THAT THE PURPOSE OF GOD ACCORDING TO ELECTION MIGHT STAND
Brothers and sisters in Christ, I hope you are not discouraged. I hope you are facing this new year with peace and faith in Christ. Our Saviour tells us, “Let not your heart be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in me”. Whatever it is that weighs upon your mind or tries your spirit, may the Lord God give you grace to trust in Christ and strength to carry you through your trial.

In his message to the Ephesians the Apostle Paul pictures the Lord’s people as a building made up of individual believers, like you and me, fitted together, located by design, and gathered to serve a high and holy purpose.

Perhaps to mitigate the discouragement the apostle knew would affect the Lord’s people through the ages he tells us this building is growing. There is something alive here. We are a holy temple that is being raised up and nurtured by God Himself. There is growth, enlargement and progress in the church of Jesus Christ whether we see it or not. We are a building dedicated to the worship and glory of God. It is our delight and privilege to be a part of something wonderful that is growing up to the honour and glory of God.

But look at the reason for these blessings. We are not building something ourselves, we are being built into something bigger than any one of us, a union, a body of believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Notice how Paul describes this, “we are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ”. We share the same foundation as did the prophets of the Old Testament and the apostles of the New. They had one common foundation and one common salvation which was Jesus Christ their Lord and we are united with them and with each other upon the same foundation.

It is the gospel of the Lord Jesus that unites us, the doctrine of free grace, eternal election, imputed righteousness and particular substitutionary atonement. We love the gospel of grace. We love the gospel that tells of mercy granted, forgiveness bestowed, and faith that endures; endures because it is Christ’s faith given to His chosen people by God Himself according to His sovereign purpose.

Christ is the cornerstone of our faith, of our lives, our worship and our testimony. Our fellowship with each other is because of our fellowship with Him. Because we are united to Christ we are united with each other. We may be miles apart, time zones away, born of different nationalities, languages and cultures but none of that matters when we come together around the word of God and the gospel of God.

Being in Christ we are heirs of glory; safe, secure and certain of heaven. We are fellowcitizens on earth with His people, in His body the church. Whatever 2022 holds for us personally, and for the church and the world in general, God is in control. He is building His church, and gathering His people upon the foundation that is Jesus Christ and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.
Hidden in the Shadow of God’s Hand

The Saviour says, ‘In the shadow of his hand he hid me’ and so it was. There is Jesus of Nazareth – no where to lay his head. Why, what will that feeble man do? Apparently feeble, I mean. There are a few unlettered men with him; what will they do? Ah, he is hidden. The Saviour went forth, and the disciples went forth; and there was a secret about the matter; the power of God was hidden from the world. ‘I thank thee, O Father, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.’ And so when the disciples went forth and preached, as a little specimen of what it should be afterwards, they said, ‘Even devils are subject unto us through thy name.’ And when he sent them forth finally, he said: ‘Go and preach the gospel; I send you as lambs among wolves; and they will bring you into the synagogue, and scourge you, and put you into prison and laugh at your attempt to turn the world upside down, but you shall turn the world upside down, they will laugh at your attempt to turn these mighty tides, but as Mordecai instrumentally turned the tide of a hundred and twenty-seven provinces, you shall do so spiritually; ‘I send you forth as lambs among wolves but lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.’

James Wells (1803 - 1872)
And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads (Revelation 22:4).

Heaven is set forth in the Scriptures by many pictures of the bliss awaiting God's elect in eternity. Heaven is a place prepared for us. It is the everlasting kingdom. It is eternal glory. Heaven is our purchased inheritance. It is the city of God and of the Lamb. It is our home. Heaven is our final resting place. These, and many other descriptive phrases, fill our hearts with joy and anticipation. However, surely this is the greatest bliss of the eternal state, the most wondrous consummation of glory, and the very heaven of heaven, 'And they shall see his face'. When the Lord said to Moses, 'Thou canst not see my face and live', He was speaking to a mere mortal upon the earth. Those words have no reference to those who have put on immortality and incorruption. In the coming glory-land every child of God shall see the face of our God and live. Indeed, it is this sight of Christ which shall be the essence and excellence of our life. We shall see Him who is the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of His person face to face! That is the heaven which awaits us!

The Heavenly Vision
What is this heavenly vision? Some people have very carnal and unscriptural ideas about heaven. Some think of heaven only as a place where they can gratify their carnal desires. They seem to think only of the comforts and pleasures heaven might bring to them in a natural, physical way. To them, the streets of gold, the gates of pearl, and the walls of jasper are enough. I have even heard men talk about heaven as though it were a place that would gratify their religious pride and self-righteousness. Some religious denominations have the vain imagination that their particular brand of religion will give them a place of superiority in glory. In pride and self-righteous bigotry, they suppose all of God's saints will be beneath them and serve them!

Such carnal ideas of heaven must be rejected. However, there are many things in heaven that we shall see and enjoy. We shall see the holy angels who have ministered to us throughout our earthly pilgrimage (Hebrews 1:14). Men and women of flesh and bones will commune with cherubim and seraphim. Gabriel,
and all the heavenly hosts, will be known by us. We shall see the patriarchs who served God in those early days of time. We shall even know those men and women who walked with God before the flood like Abel, Enoch, and Noah. The apostles and prophets will be seen and known by us. Those martyrs, with whose blood the pages of church history are written, will be seen. Those brethren, with whom we have enjoyed sweet fellowship upon the earth, will be seen by us. And those loved ones who fell asleep in Christ Jesus will be seen again. Without question, in our glorified state, earthly ties will no longer divide us; but the saints in glory will know one another, just as Peter, James, and John knew Moses and Elijah when they appeared with them in the mount of transfiguration.

Yet, for all of this, the greatest joy and fulness of heaven will be the fact we shall see Christ Himself face to face. What we desire above all else in heaven is the sight of Christ. With the Psalmist we most gladly declare, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee' (Psalm 73:25). Christ is all in all to us here, and we long for a heaven in which He shall be all in all to us forever. Here upon the earth, it was a sight of Christ which first turned our sorrow into joy. The daily renewal of communion with Christ lifts us up above the cares of this world. Even here, we say, if we have Christ we have enough. If Christ is all to us now, what will He be in glory? The paradise of God is a heaven of intense, eternal, spiritual fellowship with Christ. Heaven is a place where it is promised, 'They shall see his face.' Moses, we are told, saw His back parts. He saw the train of His majesty; but, there, we shall see His face.

We shall literally see our Saviour’s face. Though He is glorified, that very man who died at Calvary is upon the throne of glory. We shall see Him, the God-man. What a sight it will be for redeemed sinners. We shall see our well-beloved; His hands, His feet, His side, His head, and His face. We shall literally see Him who loved us and gave Himself for us.

Even sweeter is the fact we shall enjoy a perfect, spiritual sight of our Redeemer. This text seems to imply a greater ability in the next world by which we shall be able to more fully see Christ. Here, upon the earth, the very best of us are only infants. Now, we know in part. Now, we see through a shaded glass. In heaven, we shall see the Saviour face to face. And we shall know even as we are known. We shall see Christ in such a way as we shall know Him. We shall know the height, depth, length, and breadth of the love of Christ that passes knowledge.

We shall see the Saviour always. The saints in heaven shall never cease to see Him. We shall never cease to embrace our Saviour! It is not so now. Sometimes we are near the throne, at other times we are afar off. Sometimes we are as bright as the angels, at other times we are as dull as lead. At times we are hot with love, at other times we are cold with indifference. But, the day will soon come, when we shall forever be in the closest possible association with Christ. Then we shall see His face without ceasing. We shall see our Saviour’s face as it is now, in the fulness of His glory (John 17:24). John gave us a little glimpse of that in chapter one verses 13-16 of his gospel. Read it again and rejoice in the prospect of this blessed hope.

The word ‘see’ in this text implies a clear, full, undimmed sight of Christ. We shall see Christ clearly, because everything hindering our sight of Him here will be removed. Our sins and our carnal nature will be completely removed. All of those earthly cares that now cloud our vision will be taken out of the way. All our sorrows will be ended (Revelation 21:4). There, in glory, nothing will stand between us and our Saviour. We will love Christ supremely. We shall see Christ personally. Now we see Him by faith, but then faith will be turned to sight, and we shall see Christ personally for ourselves. The language of Job is a proper confession of every believer’s future prospect. ‘For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me’ (Job 19:25-27).

Face to face with Christ my Saviour,
Face to face, what will it be;
When with rapture I behold Him,
Jesus Christ who died for me?

Carrie Ellis Breck
We shall see our Saviour in all the fulness of His person and work. Beholding fully His glorious person, we shall see Him who is God over all and blessed forever in the perfection of His glorified manhood. In that day, we shall see Christ in the fulness of His covenant engagements, and in the perfection of all His mediatorial offices as our Surety. We shall see Him as our Prophet, Priest, King, Husband, Shepherd, and Substitute. In the world to come, we shall see Christ in the fulness of His saving grace. Then we shall know the meaning of electing love. Then we shall know the price of blood atonement. Then we shall know the power of His priestly intercession. Then we shall know the goodness of His preserving grace.

When we see His face, our eyes will be full of adoration for Him. In that world of glory to come there will be no voice heard that speaks of the power of man’s free-will, or the goodness of man’s works. We shall say, ‘Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name be honour, and power, and glory, and dominion forever and ever’ (Psalm 115:1; Revelation 1:5, 6; 5:9, 10).

Heaven’s Joy
Why do we consider this vision of our all-glorious Christ the greatest bliss and joy of heaven? I have said that seeing Christ face to face is the heaven of heaven, the glory of glory. Why do we place such importance upon this one aspect of our eternal inheritance? The answer should be obvious. When we see Him our salvation will be complete. Soon the resurrection day will come, and all men will see the great God and Saviour. When the wicked see His face, they will be consumed in His fierce wrath. We shall see Him and live. We will be like the burning bush, glowing with the glory of God, but not consumed. We shall stand in the presence of God in perfect salvation. Our souls will be eradicated of every spot of sin. Our bodies will be made immortal, incorruptible, glorious. When we see His face we shall be conscious of His favour and have a perfect and uninterrupted fellowship with Him. In glory, we shall walk with God perfectly. When we see His face, and not until we see His face, will we fully know and understand the meaning of being one with Him.

There will be a transformation when we see Him, ‘We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is’. We shall see things as He sees them, think as He thinks, will what He wills, love what He loves, and hate what He hates, perfectly. When we see the face of the Son of God we shall be perfectly satisfied (Psalm 17:15).

The Blessed People
Who are they to whom this promise is given? The apostle tells us those who shall see His face are none, ‘but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life’ (Revelation 21:27). Every one of those who are the objects of God’s eternal grace will see His face. Every soul chosen of God in the council of love will see Christ in the courts of glory (Ephesians 1:4). Every one predestined to be His son will be His son (Romans 8:29) Every soul for whom Jesus died at Calvary will see His face in heaven. They are accepted, pardoned, justified, sanctified, and purchased. And they will see Him (Isaiah 53:10-12). Every man, woman, and child who is called by the Spirit of God and regenerated by divine power will see His face (Ephesians 1:13, 14). Everyone that repents of his sin and believes on Christ will see Him (John 1:12, 13). Every heart that bows in submission to King Jesus will see the King in His beauty (Luke 14:25-33). Everyone who loves Christ will see Christ (2 Timothy 4:8). They may have been the vilest wretches ever to walk upon the earth, but they are washed, they are justified, they are sanctified. And ‘they shall see his face’!

They will all with equal clearness see the face of Christ. I read of no secondary joys in heaven. There are no back streets in the New Jerusalem! Whoever invented the doctrine of degrees in heaven knew nothing of free grace! There is as much foundation for such a doctrine in the Scriptures as there is for the doctrine of purgatory, and no more. All the saints of God shall see the Saviour’s face. What more can anyone want? The dying thief went with Christ to paradise, and so did Paul. Heaven is altogether the reward of grace, not of debt and heaven will be fully possessed by all the heirs of grace (Romans 8:17). All the saved are loved by God with a perfect love. All were chosen in Christ. We all have the same blessings of grace in the covenant. We are all redeemed by the same blood. We are all accepted in the same righteousness. We are all sons of God upon the same grounds. And we all have the same hope of glory. Heaven was earned and bought for us by the Son of God. It will be given to us in all its fulness. In this world of sorrow, comfort yourself with this hope. ‘They’ who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ ‘shall see his face’.

Don Fortner’s book Going Home is available to buy from New Focus Magazine. See page 19 for details.
Counterfeit Gospels

No ‘Moral’ Gospel Atones for Sin

The new ten-point ‘Calvinism’

During the later eighties and throughout the nineties until the present day, we have been bombarded with a new legalism propagated through evangelical and Reformed media. These publishing houses and para-church organisations insist in the name of ‘Reformed religion’ that keeping the Ten Commandments, otherwise named the Decalogue, as a cut-down stand-alone ripped from its Biblical context, is all that is necessary for a life of faith. No heed is paid to the fact that Moses wrote all the foundation books of the Bible which are Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy as a gospel commentary on this standard of action. Moses showed that one cannot cut off Law from Gospel as the tenor of both reveal one gospel which is the Father’s Covenant of Grace with His Son. The Torah of which the Ten Commandments are but a tiny part, points back to man’s fall through Adam and forwards to justification by faith in the Messiah Christ and not by works righteousness. The present obsession with but a fraction of the entire Mosaic Law, cut entirely out of its evangelical context, brings with it a moralism based on an anti-Mosaic Neonomianism. This is presented as ‘moral law’ or ‘true religion’ but it is not the Religion of the Bible. The false argument here is that Christ did not place Himself under the whole Law as He was always above it, but gave Himself as a token sacrifice, fulfilling a token Law as an example of how He wished His Bride to live. Orthodox theologians such as John Milton with whom such as Rationalist Andrew Fuller strongly disagreed for obvious reasons, believed that man must die or Someone in his stead, saying:

Some other able, and as willing, pay
The rigid satisfaction, death for death.¹

Against this atoning and saving doctrine, Fuller proclaimed he knew better and stated:

The law made no such condition or provision, nor was it indifferent to the Lawgiver who should suffer, the sinner or another on his behalf. The language of the law to the transgressor was not, Thou shalt die or someone on thy behalf, but simply, Thou shalt die: and had it literally taken its course, every child of man must have perished. The sufferings of Christ in our stead, therefore are not a punishment inflicted in the ordinary course of justice, but an extraordinary interposition of infinite wisdom and love; not contrary to, but above the law, deviating from the letter, but more than preserving the spirit of it. Such, Brethren, as well as I am able to explain them are my views of the substitution of Christ.²

Counterfeit

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

¹ Paradise Lost, Book III, 210-212.
This is what comes from isolating the Ten Commandments from the gospel of Christ in which God embedded them through Moses. It ignores all God’s provisions in using the Law to point to Christ by preaching salvation in the Coming One, foretold in the Old Testament teaching concerning sacrifices, scapegoats and the doctrine of justification by faith in the Messiah. Such modern ‘moral apostles’ leave out the Old Testament teaching regarding Christ completely by rejecting the whole Law and Gospel which points to Him. The entire Old Testament is one with the New in proclaiming the vicarious and substitutionary death of Christ who put Himself fully under His own Law, the Just for the unjust, for our total salvation. Death did not take its course for Christ’s flock because Christ’s death intervened, fulfilling time’s purpose and the Will of God.

Moral man is a law unto himself
There is no atonement in moralism as Christ teaches that left to his moral-law-ism man becomes a law unto himself. This substitution of morals for Biblical Christianity certainly earns the titles ‘Hyper-moralism’ and ‘Antinomianism’. It is the rational Hyper-moralists in our churches who now define the orthodox faith as ‘Hyper-Calvinism’ and ‘Antinomianism’ though partakers of such faith believe in the doctrine of Grace and the responsibility of man to the whole Law and Gospel as contained in the whole Bible from Genesis to Revelation. We alone have not reduced the Bible message to the Ten Commandments or less.

It is also interesting to see how even the former Ten Commandment moralists are reducing the Commandments in Number, eliminating those which go against their own moral precepts. Fuller himself cancelled the commandment on adultery in his glaringly immoral advice to the Indian mission advocating divorce for those Baptists married to a non-Baptist, leaving them free to court another woman. So, too, many Fullerites have dropped the commandment regarding the Sabbath.

I remember my surprise after writing my published tribute to William Huntington and describing his all-comprehensive view of the Law. Several Neonomian moralistic publishing houses on both sides of the Atlantic responded by calling Huntington an Antinomian because he had a pan-Biblical understanding of the Law which they had reduced to their eight, nine or ten point faith built merely on their cut-down view of the Law. I was called the same for standing in the shadow of Crisp, Gill, Brine, Huntington, Button, Ryland Senior, Martin, Stevens, Toplady, Foreman, Rushton, Wright, Hawker and Doudney who were representatives of different denominations but united in the same Christ. On his web-site Maurice Roberts of the Banner of Truth still calls me such and gives my dear friend Peter Meney, a fine winner of souls the same titles. Morals divide, Christ unites. I pointed out in a letter to a major critic of Huntington who then was the editor of a leading Reformed British magazine that though he advocated Sunday trading, Huntington refused to work on the Sabbath. Back came the written answer that in his Sunday book-trading the editor honoured the Lord of the Sabbath, implying that Huntington did not in his abstinence from such work. This Eight, Nine or Ten Point Token Religion which is erroneously called ‘Evangelical Calvinism’ is neither ‘Evangelical’ nor ‘Calvinism’ and is still spreading as a cancer throughout evangelical, Reformed churches.

‘Moral Law’ provides no salvation
There is no saving factor in man’s fallen appreciation of the Scriptures. Typical of this debilitation of the supposed ‘moral law’ is David Prince’s Southern Baptist Blog-Site ‘Andrew Fuller Fridays’ proclaiming ‘The Moral Law the Rule of Conduct for Believers’. A moral view of but a small part of Scripture provides no spirituality and no salvation and no understanding of the Scriptures as a whole. The
Scriptures preach forgiveness and reconciliation with God and provide a *vade mecum* throughout a life in Christ outside of moral codes defined by man. Even if man could form his life within the morality of the Ten Commandments, this would have no relevance to salvation. Morality does not point to any form of atonement whatsoever. Morality as practised by mankind is a religion of intolerance which separates one clique from the other. Christianity is a religion of forgiveness and acceptance for lost sinners whether ‘moral’, amoral’ or ‘immoral’. Thanks be to God, Christ died for the ungodly! Christ makes it quite clear in His teaching that when we feel that all moral laws are being obeyed, we are still only doing law-duties and still have attained no atonement for our sins. In Luke 17:9, 10, the Great Reconciler says:

> Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not. So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.

Human behaviour at its very best is only human behaviour at best and goes not one step beyond it. Morality or rather the religion of moralism merely shows us that we need something far greater from outside which frees us from such Fall-thinking. Those who wish to climb up the moral ladder so that by an acknowledgement of duties they can reach or continue in saving faith are again called to soberness by the Scriptures which warn us:

> Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

‘Morals’ are not always ‘moral’

It is however, argued that morals are good things and even such a moraliser as John Gill sought to live a moral life. This is an unfair argument. We are not talking about the same things. ‘Morals’ can never lead to faith and are not always ‘moral’ in the sense that they are edifying and uplifting in our walk of faith. Indeed, the term ‘moral’ has been emptied of true Biblical meaning by followers of the ‘well-meant offer’, ‘duty-faith’, ‘moral law’ enthusiasts. This is what Gill complained about and he is still criticised for this ‘Back to the Bible’ appeal concerning Christian morality by such free-will Rationalists as Curt Daniel and Sam Waldron who have exchanged Christianity for Enlightenment reasoning concerning man’s abilities to will himself into God’s Grace. Gill saw all that was morally edifying as coming from the gracious heart of God and not from the supposed Fullerite ‘reasonableness of things’ propagated by the old Liberals and fallen man’s alleged awareness of his duty to believe as a moral instrument towards salvation. The fact is that this late-modernistic view of ‘morals’ has been depleted of any truly moral content. The Christian gospel throughout the Bible teaches that we are saved by grace and not works. The ‘morality’ of Grace is different to works morality. This limiting of the faith to keeping a supposed ‘Moral Law’ is only a means to an unknown selfish end. The priest who hides in his cloister and whips himself to be good, is good for nothing!

A dead-end gospel

The truth is that morality-based, make-believe religions such as the modernistic teaching on the duty-faith awareness of ‘the fitness and reasonableness of things’ in fallen man are dead-end gospels of works righteousness, which clearly and simply show the unrighteousness of their origins and goals. No human ideology saves from sin. The moral-law mentality is totally void of a sense of meaning concerning its own function and the reconciliation that only God can provide.

3 1 Corinthians 10:12.
When God speaks to us of Christ from His word it is always new and fresh. It is the unexpected entrance of saving light we never saw before. Don Fortner has written of this Great Light in his new commentary *Discovering Christ in Leviticus*.

Don Fortner was a faithful Gospel preacher who laboured in God’s word to tell and remind sinners of God’s glory in Christ and His precious blood. Near the end of his life, Don wrote, ‘It is in His beloved Son that God the Father is well pleased. He is pleased with us in His Son.’ This is also the theme of this book.

In *Discovering Christ in Leviticus* Don emphasises first God’s pleasure with Christ and His sacrifice for sin, and thereafter how His pleasure settles upon us who are in Christ and have received the benefits of His blood. Here are four things Don shows:

1. **The precious blood of Christ**
   The book of Leviticus foreshadows ‘the precious blood of Christ’ for the salvation of sinners to the glory of God. God required the blood of His Son for the salvation of sinners and so God gave His Son as a Lamb; the Lamb of God. Then God accepted the offering of His Son for sin. Now God declares the redeeming and atoning work of His Son for the salvation of sinners. This is the Gospel. When God saves a sinner, He makes the blood which is most precious to Him also to be most precious to that sinner. And because God is satisfied with Christ’s blood we can be satisfied with Christ’s blood, too.

2. **God’s acceptance is our acceptance**
   What God thinks of Christ is for us salvation. It is what God thinks of His Son’s offering as the Lamb of God for us that saves us. Christ’s shed blood is our justification, sanctification, reconciliation and acceptance. It is the basis of our eternal blessings.

3. **Christ satisfied the Law’s demands**
   The Book of Leviticus details God’s provision to reconcile us to God. Scripture, history and personal experience demonstrate no one can fulfil the obedience required by God’s Law.

The Gospel declares the good news that what God requires for salvation He Himself supplies for His people in His Son. Our Great High Priest offered Himself as the Lamb of God to bring us to God. What God’s Law demanded our Lord Jesus Christ supplied as Substitute. Now we see! “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth”.

4. **We are holy in Christ**
   God hates sin and for God’s elect Jesus’ death has removed sin completely. Christ crucified says it all. Christ knew no sin. He did no sin. But as the High Priest for God’s covenant people, He took our sins from us and they became His. He confessed them and paid the penalty for them. He endured God’s wrath willingly and submitted to judgment. Christ gave full satisfaction to God whom we offended. The laws and sacrifices of Leviticus anticipate Christ’s bright Gospel light by revealing God’s holiness and foreshadowing our way of escape.

Understanding Leviticus properly means discovering the person and work of the Lord Jesus in the symbolism, rituals and legal requirements given by God to Moses. When we discover Christ in Leviticus the book opens before us with an enlightening beauty because Christ is that Light. We are grateful to our late brother Don Fortner for giving us this fine insight and reminding us again that it is only as we see Christ in the scriptures that we understand them properly.

**Discovering Christ In Leviticus**

Don Fortner

Price £29.95 ($39.95) + £2.95 p&p

634 pages hardback

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It is remarkable that one of the disciples should have been absent from the assembly on the evening of the day Christ rose from the dead. What was the cause of his absence it would be worse than useless to conjecture. But the intention of Providence in it is obvious. It was to display the natural unbelief, as to the things of God, that is in the heart of man; and to teach us the kind of evidence that God accounts sufficient for His saving truth.

Why was one of the disciples absent? Why was this disciple Thomas? The narrative itself affords an answer to both questions. Divine Providence intended to give us a specimen of unbelief even in His own people. Thomas was peculiarly incredulous; therefore he was the person fitted to act the part designed for him on this occasion. If Thomas was afterwards convinced, there was no room left for captiousness to allege that the fact of Christ’s resurrection was received by the disciples on slight grounds, without sufficient evidence and caution.

The unbelief of Thomas was unreasonable and sinful in a degree beyond expression. Why did he not believe the united testimony of the other apostles? He should have received the testimony of any one of them. Unbelief justly exposed him to eternal condemnation. Has Thomas a licence for unbelief, more than any other of the human race? Must he not be liable to condemnation on the same ground with the rest on mankind? Must he be satisfied in his own whims with respect to the evidence of this fact? Can he say with innocence, “except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe”? Did ever any infidel express a more unreasonable demand for the evidence of Christ’s resurrection, and the truth of Christian religion? The demands of sceptics are moderate and sober, compared to this intemperance of unbelief. The most unreasonable of them demand only that a particular revelation of the gospel should be made to every man. This falls far short of the extravagance and unreasonableness of the unbelief of Thomas.

But there is wisdom in this madness. If Thomas is unreasonable, God uses his unreasonableness to effect a great purpose. By this means, in the satisfaction given to Thomas, we have the fact of the resurrection established on evidence beyond all suspicion. The possibility of delusion is removed and the reality that it was Jesus whom the Apostles saw, rests not merely on the testimony of their eyes, but of the
DOUBTING THOMAS

hands of the most unreasonable unbeliever that ever was in the world. Of all the infidels that ever existed, Thomas was the most extravagant. Voltaire and Hume are men of moderation, compared to this prince of infidels. Nothing will satisfy this philosopher but the handling of the prints of the nails in His Master. Was it not possible that the risen body of Jesus should have had no scars? Was this not the most likely thing to be expected? That Almighty power that could raise Him, could raise Him without a mark of His crucifixion. But Thomas was in all respects unreasonable; that through this Jesus might exhibit Himself with evidence of His resurrection, that the most extravagant incredulity could presume to demand.

By this providential fact the Lord teaches us that His own disciples believe in Him, not because they are naturally more teachable, or less incredulous than others. It is God only who overcomes their unbelief. They are not only by nature the children of wrath even as others; but after they are brought to faith and life, the only security of their perseverance is the favour and love of God in Christ. They are kept by faith, and that faith is not of themselves, but is the gift of God. The strongest of all the disciples of Christ would not abide in the faith for a single day, if like Peter or Thomas, they were to be given up to their own natural unbelief. But if the strongest would not stand in their strength, the feeblest will not plucked from the hand of the heavenly Father. After the fearful example of Peter and of Thomas let no disciple of Christ trust in his own steadfastness. We are strong only when, seeing our own weakness, we have our strength in the Rock of our own salvation.

In this providential fact, we see the forbearance and condescension of Christ to His people, even when they are unreasonable. He graciously removes the doubts of Thomas, though He might justly have left him to perish in his presumptuous unbelief. From this we may be assured, that, in one way or another, the Lord will remove the doubts of His people with respect to the evidence of the gospel. If He will not give them that evidence which extravagance may rashly demand, He will keep them from such extravagance, or remove their doubts by opening their eyes to understand the proper evidence.

This will be the same thing with presenting to their view and to their touch His hands and His side. He will assuredly overcome the unbelief and hardness of heart of the most obstinate of His chosen ones. If He was not provoked to give up Thomas, His patience cannot meet with a more extravagant case of incredulity. He could call a Saul of Tarsus in the midst of his furious enmity to Him and He did overcome the unbelief of the incredulous and obstinate Thomas. What a consolation is this to the believer! What thoughts of unbelief arise in the heart!

Our Lord, even though, for His own wise purposes, He indulged Thomas, yet did not approve of his unbelief, nor of his demand. He did not ascribe his incredulity to greater talents, or greater caution, or greater concern about the truth, than were discovered by his brethren. On the contrary, He shows that they rather are blessed who will believe without such evidence than Thomas demanded. There are two extremes, equally to be avoided, into which men are prone to fall. Some believe without evidence, believe against all evidence, believe what all evidence, capable of being submitted to the mind of man, shows to be absurd and impossible. On the other hand, there are some who unreasonably refuse evidence that is sufficient, evidence that God has pronounced sufficient, and look on themselves as manifesting greater intellect, or greater wisdom, in demanding evidence of another kind, which God has not appointed. "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."
ISAAC WATTS

The Offices of Christ Glorious

1
Join all the glorious names
Of wisdom, love, and power,
That ever mortals knew,
That angels ever bore;
All are too mean to speak His worth,
Too mean to set my Saviour forth.

2
But O what gentle terms
What condescending ways,
Does our Redeemer use
To teach His heavenly grace!
My eyes with joy and wonder see
What forms of love He bears for me.

3
Arrayed in mortal flesh,
He like an angel stands,
And holds the promises
And pardons in His hands;
Commissioned from His Father's throne,
To make His grace to mortals known.

4
Great Prophet of my God,
My tongue would bless Thy name;
By Thee the joyful news
Of our salvation came;
The joyful news of sins forgiven,
Of hell subdued, and peace with heaven.

5
Be Thou my Counsellor,
My Pattern, and my Guide;
And through this desert land,
Still keep me near Thy side;
O let my feet ne'er run astray,
Nor rove, nor seek the crooked way!

6
I love my Shepherd's voice;
His watchful eyes shall keep
My wandering soul among
The thousands of His sheep;
He feeds His flock, He calls their names;
His bosom bears the tender lambs.

7
To this dear Surety's hand
Will I commit my cause;
He answers and fulfils
His Father's broken laws.
Behold my soul at freedom set;
My Surety paid the dreadful debt.

8
Jesus, my great High Priest,
Offered His blood and died;
My guilty conscience seeks
No sacrifice beside.
His powerful blood did once atone,
And now it pleads before the throne.

9
My Advocate appears
For my defence on high;
The Father bows His ears,
And lays His thunder by.
Not all that hell or sin can say,
Shall turn His heart, His love away.

10
My dear, almighty Lord,
My Conqueror and my King,
Thy sceptre and Thy sword,
Thy reigning grace I sing;
Thine is the power; behold, I sit,
In willing bonds, beneath Thy feet.

11
Now let my soul arise,
And tread the tempter down!
My Captain leads me forth
To conquest and a crown.
A feeble saint shall win the day,
Though death and hell obstruct the way.

12
Should all the hosts of death,
And powers of hell unknown,
Put their most dreadful forms
Of rage and mischief on,
I shall be safe, for Christ displays
Superior power and guardian grace.
This word is of very plain and obvious signification; and it is blessed to see in the Scriptures of truth how sweetly accommodating all the persons of the GODHEAD are brought home to the believer's heart under the figurative language of refuge. Hence in allusion to God the Father, Moses was commissioned to tell the church this grand and all-supporting truth — "The eternal God is thy refuge; and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy before thee, and shall say, Destroy them" (Deuteronomy 33:27). And the Lord Jesus Christ is the immediate refuge of His people, for He is said to be their hiding place and their covert from the storm and tempest. And how truly blessed is it to discover, that in His person, blood, and righteousness, as the glorious Head and Mediator of His redeemed, they are secretly and securely hid with Christ in God; so that neither law nor justice, sin nor Satan, death nor hell, the world nor the grave, can come to injure them. (Psalm 32:7; Isaiah 32:2) And no less so is God the eternal Spirit, in his own sovereign power and GODHEAD; for He by His gracious influences stamps the whole authority of redemption on the hearts of His people, gives them His earnest of the promised possession, and effectually seals their souls unto the day of redemption (2 Corinthians 5:5; Ephesians 1:13).

The Cities of Refuge
Under this article of refuge, it will be proper to notice those cities of refuge, which the Lord appointed under the Old Testament dispensation, as a shelter for the manslayer who unintentionally killed another, and hated him not in times past. If the reader will consult the Scriptures which relate to those cities of refuge he will find a very ample account, Numbers 35:9-34; Deuteronomy 19:1-13; Joshua 20:1-9 throughout. And when he hath read the several particulars there recorded, he will discover that those cities of refuge were wholly intended to screen the unintentional murderer. And so exact was the law to be regarded, that on the poor fugitive's arrival at the suburbs of either of those cities, the congregation was to proceed on the subject of enquiry; and if any malice pretence was found in the mind towards the person he had murdered, the law enjoined that he should be taken even from the altar, and put to death. And this security, even to the unintentional murderer, continued only while he remained in the city of refuge; for if he was found without the suburbs, the avenger of blood might by law kill him.

We are informed that the Israelites were so much interested in following up the divine commands concerning those cities of refuge, that the magistrates once in every year made a point to examine the roads leading to those
cities from every direction, and to have them put in perfect repair, that no obstruction might be found to stop the fugitive in his flight from the avenger of blood pursuing him. And it is said, that at every opening there was placed a direction-post with the word Miklat upon it, (meaning refuge) as if to say, this is the way to the city of refuge. A beautiful type of the ministers of our God, who are supposed to be always as watchmen upon the walls of Zion crying aloud to sinners, murderers of their own souls, “to flee unto Christ as a refuge to lay hold of, and as an anchor to the soul both sure and steadfast within the vail” (Hebrews 6:18, 19).

There was somewhat very significant in the names of those cities, and it is not fanciful to remark their allusion to the purpose for which they were appointed. They are called Kedesh, Shechem, Kirjotharba, or Hebron. These were on this side Jordan. On the other side, by Jericho eastward, was Bezer in the wilderness of Ramoth in Gilead, and Golan in Bashan.

If, as we cannot but conclude from all the other parts of Scripture, that as every thing under the law typified the Lord Jesus Christ, so these cities of refuge had an eye to Him, as the only shelter for soul-murderers, then we shall find somewhat remarkable in the names of those cities. Kedesh which signifies holy, was a beautiful memorandum of Him concerning whom the Holy Ghost saith, by the apostle, Hebrews 7:26 “Such an High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens. Shechem is the Hebrew for shoulder, or of one consent.” And it is so translated in the margin of the Bible in Zephaniah 3:9 which see. And it is no violence to the expression to make application of this word to Him whose government was declared to be upon His shoulder, Isaiah 9:6. One of the old writers, Raphelius, makes a very striking observation concerning this expression of the government being said to be upon Christ’s shoulder; because said he we carry burdens on our shoulders, therefore Christ is said to carry His. And this He did when he became the Almighty burden-bearer of the sins of His people. The third name of those cities of refuge, Kirjath-arba, which is Hebron. (Kirjath-arba means the city of four, from Arba, four). Hebron signifies unity, fellowship, concord, or the like. When sinners are brought into union with Jesus, they are said to “have fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ” (1John 1:3)

And the names of the three cities on the other side of Jordan were not less striking in allusion to Christ. Bezer or Bazar was used for a market place among the Eastern nations in after-ages; and Betzer meant an inclosure: so that in either sense the word is striking. As the man-slayer found in this city of refuge a blessed exchange, and a safe inclosure, both under one, so soul-murderers, when taking shelter in Christ, barter their sins for His righteousness, and find peace and safety in the blood of His cross. So Ramoth and Golan both read with an eye to Jesus, as they express exaltation and joy, may be supposed to imply the raising up of the depressed spirits of a sinner when fleeing to Christ for refuge, and finding Him all he stands in need of, as well as that “joy and peace in believing, when abounding in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost.”

It is very blessed in reading the Old Testament Scripture, to discover in every part of it so much of the New. And when we are enabled, by the sweet teaching of the Holy Ghost, to discern Christ thus preached to our fathers in type and figure, what an infinite importance do such views tend to convey, when we find both in law and prophets every minute circumstance pointing to Him who is “the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.”
One often reads in popular works and even in doctoral theses that Englishman William Carey founded the first Protestant Mission in the non-English speaking world on behalf of the Particular Baptist Missionary Society.

Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg and William Carey
Actually, the Baptists were rather late in discovering the world-wide mission field as Lutherans, Church of England and Independent missionary enterprises beat the Baptists by over a century. Great as Carey’s work was, it was built on the pioneering work of Christians of other denominations, in particular that of Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg who was called to India almost a century before Carey. The missionary work Carey undertook in Danish held territory reflected and built on Ziegenbalg’s endeavours and successes which were carried on by Ziegenbalg’s son in Serampore long after Ziegenbalg’s death. Indeed, the Danish influence on Carey started before he sailed to India in the Danish vessel Kron Prinsessa Maria to Calcutta. As the British East India Company forbade Carey to evangelise the territories they claimed to rule, he and his co-workers Marshman and Ward settled in the Danish colony of Serampore in 1805 where the evangelical traditions of Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg were still honoured and followed. Ziegenbalg’s only surviving son Gottlieb Ernst Ziegenbalg became the first Director of the

Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg (1683-1719)
Serving Christ in India
Part One: God’s Preparations for Ziegenbalg’s Future Calling
Danish East India Company in Serampore in the 1750s and brought with him missionaries from Tranquebar to preach regularly in the colony. The colony thus welcomed Carey, Marshman and Ward with open arms as being of one mind and calling with them.

It was with the enthusiastic encouragement of the Danish King Frederick VI and the Danish Governor Colonel Bie that the ‘Serampore Trio’ established the Serampore College in 1818, on the pattern of the first protestant theological seminary founded in 1716 at Tranquebar. This venture was aided by a gift of 5,000 dollars and gold medals to each member of staff from King Frederick. The college was soon to be given a charter as Denmark’s third University after Copenhagen (1479) and Kiel (1665) by the Danish monarch and was then able to award academic degrees. It must be also noted that the newly founded Particular Baptist Missionary Society did not approve of the Baptists’ move in allying with the Lutherans and later Church of England Christians as I have shown in previous New Focus articles. Indeed, the alleged part played by the Particular Baptist Missionary Society in their support for the Serampore Mission must be re-structured due to a bevy of new studies challenging their ‘traditional’ accounts.

Discovering Tharangambadi
Finding Tharangambadi, or Tranquebar, on the map is not at all difficult. If one moves the eye from the sharp point of northern Sri Lanka across the Bay of Bengal going due north, there on the coastline you will find Tharangambadi. Actually getting there is quite a different matter. The small town of 23,000 inhabitants with its one eight-roomed hotel and one restaurant has no railway and the various ‘local’ airports are all three to four taxi-hours away. Getting there by a small boat is perhaps easier but the coastland is susceptible to many storms. Perhaps this is why the town is called Tharangambadi which means ‘Singing Waves’ though the waves often howl. Tharangambadi is the modern name for Tranquebar, given to the town by its Danish occupiers in 1620 after allegedly buying it from the Raja of Thanjavur.

Once in the town, however, one finds it is beautifully situated. Though recent storms have removed a long piece of the coast line, this destruction is now hardly noticeable as Tharangambadi is being polished up and even becoming a tourist attraction, and the old centre, built by the Danes, has been renovated and many over 300 years old buildings have been restored. This includes several buildings centring round the main character of my story, Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg who arrived in Tranquebar in 1705/6 and in a very few years transformed the place.

Tharangambadi’s testimony to Ziegenbalg’s work
When one walks down the Tharangambadi High Street, one cannot miss seeing an enormous statue at the end of the road. There are lots of similar statues all over India, often painted gold to make them appear more impressive, and they are usually set up in remembrance of great statesmen, military heroes, or local Rajahs. This statue is, however, quite different. It is set up to commemorate the first German missionary to India, Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg, sent by courtesy of the Danish King over 300 years ago to found the Tranquebar Mission. Behind the statue there are two large though unusual plaques for this mostly conservative Hindu town which surprisingly commemorate a foreign Christian missionary. However, the inhabitants of Tharangambadi are too grateful to forget the great impact young Ziegenbalg’s work had in placing the town firmly on the map and in the Indian history books and Tamil lexica. Indeed the Indian historian and theologian David Jeyaraj has called Ziegenbalg ‘The Father of Modern Protestant Missions’ and ‘The Morning Star of India. Thus, as soon as one reaches Tranquebar from the sea, one finds on the promenade a large stone edifice commemorating the landing of the good ship Princessa Sophia Hedwiga which brought Ziegenbalg to the town. Should you have sent
postcards off to Europe from Tharangambadi in recent years, they will have been sent from the Post Office with stamps bearing a portrait of Ziegenbalg produced during a week of official celebrations in Ziegenbalg’s honour.

Ziegenbalg’s ‘firsts’
The plaques on the High Street bear the admonition in capital letters ‘BE ALWAYS THE FIRST’, followed by the words, ‘ZIEGENBALG WAS’. Next, there is a list of ‘firsts’ attributed to Ziegenbalg numbered from one to twenty-four engraved like the two tablets of Moses. His work for the gospel is listed as a ‘first’ but also his ‘practical divinity’ in founding schools for both girls and boys, establishing a Seminary to train Christian leaders; promoting home crafts; building an orphanage; setting up factories; engaging in strenuous social work including establishing a ‘free meals’ kitchen for the poor, widows and ex-slaves; founding the town’s tailoring trade; building and running a paper mill; creating an alphabet for the local language, translating the Bible; teaching the printing trade; authoring books in Tamil and even translating Tamil works into German dealing with the religious history of the area. Indeed Ziegenbalg seemed to have had his finger in every pie, pulling out all the plums in order to nourish the hundreds whom he suddenly found under his care both spiritually and bodily. Furthermore, Ziegenbalg is credited with founding the first Christian congregation in all Asia since the days of the early Church and helping his congregation to build a church through their own energies and work. This church building is still standing and in regular use as also the Manse built for Ziegenbalg though the latter has recently been opened as a cultural museum. Ziegenbalg’s grave is also still standing in the church cemetery, looking as if it had been newly erected. The local Hindus confess that Ziegenbalg even influenced their own religion which adopted the idea of grace from Ziegenbalg not present in Hinduism before. Indeed, all over old Tranquebar one is reminded of Ziegenbalg by the New Jerusalem church, public buildings, schools and machinery he set up, all kept in good condition by a thankful community and modern travel brochures boast in a positive sense that because of this, time has stood still in Tharangambadi. Time might have stood still but Ziegenbalg’s gospel is still continuing there though when the British ‘bought’ Tharangambadi from the Danes in 1845 they stopped the Danish-German missionary witness. More than one commentator I have read remarks that time has not really stood still in Tharangambadi because Ziegenbalg’s ideas are still ultra-modern.

The birth and upbringing of a missionary
Ziegenbalg was born on the 24th of June, 1683 in humble circumstances but his Christian mother died when he was a small child. His strongest memory of his mother was when she confessed on her death bed that she was leaving a great treasure behind. The tiny tot misunderstood her words and asked where the treasure was buried. His mother smiled and with her last breath raised her hand and indicated that her oldest daughter and her young son were her treasures in the Lord and with this happy smile still on her face, the good woman died. Ziegenbalg did not have such happy memories of his father who married another woman a few months after his wife’s death and estranged the children. He died soon after whilst Ziegenbalg was only six and left his oldest daughter Anna who had a strong trust in the Lord but was married to a very stern husband, to look after...
Bartholomäus and his younger sister, both of whom were in very poor health.

Ziegenbalg’s sister sent her brother to a primary school in Kamenz and then to the Grammar School at Görlitz where he seemed, at first, to be more interested in music than anything else and joined a band of the Grammar School’s musicians who called themselves the ‘Collegium musicum’. One day, however, as they were playing some old folksongs, there was a knock at the door and a young man, scarcely out of his teens himself, asked if he could come in. Once he had been given a seat he explained that he was an itinerant preacher and wished to tell them that though it is a fine thing to play and sing songs praising the beautiful countryside as they did, music was much more designed for praising the Lord who on such a fine summer’s day has made all things bright and beautiful. Most of the musicians mocked the well-meant words of the preacher and the ‘collegium’ was quickly abandoned. Ziegenbalg, however, hung on to the young man’s words and was to hear him often over the next six months witnessing to the need to be born again in Christ and follow the path of the gospel. Though Ziegenbalg had neglected his studies somewhat when playing in the pupils’ band, which he now left, he neglected his school work almost altogether by accompanying Johannes the rather mystical preacher, who was a follower of Jacob Böhme, on his various journeys believing that his ‘guiding star’ was leading him to have peace with God. As soon as Johannes moved out of the district Ziegenbalg felt as if he had been left in the dark with his only light and hope gone.

A mother’s care for her son lasts longer than her life

Since he was a small child, Ziegenbalg had been convinced he would one day study for the Christian ministry but now he found himself most unworthy to take on such a task. During one night of torment, Ziegenbalg forgot the mystical preacher who had become his idol and his thoughts returned to his mother whose last words were of the treasure she had left. He now realised his mother had always found her treasures in the Word of God and left his bed, lit a candle and took out his mother’s old Bible and turned to the text his mother had so often read for her children. It was Psalm 23. From that night on, Ziegenbalg became a man of the Bible, putting aside all the mystical paraphernalia of Hyper-Pietism which had offered him the two props of the Bible and their mystical dreams on which to build his faith. The one prop of God’s word was enough as it showed him the one salvation in Jesus Christ which he now had found, like his mother and elder sister. He then took up his studies again with great eagerness and earned not only good marks but the praise of his teachers.

Missing a father’s hand

Ziegenbalg, happy in his memories of his mother, felt the absence of a guiding fatherly hand badly and he longed for an earthly father with the faith of his mother. One of his teachers gave him the advice to seek out Professor August Hermann Franke at Halle who had devoted his life to being a father to the fatherless. Ziegenbalg knew of Franke’s work amongst orphans and decided to write to him seeking guidance. Franke replied swiftly, encouraging him to keep up his former ideas of entering the ministry and advised him to deepen and complete his Grammar School learning by joining Joachim Lange’s famous Friedrich-Werderschen Grammar School in Berlin for the final instruction he needed before going home.

Going Home

By Don Fortner
Price £23.95 ($30.00)
206 pages hardback

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

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

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

Extract from Foreword by Pastor Earnie W. Lucas

Available from Go Publications at: http://go-newfocus.co.uk/books Purchases through Paypal or credit card. Also available from Amazon.
O God, what offering shall I give?
To Thee, the Lord of earth and skies!
My spirit, soul, and flesh receive,
A holy, living sacrifice!
Small as it is, 'tis all my store:
More should'st Thou have, if I had more.

Now then, my God, Thou hast my soul:
No longer mine, but Thine I am:
Guard Thou Thine own, possess it whole!
Cheer it with hope, with love inflame!
Thou hast my spirit: there display
Thy glory to the perfect day.

Thou hast my flesh, Thy hallowed shrine,
Devoted solely to Thy will;
Here let Thy light forever shine:
This house still let Thy presence fill:
O Source of life, live, dwell and move,
In me, till all my life be love!

O never in these vales of shame,
(Sad fruits of sin) my glorying be;
Clothe with salvation, through Thy name,
My soul, and let me put on Thee!
Be living faith my costly dress,
And my best robe, Thy righteousness.

Send down Thy likeness from above,
And let this my adorning be;
Clothe me with wisdom, patience, love,
With lowliness and purity;
Than gold and pearls more precious far,
And brighter than the morning star.

Lord, arm me with Thy Spirit’s might,
Since I am called by Thy great name!
In Thee let all my Thoughts unite,
Of all my works be Thou the aim:
Thy love attend me all my days,
And my sole business be Thy praise.

Johann Joachim Lange
(1670–1744)

studying theology. Professor Franke arranged everything for Ziegenbalg who was still unsure of his suitability for the ministry. Lange had been a penniless student under Franke in Leipzig and was to become Professor of Biblical Exegesis in Halle where Franke had long wished to have him. Lange is better known in England through his hymns, a number of which appear in the hymn-books of English speaking countries. Lange, together with his friend Philipp Jakob Spener took Ziegenbalg under their wings and the young scholar studied Spener’s Pia Desideria to his spiritual edification. A number of scholars believe that Spener was influenced in this work by Scotland’s John Durie, known to readers of this magazine. Ziegenbalg soon showed his maturity in the faith as well as academic abilities and soon found himself, despite ill-health at Halle under the guidance of Franke. However, Ziegenbalg had spent a couple of weeks at the Leipzig, Wittenberg and Jena universities before opting for Halle which he found to be a veritable heaven on earth.

Ziegenbalg’s mistrusts his own abilities
This peace was somewhat disturbed by a letter from his elder sister Anna telling him that he had inherited the family’s farm and was needed back home. His health broke down again and he had to return home, not to take over the farm but to recuperate under Anna’s care before returning to Halle feeling much stronger in body and spirit. His bags were all packed and he was ready to depart but two events hindered his return. The first was that a friend, faced with an eight-week absence from his church and school begged Ziegenbalg to take over both tasks for him until his return. Ziegenbalg felt duty-bound to help and reaped great blessings in the work. On his friend’s return with a lady on his arm whom he swiftly married with Ziegenbalg being an honoured wedding guest, Ziegenbalg packed his bags again for Halle but suddenly School Director Lange sent him a message to say that he had an earnest proposal to set before him prompted by a letter from Professor Franke.

The interview with his friend and former teacher was to alter Ziegenbalg’s life completely. Lange greeted Ziegenbalg with the news that the King of Denmark, Frederich IV, was looking for missionaries gifted in preaching and teaching to pioneer a church and school founding work in Tranquebar. He had found none in Denmark equal to the task and through his court chaplain had turned to Professor Franke for help. After deep consultation and prayer between Lange,
Spener, and Franke, it was decided that Ziegenbalg and his friend, brother and fellow-student Heinrich Plütschau were ideally gifted to represent the Danish missionary outreach in India. Ziegenbalg could scarcely understand what he was hearing and all his thoughts were confused so he asked for a time to organize his mind and heart. After a few days, he wrote a letter to his advisors claiming that on grounds of unsuitability he must reject the proposal. Professor Franke and his brethren took this merely as a sign of humility and re-emphasised their conviction that he was the right man for the task. Ziegenbalg then visited his friend Plütschau to discuss the matter and found him convinced that as it was the Lord’s will that they should go into all the world and preach the gospel, as Ziegenbalg had so often stressed, so why not start with India? Together in prayer, all doubts and difficulties disappeared from the two friends’ minds and they both felt a strong call that they should follow Christ in His work in Tranquebar.

A ship was ready to set off to India and the next opportunity might take months or more so the two friends had no time to say farewell to their families. The King had sent both men one hundred dollars each to cover their costs. They had even to leave their libraries and much of their personal possessions behind them and travelled lightly on the post coach to the harbour. Ziegenbalg was happy he had at least his mother’s Bible in his luggage. His last words to Plütschau before boarding the coach were, ‘I am convinced that it is God’s will to send us to the heathen but will I be fit for the task?’ Then they travelled through Mecklenburg towards Rostock.

Difficulties not envisaged
From Rostock they sailed to Denmark where they were received in Copenhagen by the court chaplain Dr Lütken who was born in Germany. As the two men had not been ordained, they were sent off to the Bishop of Seeland, Dr. Bornemann for the ceremony. To their surprise, the good bishop refused to ordain them without a strict examination in Latin starting with the question ‘Quid est regeneratio’, or ‘what is the New Birth?’ Ziegenbalg replied quickly in Latin that the New Birth is an act of grace which transfers a person into life’. Further questions ensued concerning the state of the wicked outside of Christ and what is the content of the gospel to be preached to them. He was not pleased to find that the candidates looked on all people as sinners and did not distinguish between ‘heathen Christian’ and those of ‘Christian’ countries. Both men answered as born again Bible-believing Christians but the Bishop was obviously not pleased with the answers and refused to ordain Ziegenbalg and Plütschau. When the King was told of this rejection, he gathered from Dr. Lütken that the questions had been adequately and correctly answered and that, as Dr Lütken said, the Bishop was a ‘hot head’ and so he demanded a new examination to take place within three days in the presence of his court chaplain otherwise another bishop could easily be found. The Bishop said he was surprised how the two candidates had changed their opinions, on being questioned, which was quite untrue but they were promptly ordained.

Free to go abroad
Their first given task as ordained men was to preach before the King and his family on Acts 26:16-18 concerning Paul’s conversion and commission:

> I will appear unto thee; Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.

After this, the Danish Christian brethren fitted Ziegenbalg and Plütschau out for the journey and made sure they had sufficient money to finance at least the start of their ministry. On 30 November the two missionaries boarded the Princessa Sophia Hedwiga and started on their dangerous sea-voyage to Calcutta (Kolkata) which was to last until June of the following year. There was danger enough on the journey as the ship lost its masts in wild storms but there was a greater danger ahead. The Danish East India Company were shocked to hear that the Danish Christians had sent out missionaries to India. ‘They will raise up the natives to challenge our authority,’ they argued in rage. So the DEIC rapidly sent off a faster ship to India to inform the Governor of Tranquebar that he must do all in his power to stop the missionaries landing and gaining access to the inhabitants. They obviously believed as confessing Christians that the gospel of liberty must, at all costs, not be preached to the ‘heathen’.

To be continued
Do you ever feel there is more to the gospel than most people make out? Someone says,

“The gospel is easy, all you have to do is believe”.

Well that sounds easy. What do I have to believe?

“Oh, just believe that Jesus died.”

H-okay. Everyone dies – so that’s not hard to believe. Does that make me a Christian?

“Well no, you have to believe He rose again from the dead, as well”.

Okay. I can do that. Right, done.

“And that He went to heaven. And that He is coming back.”

Okay. Anything else?

“Well, you must believe in God and believe you’re a sinner.” “And you have to worship, and trust in the blood, and get baptised.” “You have to repent and pray as well, plus you should probably stop going to the pub.”

Wait! Wait! I thought you said this was easy.

More than simple faith
The truth is, the gospel is much bigger, broader, more profound, more meaningful and important than a few glib comments or a handful of trite religious suggestions. If you ever hear someone start a sentence with, “All you have to do to become a Christian is…“, you may put your fingers in your ears. Furthermore, ask any older believer and they will tell you, having spent many years listening to gospel preaching they still have much to learn, many doubts and struggle with faith most days.

More than a great offer
The gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is not a set of facts to be believed, nor a proposition to be accepted or rejected. It is the answer to a problem. It is help for the helpless. It is spiritual food and drink for spiritually starving souls, it is heavenly nourishment for all who hunger and thirst after righteousness.

The gospel is healing ointment for those wounded by sin, it is rest for the weary, comfort for the sad, it is the message of life-imparting power to dead sinners and takes its potency not from the freewill of the spiritually dead, but the sovereign will of the all-powerful creator and giver of life. The gospel is the message of the Lord Jesus Christ’s accomplishments for the salvation sinners.

A big answer for a big problem
You might say, “Now, that is complicated”. “What do you mean the gospel is the answer to a problem? What problem?” The problem...
of sin, of course, with its progeny-in-tow, guilt, judgment and everlasting separation from God in hell. The gospel is the answer to that problem and encompasses everything God has done in Jesus Christ to save, deliver and recover His sinful, guilty people from the condemnation they otherwise deserve.

Just to be clear. Sinners are not saved by believing as a cause — or because they believe — as if their faith is the condition of acceptance with God. The cause and source of salvation is the unique work of Jesus Christ. Sinners are saved because Jesus Christ substituted Himself in their place, carried the punishment for their guilt, shed His blood to cleanse their sin, and brought in a perfect righteousness that God freely bestows upon them. When the gospel brings that message to the ears of a sinner to be believed by faith, the benefits of the already-finished cross-work of Jesus Christ are applied to the individual’s consciousness and enjoyed by the newly born again.

A finished work
The gospel is God’s account of what He has done to save His people, it is not what He hopes will happen. Salvation is experienced by all who trust in Jesus Christ the Saviour. Forgiveness is found, comfort obtained, and peace with God discovered when the sinner, confessing their sin, realises what the Lord Jesus Christ has actually accomplished at the cross and the sinner is given faith to trust it for themselves.

The gospel is not complicated, but neither is it easy to believe. In fact, humanly speaking it is impossible to believe. It will be resisted, refuted and aggressively denied by everyone until God the Holy Spirit enables faith and convinces the sinner to throw down their arms and submit to Christ. Only a work of grace can make a sinner able, and willing, to believe.

A glorious promise
And one final thing. The gospel of Jesus Christ is a high tower from which eternity’s glorious wonders are glimpsed from earth and the endless enjoyment of life with Christ may be seen. It is true, as Paul tells us, ‘Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him’. Yet the gospel promises grace now and glory hereafter to all who believe. Salvation is not in believing, salvation is in the One believed, and faith to believe is God’s gift to those He chooses to save.
New Focus Church Online
That the purpose of God according to election might stand

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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?”