromwell’s sporadic, hand-picked Parliament to keep up plans for a pan-European Judicium which he had worked out almost single-handedly with these countries. England was at sixes and sevens with herself and Oxford University, once the flagship of Cromwell’s educational reforms, and who, under John Owen had accepted Durie’s plans for introducing the natural science into the general school curriculum, now blocked reforms for elementary and secondary education. Soon, however, Britain was once again in party mood as the Swedes, Danes and Germans patched up their quarrels and again providentially looked to England for leadership.

Cromwell becomes a fading figure
Premature old age and weakness had overcome Cromwell and now with all royal honours and privileges and £2,000 per annum salary besides extra royal perks, he wanted comfort, peace and quiet with no Parliament or petitioners to disturb him. Cromwell relied mostly on his chief Secret Service man John Thurloe who was paid the vast sum of £70,000 per annum to keep England safe from internal and external danger. It was said of Thurloe that he ‘carried the secrets of all the princes of Europe at his girdle’. Cromwell showed great wisdom in choosing Thurloe as his closest friend and adviser. He was also often the only man Cromwell trusted to share his coach. Thurloe was demonstrably the most competent, knowledgeable and hard-working man in England and of a fine Christian disposition. Thurloe saved Britain from many a catastrophe during the Usurpation and Interregnum, his only trouble being to find a legal basis for his actions. The omnipotence of the law had been abolished in England and Cromwell and his advisors, mostly military men, had become a law unto themselves. Now the almost 60,000 man strong army was the only omnipotence Cromwell tolerated and it was of his making. If this were questioned, Cromwell replied ‘necessity and providence demand it’. Though those faithful to Cromwell were campaigning for him to be proclaimed Emperor and fawning poets called him ‘divine’, Cromwell’s ever changing moods and tempers pronounced him to be most human.

Though weakened, Cromwell still fought for absolute control
Cromwell now had portraits of himself hung in government places depicting an idolised Protector with three crowns for the three kingdoms encircling his head like a halo. The common people did not suffer too much from the lack of objective law in England as they were now so far removed from the tiny oligarchy at the top that little contact was possible. The only sight
of Cromwell’s glory they experienced was when his coach passed by and his soldiers forced the men to bow and doff their hats and the ladies courtesy. On the other hand, the royalist gentry trembled under Cromwell’s hand as they were taxed out of existence. The Protector found the money useful as he was now paying his colonels £7,000 per annum. Lisle and Whitelocke, the two highest Commonwealth officials, received, in comparison, £1,000, which was still quite a fortune in those days. A normal minister who had usurped an Anglican living, with the same or better education than an army officer, received an average of less than £50 pounds a year with curates often being thankful for board and lodgings and a change of garments every few years. Former Anglican clergy, had their homes and libraries confiscated but were still expected to provide horses and soldiers for Cromwell. They were given theoretically a pension of a fifth of their former salary, payable to their wives to humble them further. Such pensions rarely materialised. Some seven to ten thousand former Church of England clergy, university men and college lecturers were reduced to poverty and their church buildings and colleges left to rot or, at best, to be used as stables and barracks for troops. Happily Cromwell’s decree that prevented ejected ministers from gaining employment even as teachers and his ruling that the Prayer Book should be outlawed, and his efforts to keep ministers from their former parishes, were not always enforced. Illegal churches were now set up where Anglicans such as Thomas Fuller and Baptists like Henry Jessey could serve the Lord together. Brave Richard Baxter once took a Prayer Book service with a soldier holding a pistol to his head, but the gun was never fired.

Old Archbishop Ussher, supported by most ejected Anglican Puritans and their Independent fellow-ministers, made passionate pleas to Cromwell for religious toleration. The strange result was that Cromwell began to allow the intolerant Presbyterians, who had persecuted both Anglicans and Independents, back into his short-term parliaments. Preaching was now falling out of vogue and secular music and play-acting was more popular than ever. It was bawdy ballads for the proletarian populace and the latest Sir William Davenant operas, enhanced with sets built by Inigo Jones, for the Puritan gentry. Cromwell encouraged this movement by patronising the first opera ever to be composed in England. He was said to especially favour William Davenant’s work as it was anti-Spanish. Cromwell, however, did make some effort to rule his people by forbidding duels, drunkenness and swearing.

The Yeomen of England protest
The lower middle class and farmers from whom Cromwell was raised now began to form a protest movement as in the days of Magna Carta and King John. For the first time in English history, pastors, poets, scientists, social reformers, men of letters, small land-owners and politicians began to work together in various so-called Invisible Societies to plan reforms. Not all of these wanted to restore the monarchy but all wanted a radical change in a society that had slumped into chaos. Now Cromwell’s solutions were merely negative, banning this and the other arbitrarily and there was little attempt to reform the country’s moral state by positive means. The press became more frivolous and worldly as pamphlet wars were carried out to an extent hardly reached by our modern tabloid press. Milton was much to blame as he had pleaded in his Areopagitica that in the Eutopia (Milton’s spelling) of England press censure should be abolished. This had helped the bawdy press to gain a monopoly on ‘correspondence’, the word used then for the exchange of information and learning. So, to stop this evil influence, Cromwell nigh abolished newspapers and pamphlets altogether, allowing but one London newspaper to appear twice weekly. Now the Christian press had to work underground as witnessed by Marchmont Needham, the Christian journalist and author who had produced a weekly international news journal called Mercurius.

Public outcry moves Cromwell
After petitioning Cromwell for over ten years with little success, a great breakthrough came on Thursday 25 December 1656 when friends of religious reform and universal learning petitioned Cromwell for the setting up of establishments
to train Reformed pastors, teachers, scientists, doctors, and employers in preparing themselves for a work of general usefulness to society. Their sole, non-profit-making aim was to care for the public good and the glory of God, educating young and old, male and female from the cradle to the grave in studies which rather than being subject-based provided an education which synthesised and synergised knowledge, in cooperation with all the world’s think-tanks and data bases. Education was to be for the benefit if society and not private gain. So, too, monies were to be invested in machines for data-processing so that students whether still at school, college or employed in the professions, could have immediate access to all data. The libraries, universities and employers of the world were to be encouraged to work to this end and England’s schools and colleges should become international and multilingual until the creation of a single world language based on Christian thought and teaching could be perfected. Never, in the history of religious and educational reform was such a project envisaged. With this and many other petitions worked out by England’s leading theologians, educators, men of letters, social reformers, scientists and employers, was sent a detailed account of how these projects could be financed. It was pointed out that most of the buildings such as the Dean and Chapter Houses and the residences of former Anglican bishops and ministers were standing empty and enough surplus money was lying around gained through conquests in Ireland, Scotland and at sea. The petitioners did not hesitate to condemn the low state of Christianity and learning in England and urged that their motives and aims would preserve England from drifting as a nation from the Lord and help England lead the world through peaceful means.

Cromwell shows signs of grace

The petitioner’s had to wait patiently for a year before Cromwell replied personally from Whitehall on 19 January 1657/8. The Protector, who was now suffering from monthly bouts of illness and trembling limbs, had called a new, albeit, short-lived, Parliament together in 1657 composed of 350 members, mostly soldiers or relations of Cromwell. On 17 September, Cromwell greeted them in the Painted Chamber with a three-hour sermon urging the members to make a strong effort to refute sin and profanity and be bold for the gospel’s sake. From now on, Cromwell’s parliamentary speeches were sermons pleading for a righteous nation but they did not touch on the real problems of Britain but were rather in self-praise of Cromwell’s own view of himself as a great Christian reformer. He saw the work of the Parliaments over which he had presided as a fulfilling of Old Testament prophecies and the Book of Revelation with a far too positive reviewing of the past rather than providing a reforming hope for the future. Cromwell’s personality, however, became fettered by eschatological speculations which were quite other-worldly as if to escape from the reality of his times. I have read letters in the Swedish archives from Cromwell which were so full of eschatological imagery and quotes from Revelation as to be beyond modern understanding as Cromwell felt he and King Charles of Sweden were some kind of apocalyptic riders. This new interest in educating the whole man in the entire knowledge of Christ and His creation as ‘God only Wise, gave the petitioners new hope. When the reply came, after a year’s wait, there was great rejoicing in the Invisible Societies, Cromwell thoroughly approved of the suggested national project and had ordered that proceeds from certain property confiscated during the Irish campaigns and which now brought in an annual revenue of £2000 would be given the petitioners for their intended work of religious and educational reform.

Death catches up with Cromwell

Sadly, now Cromwell was a dying man, striving to rally his country back to God as he prepared his own soul for the Judgment Seat of Christ but nothing was done to carry out the Protector’s wishes. Indeed, Parliament started to go its own way and openly snubbed Cromwell as in the case of James Naylor, a former soldier, now turned Quaker whom Parliament wanted to punish most severely and Cromwell wanted to save. Thurloe now uncovered constant plots to murder the Protector. The Fifth Monarchy men, ever ready to call Cromwell ‘the man of sin’ and ‘the little horn’, now called him ‘the Bastard of Ashdod’. They, however, split up

3 Cromwell and the Durie-Hartlib Circle were very interested in steganography which combined linguistic, para-linguistic, meta-linguistic and socio-linguistic features and which has now become such an integral part of modern digital communication and advertising. It could be I am doing Cromwell a disservice here and that Cromwell’s letters were highly codified. However, at the time, many Christians around Cromwell, and certainly Cromwell himself, were looking at Revelation and what they called ‘Christian Astrology’ as a form of God’s steganography or secret language. Indeed, many with a new superficial knowledge of ‘popular’ Hebrew and Greek, were talking about the whole Bible being God’s codified language to those who had eyes to read it and ears to hear it. Of course, they understood these words as a matter of linguistics and the occult only and lost the spiritual meaning. The many Dispensational sects of today still believe in the Book of Revelation as God’s steganography.
over their eschatological interpretations and could no longer speak with one voice. In lieu of banned newspapers, all England began to read the days’ events from the Book of Revelation, each being his own interpreter.

Now news reached England from the Continent, where it had been circulating for about seven years, that Charles II would pay any man £500 a year if he did the world of that ‘base mechanic’ Oliver Cromwell. The ‘mechanic’s’ civilian followers clamoured again for their idol to be made King, indeed. Emperor, feeling that this would place him above all threats to his life, though they were regicides themselves. The Presbyterians and London supported this aim. The Protector began to fade rapidly, especially after his daughter, Elisabeth Claypole died on August 6, 1658. When George Foxe presented a petition on behalf of the Quakers on 21 August to Cromwell, he said as Cromwell approached him that he had felt a ‘waft of death’ and, when Cromwell came nearer, he ‘looked like a dead man’. Cromwell’s chaplains, John Owen and Thomas Goodwin, began to pray continuously for him, perhaps realising, too, that Cromwell was about to meet his Maker, but the Protector said, ‘I shall not die this bout’. Then Cromwell fell into fits of despair and bad conscience, crying ‘It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God’. He asked his chaplains if it were possible to fall from grace. They said it was not. ‘Then I am safe’, said Cromwell, ‘because I was once in grace’. Then he recovered from his fears and cried out, ‘I am more than conqueror through Christ that strengthened me.’ John Buchan put it beautifully again, ‘He had escaped from Doubting Castle to the Land of Beulah’.

The funeral ceremonies

Though Cromwell’s death was heavily covered by the State Papers and Parliamentary Records, nobody really knows what happened as the propaganda machine blocked out all the fine details. There is however an appendix to the Diary of Thomas Burton Esq. Member in the Parliaments of Oliver and Richard Cromwell from 1656 to 1659, which gives a lengthy description of Cromwell’s death and burial from the pen of the Rev. John Prestwich, Fellow of All Soul’s College, Oxford.

According to Prestwich, Cromwell was taken ill in Hampton Court Palace, with a ‘bastard tertian argue’ or a fit of paroxysms which occurred at regular intervals. Buchan says it was an illness of the mind rather than body. When the doctors and Cromwell’s family realised he was dying, they took him back to Whitehall. Shortly afterwards, on 3 September, 1658, Oliver died. Richard, his eldest son was immediately proclaimed his successor. Protestant Netherlands proclaimed a public holiday and throughout Europe there were public celebrations. Thousands of exiles abroad received new hope of being able to return as free men to the country of their birth, just as the refugees returned to England after the death of Mary the Bloody. The men and women of the Invisible and Petty-France societies declared that future Britain still unborn, would value Cromwell more than Britain did before he died.

Immediately after Cromwell’s death, his body swelled up and burst producing a ‘deadly and noisome stink’. It was quickly buried without the event being officially recorded. However, vast sums of money, far more than the amount spent on former kings’ burials, had been allotted for the funeral rites and the public were demanding to see Cromwell’s body. Cromwell’s courtiers had now to make sure that the ceremonies, arranged to start in late November, were respected. The supposed ‘body’ of Cromwell was removed from Whitehall and taken to Somerset House on the Strand where it was laid out in royal style. For several days, the crowds passed by the ‘body’ in silent respect. Throughout the lying in state and even the funeral ceremony, the object laid out for public viewing was referred to as Cromwell’s ‘body’. This was dressed in a cosily suit of velvet, adorned with a purple robe, well-furred with ermine held together with rich gold lace and strings and tassels of gold. The ‘corpse’ carried a richly embroidered belt and a costly gold-hilted sword at his side. On its head was placed a purple velvet hat trimmed with ermine. In its right hand was placed a sceptre and in its left hand a globe. Behind the head, a chair of gold was placed with the imperial crown upon it. The entire scenario was raised on a platform flanked with banners and surrounded by a row of men in black and a further row of soldiers. Ushers brought the mourners to the edge of the scene and led them back. A real sight of the Protector was scarcely possible. On the day of the funeral, the ‘body’, which was really a wooden and wax imitation, had the imperial crown put on its head and it was then laid, covered by a black velvet cloth in an open chariot and taken to the Abbey Church of Westminster. Soldiers stood all along the route to prevent spectators from approaching too near the chariot. John Evelyn, the diarist said it was a joyful parade, none crying but Cromwell’s dogs. The list of mourners at the ‘funeral’ cover ten pages of small print in Prestwich’s description, from high ranking army officers down to Cromwell’s pastry cook, larder keeper and butcher. The procession took seven hours to reach its near destination. The proceedings were
somewhat delayed by the guests quarrelling over the various positions given them in the rank and file. Richard Cromwell, the new Protector, was not even allowed to mourn in public because of his status and Henry Cromwell was in Ireland, so no direct members of Cromwell’s family were present. Though Prestwich lists the names of Cromwell’s favourite musicians who joined the procession, there is no mention of them playing or of a Christian service. Burials and marriages had been banned from the Church’s prerogative, so anything ‘religious’ was not expected. Perhaps because there were no candles or heating in the church, the ceremony was soon over. Nor, however, is there any indication of a public burial as the crowned effigy (at times Prestwich speaks in the plural) was immediately placed in the East wing of the church, taking the place of James I’s likeness. Prestwich adds, however, that Cromwell’s effigy was much finer as the funeral arrangement had cost £60,000. Others say £100,000 but a year after the event, craftsmen and organisers were still clamouring for some £20,000 which had not been paid. Perhaps this is why ‘tourists’ were now charged 2s/6d a head to view the newly crowned royal relics in the church.

Looking into the papers of Jews who lived in England during Cromwell’s reign, I came across a letter written by Moses Wall a merchant who moved in circles close to Cromwell and who gives every appearance of being a very learned man. Wall wrote to Samuel Hartlib, saying (spelling modernised): “in the late Protector’s days there were more good men persecuted in his almost five years of government, than were in almost five score years of our late Queen, & Kings, beginning with Elizabeth who came in Nov.19.1558. And as for the wars abroad, I am of his mind who says, That there was never so much war in the world to so little purpose; the good of mankind being very little, if at all minded.”

Maurice Ashley, in his book Charles I and Oliver Cromwell, ends with the words: “The crowds outside Whitehall palace had watched Charles’ execution with dejected faces and in silence. Oliver was said to have died in deeper silence than any king. ‘There is not a dog that wags his tongue so great a calm are we in,’ wrote John Thurloe afterwards. So Charles and Oliver both left the earth in silence; and both, as faithful Christians, were convinced that they were on their way to paradise.”

I believe this is a very fair assessment. God grant that we shall be likewise prepared by Him to meet them both in Glory.

4 Ref: 34/4/17A-18B. Hartlib Papers, Sheffield University.
1. Go worship at Immanuel’s feet,  
   See in His face what wonders meet!  
   Earth is too narrow to express  
   His worth, His glory, or His grace.

2. The whole creation can afford  
   But some faint shadows of my Lord:  
   Nature, to make His beauties known,  
   Must mingle colours not her own.

3. Is He compar’d to Wine or Bread?  
   Dear Lord, our souls would thus be fed:  
   That flesh, that dying blood of Thine,  
   Is bread of life, is heavenly wine.

4. Is He a Tree? The Church receives  
   Salvation from His healing leaves;  
   That righteous branch, that fruitful bough,  
   Is David’s root and offspring too.

5. Is He a Rose? Not Sharon yields  
   Such fragrancy in all her fields;  
   Or if the Lily He assume,  
   The valleys bless the rich perfume.

6. Is He a Vine? His heav’nly root  
   Supplies the boughs with life and fruit;  
   O let a lasting union join  
   My soul to Christ, the living Vine!

7. Is He the Head? Each member lives,  
   And owns the vital pow’rs He gives;  
   The saints below, and saints above,  
   Join’d by His Spirit and His love.

8. Is He a Fountain? There I bathe,  
   And heal the plague of sin and death;  
   These waters all my soul renew,  
   And cleanse my spotted garments too.

9. Is He a Fire? He’ll purge my dross,  
   But the true gold sustains no loss;  
   Like a Refiner shall He sit,  
   And tread the refuse with His feet.

10. Is He a Rock? How firm He proves!  
    The Rock of Ages never moves;  
    Yet the sweet streams that from Him flow  
    Attend us all the desert through.

11. Is He a Way? He leads to God,  
    The path is drawn in lines of blood;  
    There would I walk with hope and zeal,  
    Till I arrive at Zion’s hill.

12. Is He a Door? I’ll enter in;  
    Behold the pastures large and green!  
    A paradise divinely fair;  
    None but the sheep have freedom there.

13. Is He design’d a Corner-Stone,  
    For men to build their heav’n upon?  
    I’ll make Him my foundation too,  
    Nor fear the plots of hell below.

    Th’ indwelling majesty and pow’r;  
    And still to this most holy place,  
    Whene’er I pray, I turn my face.

15. Is He a Star? He breaks the night,  
    Piercing the shades with dawning light:  
    I know His glories from afar,  
    I know the bright, the Morning Star.

16. O let me climb those higher skies,  
    Where storms and darkness never rise!  
    There He displays His power abroad,  
    And shines and reigns th’ incarnate God.

17. Nor earth, nor seas, nor sun, nor stars,  
    Nor heav’n His full resemblance bears;  
    His beauties we can never trace,  
    Till we behold Him face to face.

Isaac Watts