A poet once wrote, “Ever let your hook be hanging; where you least believe it, there will be a fish in the stream.”

I like the wisdom in that saying and imagine those New Focus readers who are fishermen – and there are a fair number – will appreciate the sentiment it contains, too. However, it is not only with regard to fishing that the maxim holds true. Our belief in sovereign grace encourages us to trust that the Lord Jesus will call His people from every slow, deep pool or fast-flowing stream of life. Where we least believe it likely, one of the Lord’s elect will be waiting to hear the gospel.

It is interesting that our Lord chose fishermen, in the main, to be his disciples and noticeable how much of the Lord’s ministry involved fish, fishing or fisher-folk. He even calls His disciples to be fishers of men, a figure of speech as revealing of the preacher’s task today as, no doubt, it was then.

The net that preachers cast is the gospel (Matthew 13:47). By it men of every kind are gathered. The purpose of our Sovereign God is to gather up His people by the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Who those people are, we cannot tell. Where they are, we cannot tell. But this we know, every one will be brought to a knowledge of the truth and not one will be the fish that got away.

This ought to be a great encouragement to us all. Perhaps we feel that some are better fitted to fish in the mighty rivers, in the promising pools and where there is a long history of good fishing. But there are also hard to reach little bays, narrow inlets and inaccessible holes out of which fish will be gathered. As the poet says: “Ever let your hook be hanging; where you least believe it, there will be a fish in the stream.”

Who could have predicted that Moses, prince in Egypt, would lead Israel to freedom, or that David, in the fields, would reign over God’s people. Who amongst the persecuted believers of the first century could have imagined that Saul of Tarsus was a chosen child of God, that in a little while this persecutor of the church would be converted and bring the gospel to millions. Our Sovereign God delights in accomplishing what we least expect is possible.

Knowing that the redemption, conversion and perseverance of the elect is wholly the work of our blessed Saviour is both liberating and inspiring. It is not up to me who gets saved and, who can tell but the Lord might just use me today to bring someone to Himself.

So, here is our encouragement: take the gospel with us where we go. At work where the twisted cynic lurks; in the park where the drunks pass their empty days; at home where the long hardened family member has no time for Christ. “Ever let your hook be hanging; where you least believe it, there will be a fish in the stream.”
Several years ago were to be seen the half-burnt fragments of what looked like a brown, brittle, fossil manuscript all covered with quaint writing. It was, in fact, a manuscript diary written in the days of Queen Mary. Under the date April 3rd, 1557, was the entry: “This day five persons burnt at Smithfield, one old woman walking with her staff.”

How vivid is the image of that old woman. No name, no fame, only a simple old body. Very likely she had a troublesome tongue; at least the priest thought so. Most likely she could not read. Perhaps she had never in all her life heard what we call a good sermon. She had none of the hymns that help us, but she had heard of Jesus, and trusted all her soul’s weight on Him.

We might have supposed that it would have been an easy thing to have starved her into surrender, or storm her into submission, or wear her out, or puzzle her poor head till she could not tell right from wrong; but when put to the test she elected to burn rather than turn or pretend to believe in the Pope. Dear old pilgrim! She made her public profession of faith, and that profession in her case meant to stand in hissing fire.
Do you believe in common grace?

To answer this question one needs to be able to define what common grace is. Unfortunately, the term means different things to different people. For some common grace describes God’s good gifts or common provisions in nature such as sunshine and rain. Some see it in terms of talents or gifts that lead to human distinction in art, sport or music. Others discern the restraining hand of God holding back human wickedness by conscience and the structures of law, order and civil government; keeping society from deteriorating into anarchy.

All things to all men

If this was the extent of common grace teaching we could be content, but it does not stop there. Recently, common grace has taken on two new functions. It seems its flexibility knows no bounds. First, it is preached from pulpits in support of universal offers of saving grace and to exemplify how God cares for everyone and wants everyone to be saved. Second, it is used by some parachurch organisations to justify their existence and defend joint campaigning on moral issues with non-evangelicals.

At its heart common grace means goodness shown by God to saved and unsaved alike. It is distinguished from particular grace or saving grace, which is only given to certain individuals – the elect. It is usually divided into two parts. First, God’s grace restrains man from being as bad as he could be, given total depravity. Second, God’s grace enables men to perform worthy deeds. These ‘good works’ fall short of works meriting salvation.

Common grace is explicitly not saving grace but some say it impinges on the doctrine of salvation. Though sin deserves punishment, we are told, God is patient and longsuffering with mankind, not willing that any should perish. Consequently, though common grace does not actually save anyone, it demonstrates God’s desire and willingness to save everyone.

Common grace teachers believe God has two great works going on in the history of the world. First, the work of saving the church by special grace, second the work of improving society by common grace.

Rejecting common grace

However, we do not accept that these two works are a valid representation of God’s dealings with men. Rather we believe that God’s great purpose is singular and particular – the work of redeeming chosen sinners by the blood of Jesus Christ. God is saving His people from their sins, from death and from hell. This is the special work of the Lord Jesus and outside of Christ there is no salvation, no redemption and no grace, common or otherwise.
Common providence

Clearly people enjoy many pleasures in life, acts of charity are performed and great works accomplished. It is also true that sun and rain nurture crops without reference to election and reprobation. We are better off with government than without. Such things cannot be denied, yet we find the term ‘common grace’ unhelpful.

We do not know as God knows, and what some call ‘grace’ may be no more than the means of man’s destruction. Nations and individuals can appear, in human terms, to prosper but we should not ascribe this to God’s goodness (see Psalm 73). Worldly wealth often indicates God’s judgment as it tends to greater self-reliance, self-indulgence and despising Christ (Luke 12:20). God may raise a man high, not as a mark of grace but to glorify His own name (Romans 9:17).

The dangers of common grace teaching

But our rejection of the teaching of common grace is not merely a matter of words. If the phrase dealt simply with matters of climate we might question the term but agree with the principle. If it were only that God grants moral rule, civil authority, intermittent peace and prosperity, we might adapt the language and take time to define what we mean. But increasingly, common grace is being used to teach universal love, offers of grace and a desire by God to save everyone. It is on this matter we believe common grace to be a dangerous error dragging in its wake a host of unwelcome consequences.

Here are five consequences of current common grace teaching:

1. It misrepresents God

Those who hold common grace find it hard to limit other attributes of God. Having settled upon common grace their theology readily flows into other common or universal blessings such as universal love; universal desire to save; universal atonement; universal salvation. Yet God’s blessings are always definite and particular.

2. It misrepresents God’s saving purpose

Common grace misrepresents God’s purpose by implying that God is saving society in the world as well as saving His elect out of the world. God’s purpose in Jesus Christ is to redeem His church out of this guilty, condemned world. Everything that happens in the world is conducive to that end. Nations rise and fall for the saving of the elect. Men prosper and perish for the saving of the elect. Peace on earth is reconciliation between God and man, otherwise, outside of this, Christ came to bring a sword (Matthew 10:34).

3. It teaches grace outside of Christ

In the eternal covenant the church is placed in Christ. In and from Jesus Christ they obtain forgiveness, mercy, goodness, and love. Outside of Christ there is judgment, wrath and holy hatred. Outside of Christ God does not bestow mercy, grant forgiveness or dispense grace. God’s grace is always special, always saving, always sure. It is founded on Jesus Christ, given by Jesus Christ and received in Jesus Christ.

Divine holiness demands retribution for sin. The broken law cries out for justice. Grace itself is constrained until holiness and justice are satisfied. This is why blood was shed in Eden, foreshadowing the coming of God’s perfect lamb. To speak of grace that is non-saving, grace that is common and outside of Christ simply misrepresents the Saviour’s work.

4. It distracts from preaching Christ

Common grace is used to urge public action, political involvement and militant Christianity within society. Of course, Christians are called to do good works such as love our neighbours and stand for truth. Yet the first duty of the church is to preach the gospel. The day is fast approaching when Christian lawyers are more highly valued than Christian preachers.

Today, evangelical organisations spend millions of pounds on social work, overseas aid, political lobbying and public protests. Nurses and water engineers have replaced gospel preachers on the mission field. Instead of ministering to the souls of men we are ministering to their bodies. The energies, resources and finances that the church should be directing towards preaching Christ are spent for that which is not bread.

5. It brings confusion into the church

Common grace will never produce a more righteous society. God’s provisions to the reprobate, be they perceived as good or bad, never lead to their ultimate good but serve to leave them without excuse. Common providences increase the unbeliever’s condemnation and are ultimately an expression of God’s sovereign displeasure.

By contrast, the goodness and love of God to His elect is demonstrated in the common providences of life. Christians learn to know by faith that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose (Romans 8:28). If for the present some things are perceived as hard to bear, we take God at His word (Hebrews 12:11). Consider: If all things work together for good to those who love God what do all things work together for to those who do not love God?
What is contained in the verses at the top of this page is sad and solemn. The betrayal of Jesus Christ is a subject full of serious warning to every hypocrite. Yet, it is a subject that is instructive and comforting to believing sinners. Here the Holy Spirit describes the betrayal of our Saviour by Judas Iscariot, showing us how our Sovereign God and Saviour used the deeds of the most infamous man in history to accomplish His purpose of grace in the redemption of His elect and to fulfil the Scriptures in His death.

Judas Iscariot

"Then entered Satan into Judas surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve. And he went his way, and communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray him unto them. And they were glad, and covenanted to give him money. And he promised, and sought opportunity to betray him unto them in the absence of the multitude." (Luke 22:3-6)

The Betrayal of Jesus Christ

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Judas Iscariot

"Then entered Satan into Judas surnamed Iscariot." Here is Judas Iscariot, the traitor, the betrayer of our Lord. His name was Judas; but he was, by divine providence, surnamed Iscariot, which means “the man of murder”. Of him our Saviour said, “The Son of man indeed goeth, as it is written of him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! good were it for that man if he had never been born” (Mark 14:21).

It is important to notice the time God the Holy Spirit identifies for us when Satan is here said to have entered into Judas. This was two days before the passover. It happened while our Saviour was in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper (Matthew 26:2-17; Mark 14:1-11). In fact, Mark’s account seems to indicate that the thing Satan used to trigger Judas’ wickedness was the devotion of the woman who anointed the Saviour with precious spikenard for His burial, and the Master’s commendation of her good work. Immediately after our Saviour commended this woman and her work, Judas “went unto the chief priests, to betray him unto them” (Mark 14:10).

John tells us that this happened before the supper in Simon’s house ended (John 13:2). While they were at the table in Simon’s house, you will remember, the Lord Jesus arose from the supper and washed His disciples’ feet. (This was not at the Lord’s Supper, but at the supper in Simon’s house in Bethany.) Then, the Saviour told the disciples that one of them would betray him. When they wondered which of them would do the horrible deed, he said, “He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly” (John 13:26-27). Though the Lord Jesus had spoken very plainly, the disciples failed to realize that He had
identified Judas as the betrayer. But Judas “having received the sop went immediately out” to betray him (John 13:30).

Immediately following the supper at Bethany, while Judas was making his dastardly deal with the chief priests, the Lord Jesus sent Peter and John into Jerusalem to prepare for the passover. Then, when the appointed hour arrived, “he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him”, to keep the passover feast (Luke 22:14; Matthew 26:20; Mark 14:17). Our Saviour kept the passover feast with His disciples, as was required by the law (Luke 22:15-18). In verses 19-20 He established the gospel ordinance of the Lord’s Supper, by which God’s saints in this gospel age remember the Saviour and symbolically “show the Lord’s death, till he come” (1 Corinthians 11:26).

Judas at the Table

I have said all that, because I want you to see, and to see clearly, that Judas was at the table with the Lord Jesus and His disciples when the Lord’s Supper was established. In verses 21 and 22 we are plainly told that after making his hellish deal to betray the Son of God, Judas was present with the twelve and kept the first observance of the Lord’s Supper with them. The Lord Jesus said, “Behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table. And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed!” What a base, crass, hard-hearted hypocrite Judas must have been! Apparently, he came only to cover his tracks; but there he is sitting with the Son of God and His apostles as the Saviour established the blessed ordinance of sweet communion, just as though he was part of the communion!

This is important because there are many today who would have us “fence the table”, or not observe it at all, lest someone eat the bread and wine with us who is an unbeliever. Some would even keep other believers from the table.

Be sure you understand what the Scriptures teach regarding the Lord’s Supper. Like believer’s baptism, it is a blessed, gospel ordinance of worship; and, like baptism, it is an ordinance to be observed by believers only. If you do not trust Christ as your Saviour, if you do not discern the Lord’s Supper, that is to say, if you do not know why Christ came into this world and what He accomplished, if you do not know your need of Him as your sin-atoning Substitute—you must not join God’s children at the Lord’s Table. The ordinance is not for you. To eat the bread and drink the wine without such God-given, spiritual discernment is to eat and drink damnation to yourself.

But, if you are a believer, if you do trust Christ alone as your Lord and Saviour, the Table is prepared and set for you. No believer is unworthy to receive the bread and wine in remembrance of the Saviour. In fact, every believer is specifically told to eat the bread and drink the wine in remembrance of the Saviour, and to do so often (Matthew 26:26-28). The observance of the Lord’s Supper is not optional and it is just as wrong to refuse one of the Lord’s children their place at the Table, as it would be to refuse baptism to one to whom He has given faith in Christ.

Who makes the decision? Who decides who shall eat the bread and drink the wine? The Scriptures tell us plainly. Each person must examine himself. You, and you alone, are to determine whether you are a sinner whose only hope of salvation and eternal life is the crucified Son of God. It is not the pastor’s responsibility, or the responsibility of the church’s elders or deacons. It is the responsibility of the individual, and no one else, to determine whether he does or does not trust Christ as his Saviour.

The Lord Jesus knew that Judas was a devil from the beginning, and knew that he had already made arrangements to betray Him for thirty pieces of silver. He spoke so pointedly to Judas about these things, that he had no excuse for his hellish hypocrisy. But the Master did nothing to keep that son of perdition from eating the bread and drinking the wine.

“One of the Twelve”

We are told that Judas was “of the number of the twelve” (v. 3). He was “one of the twelve” (v. 47). Those twelve men formed the most elite
group of men ever to walk across the face of the earth. Yet, “one of the twelve” apostles of Christ was Judas Iscariot, Judas the murderous traitor. When the Lord chose Judas to the office of an apostle, He knew he was a devil (John 6:70-71). When the Lord Jesus commissioned the others, Judas was commissioned with them. When our Saviour sent out the twelve to cast out devils, heal the sick, and preach the kingdom of God, Judas was among them (Luke 9:1-6). It seems to me that Judas must have even performed the same miracles that the other apostles performed; else he may have been detected by them.

Gracious Designs
All this was done, though the Lord Jesus knew exactly who and what Judas was. Rather than questioning these things, we ought to immediately recognize that our Saviour had wise and gracious designs in them. Judas was a man specifically raised up to stand as a glaring beacon to warn all men, telling all that outward religion without inward grace is not only useless, but damning. Judas was chosen to be a preacher and even an apostle. Without question, he preached exactly the same doctrine as Peter, James, and John, the very doctrine that Christ preached. But Judas was a devil. He was never born again. He was never called to life and faith in Christ by God the Holy Spirit. Judas was never made a partaker of Christ and a partaker of the grace of God.

He was nothing but an outward, empty hearted professor of faith in Christ, not a possessor of grace. He was an apostle (a messenger of God) in name only. Peter said he was “numbered with” the apostles and had “obtained part” of their ministry (Acts 1:7). He obtained part, just an outside part, of the apostles’ ministry, no more. He had the name and the office, the duties and the doctrine, the fame and the functions of an apostle, but nothing more. He had no grace in his heart and no gifts of the Spirit. Those who heard him preach heard cold, dry, empty echoes of a cold, dry, empty heart.

I fear there are multitudes like Judas today who fill the pulpits of churches. They are ordained by men, but not by God the Holy Spirit. They are talented, but not gifted with grace. They are forceful, but not faithful. Their doctrine may be profound and precise, but it is not pure. It may elevate your thinking, but it will not edify your soul. It may swell your head, but it will not sanctify your heart.

Such a man was Judas. He was a devil from the beginning and remained a devil to the end, though he was numbered with, and constantly associated with the apostles to the end of his days, until the measure of his iniquity was filled. Then, he went “to his own place” (Acts 1:25). We should never be surprised by the appearance of such men, or surprised that they go undetected, even by the faithful (Matthew 7:22-23).

No Harm
Judas, also, stands as a constant, blessed beacon of light, proclaiming forever that all Satan’s devices, and all the deeds of even the most malicious men shall never hurt God’s cause, injure His people, or hinder the gospel. The Apostles were not hindered in their work because Judas was among them. The disciples were not harmed by his presence at the Table. Our Saviour was not hindered, but only helped in His determination to redeem us by Judas’ betrayal. In fact, it was Judas’ fall from the number of the twelve that made room for the twelfth true apostle, the apostle Paul.

In choosing Judas to be an apostle and allowing a devil to sit at the Lord’s Table with His disciples our Saviour assures us that His saints are not polluted or harmed in anyway because a Judas is among them. The Lord’s true disciples did not lose a thing because Judas was among them. They had Christ with them. Their joy was not diminished because Judas was there.

If the Lord Jesus meets us when we gather to worship Him as He promised (Matthew 18:20), we will suffer no loss if a devil dares try to hide himself from God among the sons of God (Job
1:6). If God the Holy Spirit will lead us “by the footsteps of the flock”, where the Good Shepherd feeds His sheep (Song of Solomon 1:8), our souls shall be blessed with His flock, though there be a goat or two among the sheep, even a lion lying in wait. He will prepare a table for us, in the presence of our enemies, anoint our heads with the oil of His grace, cause our cups to run over.

**Wheat and Tares**

Yes, our Saviour had wise and gracious designs in His use of Judas. He knew that His church, in this world, would never be free from false apostles, false preachers, and false prophets. He knew that tares would grow together with the wheat until the harvest. Goats will ever be found among His sheep in this world. Wherever the good fish are gathered by the gospel net, carp will be gathered too. This is exactly according to His purpose. Yet, the “precious and the vile” are still perfectly distinct, and between them there is “a great gulf fixed”. Tares never become wheat. Goats never become sheep. Bad fish never become good fish. The seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent cannot be mixed.

**Betrayed with a Kiss**

In Luke 22:47 the Lord Jesus is in the Garden of Gethsemane. He has finished praying. When He arose from prayer, He found Peter, James, and John “sleeping for sorrow” (v. 45). When He did, He said, “Rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation” (v. 46). As He spoke a multitude of Roman soldiers arrived armed with swords and spears, and Jews with the chief priests, with Judas leading the way. “Judas was guide to them that took Jesus” (Acts 1:16). But, why would such a huge multitude come to arrest one unarmed man? Were they afraid of Him? It appears they were. It is obvious that the soldiers, as well as the Jews, had heard that this man claimed to be more than a mere man. He claimed to be God in the flesh; and His disciples all worshipped Him as God. We know that the soldiers were aware of this, because one of them later declared, “Truly this man was the Son of God” (Mark 15:39).

It is certain that none of the princes of this world really knew Him, “for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory” (1 Corinthians 2:8). Yet, these men knew that He openly claimed to be “the Lord of Glory”, and feared He might just be. Jesus showed them their fears were justified (John 18:4-8). It is obvious that though Judas was determined to betray Him, he was terrified of Him. Matthew tells us that he told the soldiers as soon as they saw him kiss the Lord Jesus, they should hold Him fast (Matthew 26:48).

**Total Depravity**

Why did He use such precautions? There was in that devil of a man a terrifying conviction that Christ was more than man. He could not have forgotten the miracles of Christ. He had seen the Master escape from the hands of His enemies, when they sought to throw Him over the hill of the city (Luke 4:29-31). Therefore, He told them to bind Him and lead him away securely (Mark 14:44).

These men, all of them, must have been terrified as they led the Saviour out of Gethsemane. They all had seen and heard enough that night to convince them that this man is God. Our Lord took the initiative, approaching them with not the slightest twinge of fear. He had declared, “I AM”, and they fell away backward before Him. He picked Malchus’ right ear up off the ground and replaced it before their eyes.

They knew who they were dealing with, and must have been utterly terrified. Yet, such is the deadness and depravity of the human heart, that sinners cannot act contrary to the evil determination of their own wicked hearts and wills, unless they are graciously compelled to do so by God the Holy Spirit. Even when stricken with terror, they cannot and will not repent, except God give them repentance. If we know, by the sweet experience of His grace, what it is to repent, what it is to trust Christ our hearts ought to constantly bow before Him with gratitude and dance before Him with joy!

**Christ in Control**

Though bound like a criminal, our Lord Jesus Christ was in absolute control, even of this mob. He was overruling their malice for His own glory that the Scriptures might be fulfilled. Our Sovereign Saviour was, by the use of these wicked men, accomplishing the prophecies of the Old Testament Scriptures. He was taken by force, but not by the force of these men. He was taken captive by them by the force of His own determination to die in our place upon the cursed tree, and to do so exactly according to the Scriptures.

According to the Scripture, He had to be betrayed by one who was familiar with Him and called His friend, one in whom He confided, one who had eaten of His bread (Psalm 41:9). According to the Scripture, the sacrifice for sin had to be bound. Therefore, our Saviour voluntarily stretched out His hand to be bound by sinners (Psalm 118:27). As Isaac was voluntarily bound and laid upon the altar, our blessed Saviour was, by His own voluntary will, bound by these wicked men that the Scripture might be fulfilled.
Jews and Gentiles
This wicked band of murderous men was a mob of rebels, composed of both Jews and Gentiles. Though utterly unconscious of the fact, they were visibly and undeniably fulfilling that which was written of them in the 2nd Psalm hundreds of years earlier. We know that the conduct of these men was the fulfillment of the 2nd Psalm because the Spirit of God specifically tells us that is the case in Acts 4:24-28.

Brought to the High Priest
In verse 54 Luke says, "Then took they him, and led him, and brought him into the high priest's house." When they came to arrest our Saviour in the Garden, it was the intention of this mob to deliver Him up to the Romans, to give Him a mock trial, and murder Him. These soldiers did not come representing the Jews or their high priest. They were Roman soldiers. Why, then, did they take Him first to the high priest?

Again, though they had no idea what they were doing, they acted directly contrary to their own inclinations to fulfill the purpose of our God. Roman soldiers would not willingly do anything just to please the despised Jews over whom they ruled. And they probably acted in direct disobedience to their orders. These men were the Roman governor's soldiers. It is highly unlikely that the governor sent them out with orders to arrest the Lord Jesus and take Him to the high priest. He would have ordered them to bring the Lord Jesus directly to him.

Why, then, do you suppose they took Him to the house of the high priest? If you will read the first chapter of Leviticus, you will see that the sacrifice for sin had to be brought first to the priest. Why did they bring Christ first into "the high priest's house"? They did it that Christ might die for our sins according to the Scriptures, that the Scriptures might be fulfilled.

Christ's Appointed Place
Yet, it was by the hand of Judas, the man of murder, that the Lord Jesus Christ, our blessed Saviour, went to His appointed place, at His appointed time, and finished His appointed work as our Saviour, justified us with His own blood, forever put away our sins by the sacrifice of Himself, and obtained eternal redemption for us, dying "for our sins according to the Scriptures".

Our Own Place
The end result of all this is glorious. Because Christ took our place at Calvary, because He was made sin for us, we have been made the righteousness of God in Him; and soon we shall be brought, by His omnipotent grace and immaculate mercy, into our own place with Him in heaven at last!

What will your place be? Will you be brought down to your own place in hell by your own hands, by your wilful, obstinate rebellion refusing to bow to the Son of God? Oh, may God graciously save you from yourself by His grace, give you life and faith in His darling Son, and sweetly force you to enter into life eternal by Christ the Door. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Trust the Son of God now; and soon He will bring you to your own place, the place prepared for you from the foundation of the world, and present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.
Some preachers and professors affect to believe in a redemption which I must candidly confess I do not understand; it is so indistinct and indefinite — a redemption which does not redeem anybody in particular, though it is alleged to redeem everybody in general; a redemption insufficient to exempt thousands of unhappy souls from hell after they have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus; a redemption, indeed, which does not actually save anybody, because it is dependent for its efficacy upon the will of the creature; a redemption that lacks intrinsic virtue and inherent power to redeem anybody, but is entirely dependent upon an extraneous contingency to render it effectual. With such fickle theories I have no fellowship. That every soul for whom Christ shed His blood as a Substitute, He will claim as His own, and have as His right, I firmly hold. I love to hold and I delight to proclaim this precious truth. Not all the powers of earth or hell; not the obstinacy of the human will, nor the deep depravity of the human mind, can ever prevent Christ seeing of the travail of His soul and being satisfied. To the last jot and tittle of His reward shall He receive it at the Father’s hand. A redemption that does redeem, a redemption that redeems many, seems to me infinitely better than a redemption that does not actually redeem anybody, but is supposed to have some imaginary influence upon all the sons of men.

“Even as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” Matthew 20:28
Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? (Hebrews 10:29)

Making the Blood of Christ an Unholy Thing

The man who treads under his feet the Son of God, counts the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, and despises the Spirit of grace, commits the greatest evil in the world and deserves the terrible vengeance of God’s unmitigated wrath. Yet, in this day of relentless compromise, preachers, theologians and religious leaders are making a mad rush to trample the precious blood of Christ under their feet, making the blood of the covenant “an unholy thing”.

A Common Thing

The word translated “an unholy thing” in Hebrews 10:29 means “something common, shared by all.” To declare that there is some sense in which our all-glorious Christ died in common for all, for those who are saved and for those who perish under the wrath of God, is to declare that He died in vain, that His precious blood is not precious at all, but worthless! It is to trample His blood under foot, make it “an unholy thing”, and do “despite unto the Spirit of grace” by denying the gospel He has revealed, asserting that it takes something more than the redemption accomplished at Calvary to put away sin, asserting that man’s faith must supplement Christ’s atonement for the atonement to be effectual.

That is what is now being preached by many who once professed to believe the teaching of Holy Scripture, that the Son of God died for and redeemed His elect, whom He redeemed, not along with all men, but “from among men” (Revelation 14:4). Regarding the wholesale rush to revive Amyraldianism (Fullerism — the teaching that Christ died for goats as well as sheep, the reprobate as well as the elect) by men who wish to be regarded as “reformed” in doctrine, I have moved beyond mere concern to anger. I hope the anger is not a mere carnal passion. I find it impossible to treat that which I am convinced is a deliberate compromise of the gospel with anything less than anger.

I am convinced that this rush of “reformed” men to deny the effectual, accomplished redemption of God’s elect by the sin-atoning sacrifice of His dear Son is not the result of “clearer light”, but of a desire to take away the offence of the cross and make the gospel of God palatable to men who hate God.
It appears obvious to me that desiring acceptability and success, but unwilling to openly deny the gospel, men who once professed to believe and openly avowed the gospel of Christ are now trying to find a way to deny it, while appearing to defend it. Either that, or they are scared to death that their peers might begin to be suspicious of them, suspicious that they are more concerned for the glory of Christ, the truth of God and the souls of men than they are for the recognition and approval of their peers. In either case, they have “trodden under foot the Son of God, and have counted the blood of the covenant … an unholy thing, and have done despite unto the Spirit of grace!”

Though we are constantly accused of being antinomians and hyper-calvinists, no one (to my knowledge) preaches the gospel more freely to sinners than we do, ever urging sinners who cannot do so to trust Christ, knowing that if they do God the Holy Spirit has given them life and faith in Christ. As I see it, all the arguments and debates, warnings and admonitions in defence of what men call “common grace”, the “free offer”, “bona-fide offer”, and “sincere offer of Christ to sinners” are nothing but disguises for telling sinners that salvation is really up to them, that God’s purpose is really nothing but a helpless desire, that Christ’s death really accomplished nothing, and that the Holy Spirit’s operations of grace are really nothing but a gentle tug upon the hearts of men.

Compromise Never Works
He who vainly imagines that by compromising the gospel he will make it more appealing to men, is ignorant of both man and the gospel. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation. Yet, men tell us that by compromising it, by denying the power of godliness, it will be made more powerful, more effectual, and more successful in getting sinners saved. Nonsense! The compromise of the gospel may attract men to the religion and the preacher making the compromise. It certainly deludes eternity bound sinners with the vain comfort of religion without the knowledge of Christ; but it does nothing for the salvation of any.

Resist, as you would the plague, any doctrine that teaches, suggests, or implies that Christ died in vain, that He desired to accomplish something He failed to accomplish in His death, or that man must do something to make Christ’s sacrifice personally effectual for the salvation of his soul. And resist every preacher and religion that promotes such blasphemy. The cross of our Lord Jesus Christ shall never be discovered a miscarriage! — “He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied!”

What sacred Fountain yonder springs
Up from the throne of God,
And all new covenant blessings brings?
’Tis Jesus’ precious blood.

What mighty sum paid all my debt,
When I a bondman stood,
And has my soul at freedom set?
’Tis Jesus’ precious blood.

What stream is that which sweeps away
My sins just like a flood,
Nor lets one guilty blemish stay?
’Tis Jesus’ precious blood.

What voice is that which speaks for me
In heaven’s high court for good,
And from the curse has set me free?
’Tis Jesus’ precious blood.

What theme, my soul, shall best employ
Thy harp before thy God
And make all heaven to ring with joy?
’Tis Jesus’ precious blood.

Joseph Irons
Don Fortner
Preaching to the UK

A preaching visit to the United Kingdom in April by Pastor Don Fortner of Danville, Kentucky was well received by all who were able to attend any of seven venues across England and Northern Ireland where services were held. Don, who was accompanied by his wife Shelby, preached a total of twelve times in ten days.

Don Fortner’s ministry on tape and written word has been appreciated for years by many people throughout the UK and it became apparent that some of them were prepared to travel a great distance, taking overnight accommodation in hotels and caravans where necessary, to meet him and enjoy the opportunity to share fellowship with likeminded believers in free grace.

Pastor Fortner’s first service organised by Mr Russell Smyth and Mr Stewart Boyd was held in Ballymoney Town Hall in Northern Ireland. The message was from Zechariah 10:1-12. The next meetings was at Egglesburn in County Durham where the text for the evening was the first three chapters of Hosea. God gave liberty in preaching the gospel from the story of Hosea and Gomer, a great picture of the Saviour’s love for His church. Visitors came from Liverpool, Leeds and Scotland.

The service at West Park Church in Wolverhampton, in the West Midlands, was organised by Mr Jim Gough, ably supported by Syd Buggins and Norman Wheeler. Pastor Fortner preached from 1 Peter 1:2 on the subject, Chosen, Sanctified, Redeemed, and Blessed. The service was well attended and like the sermon title, many seemed genuinely blessed.

Next came Campus Church in Welwyn Garden City in Hertfordshire. Pastor Stephen Bignall originally invited Don Fortner to preach at the church’s annual conference and this enabled the wider tour to proceed, for which we are grateful. In all Pastor Fortner preached at four sessions on the theme, Christ in the Psalms and The Song of Solomon. On Saturday morning he preached from Luke 24:44-45. The title of this message was Christ in the Psalms and on Saturday evening the text was from Psalm 130:4 on the subject There is forgiveness with Thee. On Sunday morning he preached from Song of Solomon 5:2-8 on Failing Saints and Our Unfailing God. The final message on Sunday evening was taken from Song of Solomon 6:11-13 and titled Why Am I Thus?

A local hotel in Honiton, Devon was the venue for services on Monday and Tuesday nights, with a local pastors’ fraternal meeting scheduled for Tuesday morning, hosted by Pastor Fred Serjeant. Here the sermon was Christ is All from 1 Corinthians 1:17-31. Mr Ian Potts organised the evening services. On Monday night the message was entitled As He is, so are we in this world, from 1 John 4:17. Tuesday evening concluded the meetings in Honiton and Don preached a message from Mark 7:37 on the subject He hath done all things well.
Two services were preached in London, organised by Pastor John Graham. The first on Wednesday night at Westminster Baptist Church was from Psalm 68:18-20 on the subject *Salvation as God describes it* and on Thursday evening the final message of the trip at Ridley Hall Baptist Church where Peter Andrews is pastor was *He was Made*, from Hebrews 7:20. Well over 500 people heard the gospel preached boldly, clearly and passionately.

It is fair to say that some of those involved in organising the venues in the various locations did so with initial uncertainty, unsure if many would come to the services. Graciously, Don assured all concerned that numbers were of no importance, only the opportunity to set forth the glorious riches of sovereign grace. God honoured the faith of His people and it already seems clear that not only were the services greatly blessed, but many of those who attended gained new friends and a host of new contacts throughout the UK and beyond.

We were pleased that Dr George Ella and Pastor Fortner had the opportunity to meet person to person. Despite standing side by side in the pages of New Focus for many years, this was the first time they had actually been in the same place at the same time. The two men have tried to meet on several occasions but always some unforeseen event overtook them. This time the Lord opened the door and Dr Ella flew in from Germany to meet the Fortners at Egglesburn.

We thank all those who organised meetings, showered hospitality, provided transport and assisted in a hundred different ways to make the preaching tour a great success. As well as the services Don and Shelby saw a great deal of scenery — though admittedly often at high speed and behind glass — and also managed to call in at several local beauty spots and places of interest throughout England, courtesy of their hosts. Visits were possible to John Bunyan’s museum in Bedford, Bunhill Cemetery in London, where John Gill and many other faithful preachers are buried, and even a trip or two to some Roman ruins and historical sites. This filled to overflowing a very hectic but rewarding two weeks, for which we thank God. The trip also provided an interesting first for Don and Shelby. The journey from Honiton to London was their first ever experience of travelling by train.

Photo captions: top-left to bottom-right.

1. Pastor Fortner at Egglesburn Baptist Chapel.
2. The congregation at Egglesburn Baptist Chapel.
3. Peter Meney, Don Fortner & George Ella.
4. Syd & Joan Buggins, Shelby & Don Fortner, Jim & Eileen Gough (Wolverhampton)
5. Ian & Rachel Potts, Shelby & Don Fortner
6. Stewart & Harriet Boyd, Don Fortner, George Davies, Northern Ireland.
The search for an historical Carey

Ever since 1966 when my Professor of Missions at Uppsala, Bengt Sundkler¹, presented his students with facsimiles of Carey’s *An Enquiry into the Obligation of Christians to use Means for the Conversion of the Heathen* and told us vivid tales of Carey’s forty years in India, this great missionary has been one of my fondest mentors. Prof. Sundkler said he had learnt from Carey to drop all fastidious controversy and put the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ before formal denominationalism. Following Carey’s good Christian example, Sundkler became a missionary to Africa and was given the post at Uppsala after his retirement. However, though a Sundkler, a Culross, a Myers, a Pearce Carey, a Jones, a Bullen, a Walker, a George and a Webber have written on Carey, such as myself feel that the full true life of this godly man has still to be portrayed. Indeed, as each author describes Carey from his particular view-point only, I often think that it would take a well-researched joint-work by many authors both male and female to do full justice to Carey’s memory. Even then, the danger would be that such authors would compromise on essential features of Carey’s life so as to avoid controversy. Carey himself protested that while his work was not yet done and it was far too soon to evaluate the overall impact of his mission, churches, denominations, missionary societies, political parties and philanthropic societies were already inventing ‘lives’ of him which were pure fiction. Sadly, most modern evaluations have been built on these ‘lives’.

¹ Bengt Sundkler
Carey’s home background

William Carey was born in the village of Paulerspury, Northamptonshire on 17 August, 1761, the first of Edmund and Elizabeth Carey’s five children. Edmund was a weaver who also kept a small school and acted as parish clerk. William learned to read, write, study the Scriptures and enjoy Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s Progress at an early age. He was brought up as an Anglican and was to find Christ in that church under the preaching of Thomas Scott, friend of Cowper and Newton. William’s Uncle Peter, a much travelled man who had retired from the army to devote himself to gardening, engendered a great interest in foreign countries and horticulture in his nephew through his adventurous tales. As a child, William was allergic to strong sunshine which made his parents feel that he could never visit those sunny countries made so enticing by his uncle. He was therefore apprenticed to a shoemaker at the age of 14, a trade which occupied him for the next 28 years.

At a time when Carey confessed that neither Heaven nor hell interested him, John Warr, a fellow-apprentice and Dissenter, lent him Christian books which prepared him for Scott’s preaching. Thus Carey grew to respect both the Church of England and Dissent. This caused him some difficulty when faced with the narrow-mindedness of many of his friends and supporters in later years. However, in the days and environment of his youth, the ‘dipped and sprinkled’ to use Cowper’s language, ‘lived in peace’. This was because John Bunyan had been active in Northamptonshire, Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire and the Dissenting Meeting Houses there met according to the rules ‘Water-baptism no bar to communion’ and thus practiced ‘open communion’ with their brethren. However, in 1764 six churches joined to form the Particular Baptist Association and by 1779 when Carey began to fellowship with those of John Bunyan’s persuasion in Hackleton and Olney, the immersion issue had become prominent and several churches chose to become members of the Association and practice immersion, though they remained divided rather than open on the communion issue. However, John Sutcliffe (1752-1840), one of the first immersionist pastors at Olney, still fellowshipped with Anglican Evangelicals. This was mainly because a long succession of sound ministers including Moses Brown, John Newton, Thomas Scott, C. Stephenson and Henry Gauntlett ensured that Olney had an Evangelical pastor for the major part of the 18th century. It was a common Olney sight to see Sutcliffe taking an evening stroll in arm with the Olney vicar and his curate. Olney church records tell of his preaching the Gospel in the plot of land between John Newton’s Vicarage and William Cowper’s Orchard Side, assisted of course by Newton. Anglican Cowper writes of the great spiritual times he had with the new Baptist denomination of which he says, “It was a comfortable sight to see thirteen gospel ministers together. Most of them either preach’d or pray’d and all that did so approved themselves sound in the Word and doctrine, whence a good presumption arises in favour of the rest. I should be glad if the partition wall between Christians of different denominations would every where fall down flat as it has done at Olney.” Needless to say, all these ministers were invited to dine with Newton at the Vicarage.

Life at Olney and district

Carey wrote later in his Memoir that it was at this time that he was enabled “to depend on a crucified Saviour for pardon and salvation; and to seek a system of doctrine in the Word of God.” After conversion, Carey was gradually convinced of the need for believer’s baptism by immersion and was subsequently baptised by John Ryland Jr. (1743-1825) in the River Nene on 5 October, 1783. His wife of two years, Dorothy (Dolly) Packet, an Anglican believer, did not join him in this act. Now, through the persuasion of John Sutcliffe (1752-1840), Carey became a member
of the Particular Baptist Church at Olney, established by John Bunyan in 1672. He immediately applied to be set apart as a preacher but the church did not feel he had the ability and turned him down after a trial sermon in the summer of 1785. By this time Carey was preaching outside of the denomination and had recently accepted a call to Moulton Baptist church on a salary of £12 per year without the blessing and official sanction of his own pastor and church. His wages were inadequate to support Carey and his growing family so the trustees of the Particular Baptist Fund kindly allowed Carey a grant of £5 a year. Nevertheless, Carey was still compelled to work in his trade and serve as a schoolmaster to top up his earnings. In order to teach his pupils geography and foreign mission work, he made a globe for them out of scraps of leather. Carey’s Moulton work was crowned with a number of conversions so a year after his initial disappointment, Carey was accepted with ‘unanimous satisfaction’ for the ministry by the Olney congregation, who, nevertheless placed him on a further year’s probation. Then, on 1 August, 1787, Carey was at last ordained “to preach wherever God in his providence might call him”.

The Careys’ first child, Anne, died in her second year but their remaining children, Felix, William and Peter developed as healthy, sturdy boys. In October, 1787, Dolly underwent baptism by immersion, performed by her husband. Carey’s interests, however, were far wider than Moulton and he began to collect information about the spiritual state of the whole world, writing his comments on a large home-made map he had hung up in his workshop. World geography became his passion, fuelled by a copy of Cook’s Voyages and works on the growth of the British Empire. Reports from the Indian mission formed by Phillip Jacob Spener (1635-1705) and August Hermann Franke (1663-1727) in Denmark and Germany thrilled Carey as did tales of Count Hermann Franke (1663-1727) in Denmark and Germany thrilled Carey as did tales of Count Zinzendorf (1700-1760) and Moravian missions to North America, the Caribbean, Greenland and Abyssinia. Carey followed the stories of John Elliot’s and David Brainerd’s mission to Native Americans. He made himself familiar with the appeals of Independent Philip Doddridge in the seventeen-forties for the evangelisation of the world and the calls for prayer concerning such a worldwide ministry amongst the Presbyterians of America and Scotland. He studied carefully the Anglican missions to the New World. He was in agony at the thought that the Baptists were lagging behind. Gradually, Carey was putting together statistics for his famous Enquiry. Realising that a missionary, especially one who was prepared to give his flock the Bible in their own language, must be fluent in the Biblical languages, Carey diligently studied Greek and Hebrew, assisted by Sutcliffe. Carey then added Dutch and French to the classical languages. One day, a Christian merchant named Gotch who provided the army with Carey-made boots asked his business partner how much he was now making a week. Nine to ten shillings was the reply. Gotch then told Carey to stop making boots and he would provide him with ten shillings a week to allow him more time for language study. Another friend, on hearing that Carey was withholding publication of his Enquiry because of funds, gave him £10 towards costs. Finding that 28 year-old Carey could still hardly keep his family on under £20 a year, the Moulton church in 1789 encouraged him to accept a call to Harvey Lane, Leicester, a larger church. The salary turned out to be only slightly more than at Moulton so Carey had to return to boot-making. He soon heard that his successor at Moulton had demanded and was receiving a higher salary.

Ripening for the mission field
All was not well at Harvey Lane. The church had gone through three pastors in as many years and such were the fierce controversies that many left when Carey was appointed, though he had been assured that total harmony prevailed concerning his call. An Antinomian spirit in the church led to gross immoralities being condoned by the prominent members. Then, the Careys’ daughter Lucy died before reaching her second birthday. On the brighter side, Carey made friends with a group of Christian scientists and philanthropist in the city who helped greatly in Carey’s wider education, especially by giving him the use of their libraries. The immorality at Harvey Lane increased, so Carey disbanded his church and drew up a new membership list. Many old members repented and joined the new church which now grew by leaps and bounds. Only then did Carey feel himself ready for his official inauguration which was conducted by Ryland, Samuel Pearce (1766-1799), Andrew Fuller (1754-1815), and Sutcliffe. Pearce had a strong desire to go to India as a missionary and shared his plans with Carey. During the next Association meeting at Clipstone, Carey, supported by Pearce, put forward his proposals for a foreign mission society. Sadly, his proposals were rejected.

Carey published his Enquiry in 1792 which moved many to think again concerning world evangelism. When 24 Association churches gathered at Friar Lane Nottingham in May, 1792, Carey was the chosen preacher. His sermon
moved, blessed and thrilled all as Carey urged his hearers to expect great things and attempt great things of God. Nevertheless, the majority of ministers hesitated to support Carey’s plea to train and send out missionaries to the foreign field. Carey was in agony and in the final minutes of the meeting begged Fuller to make a proposal to save the cause. Fuller immediately moved “that a plan be prepared against the next ministers’ meeting at Kettering, for forming a Baptist Society for propagating the gospel among the heathen.” The day was far spent and the delegates were eager to get home, so the motion was quickly passed and Carey began to breathe normally again.

The formation of the Mission Society
The Kettering meeting on 2 October was something of an anti-climax. Only twelve ministers, a student and a deacon gathered at Mrs Wallis’ home, fondly called The Gospel Inn to discuss the society. Only one minister, Pearce, attended from outside the local association. Most of those present were more against the project than for it, chiefly because they felt the richer churches, who were not present, should take the initiative. Then Carey stirred the ‘nobodies from nowhere’, as Pearce Carey calls them, into more Christian thinking by relating current stories of the Moravian missionaries and their success amongst Native Americans and Africans. Carey emphasised that the Moravian harvesters, some of whom were British, were poor men who had learnt that they could do great things through the riches of God’s mercy. Finally, a resolution was moved, signed by all present to form the Particular Baptist Society for the Propagation of the Gospel amongst the Heathen with Carey, Sutcliff, Ryland, Fuller and Reynolds Hogg (Thrapsten) as executives. Thus the Baptist mission to foreign heathens did not start as a church or denominational movement but as a para-church organisation with a limited executive, and once Carey began founding local churches, the absentee executive insisted on controlling them. Later Spurgeon would protest that the Baptist Mission Society allowed anyone to join it, provided they paid a membership fee of 10s 6d. But still this was a start and Carey was able to use his own discernment and prevent too much society influence, though he had to drop his open communion plans through Fuller’s dogmatism.

As yet, however, the society had no idea of whom they would send out or where they should go. They made a collection but few had any money with them so promises, instead of cash, were put into a snuff-box passed round. These amounted to £13. 2s. 6d. However, once the society was formed, more substantial gifts came in from Christians around the country from all denominations. The people of Yorkshire were especially generous and the poor blind curate of Bradford willingly parted with a guinea on hearing that the gospel was to be spread abroad. His vicar followed likewise. Many Baptist ministers complained, arguing that the home churches were destitute and ought to be supported with such monies.

The call to India
Meanwhile, a letter arrived from a missionary to Bengal named John Thomas who was on a fund-raising tour and had intended to visit the Kettering meeting but had forgotten the time. He suggested that he and the new society should join hands and funds and they could provide him with a companion missionary. Fuller was commissioned to go to London and check up on Thomas. The letter-writer was a man of great abilities who had studied medicine, had been something of a rake, was permanently in debt and could not be trusted with anyone’s money, not even his own. To escape poverty, he had signed on as a ship’s surgeon on an India-bound vessel, leaving his wife and family to look after themselves. He was converted in India and felt a great compassion...
for the multitudes of Indians. He was probably the first Englishman to take the gospel to the Bengalis and master their language. He could live like an Indian amongst the Indians and translated several gospels into Bengali. Amongst his many converts were English noblemen and high cast Brahmins. Thomas, in spite of his new life in Christ, always lived far beyond his financial means. In London, Fuller approached Thomas most naively. He was so thrilled to meet a real live missionary, as if this gave Thomas a superhuman status. Without a word about his many failings, Fuller recommended Thomas as God’s opening door for the society and urged them to back him. Thomas, a brilliant speaker, visited the society on 9 January, 1793, saw and conquered, and left the society dazzled and amazed. The matter of his great debts was concealed from those who were asked to support him. On being told that a missionary could easily provide for himself on the mission field, Carey volunteered to be the companion Thomas needed. He had already stated in his Enquiry, that if missionaries were provided with “clothing, a few knives, powder and shot, fishing tackle and the articles of husbandry” necessary “to cultivate a little spot of ground just for their support”, they could maintain themselves. He merely expected from the society that they should give men sent out this initial support. Carey had lived simply at home and did not wish to live any finer abroad.

Though Sutcliffe and Ryland were absent, the other executives entered formally into partnership with Thomas. Fuller, rather apprehensively, wrote to the executives not present to tell them, “It is a great undertaking, but surely it is right.”

On returning to Leicester, Carey informed Dolly of his decision and intention to depart for India immediately. She refused point blank to allow Carey to go. He was in too poor health and she was eight months’ pregnant. Carey’s church also rebelled. Carey’s father said his son had ‘the folly of one mad’. All came round to accepting Carey’s call. Dolly eventually promised to follow her husband in three or four years when their unborn child would be older and strong enough for the exhausting journey. So Carey would not be entirely estranged from his family, Dolly let eight-year-old Felix accompany him.

The valedictory fiasco
Thomas and Carey planned to sail in March 1793 but after their valedictory meetings and tearful departures from their loved ones, they met with farce-like obstacles. A government clamp-down on private adventurers going to India made the missionary candidates fear they would be refused permission to sail. Influential Baptists advised Carey to pin no hope on gaining a permit. Carey then turned to ‘good old father Newton’ with his political associates. Could he risk travelling illegally to India? Newton sat on the fence and
like Gamaliel in Paul’s case, said, “Conclude that your Lord has nothing there for you to accomplish. If he have, no power on earth can prevent you.” This ambiguous statement moved Carey to risk travelling illegally. The party thus boarded a ship in London and sailed to Portsmouth where a protection convoy was to join them. Then Carey discovered that Thomas was on the run from his creditors who were taking legal steps to stop the party leaving the country. Thomas was escorted to London to sort matters out and Carey had to face extra expenses caused by the delay. Meanwhile, he preached in the Baptist and Independent churches along the coastline. On 6 May, Carey heard that Dolly had delivered a healthy child and wrote that he could not be with her as his sense of duty overwhelmed all other considerations. He could not help telling her that Mrs Thomas, though delicate, was making the journey, feeling it was only right to accompany her husband.

Thomas returned on 23 May in time to see the ship sail off with Carey, Felix and Mrs Thomas standing forlorn on the jetty. The captain had been ordered to leave the missionaries behind because of Thomas’ debts. Carey now returned home to Dolly and promised he would never leave her again. Now the positive side of Thomas’ character rose to the surface. Within a week, he had raised money, reconciled himself with his creditors, discovered a ship which would carry them legally to India and organised the transport of their baggage. On hearing that Carey had given up his missionary plans, Thomas dashed to Carey’s home and pleaded with his whole family so successfully that Dolly relented and agreed to accompany Carey to India with her children and her sister. Now Fuller drew back. The society could not pay for the large party and Thomas’ ‘debts and embranglements’ frightened him. Then Yorkshire and London friends came to the rescue and Thomas quickly found new sponsors and supporters. A further delay of two weeks, the belated Danish ship glided into the dock. On 15 June she set sail for India with the missionaries and their families safely on board. The time of anxiety and chaos was to end for a while.

1 Author of Missionens Värld, 1963 etc..
2 A normal pastor’s wage at the time was £60-100 per annum. Samuel Pearce, for instance, received £100 p. a. from his church.
3 He had begun learning Latin years earlier.

Five Clear Points

1. All men by nature are sinners in the sight of God. They inherited their sinful nature from the first man Adam. They are dead in trespasses and sin. In this condition they cannot please God. There is nothing in them that would cause them to approach God, seek God or obey God. If it were not for the love and mercy of God they would be forever and eternally lost.

   (Romans 5:12; 1 Corinthians 2:9-14; Romans 3:10-18; Romans 8:5-8; Ephesians 2:1-10; Psalms 10:1-11; Psalms 14:1-4; Jeremiah 13:23; Jeremiah 17:9)

2. Before the world began God chose, or elected, from amongst the race of men, a great and innumerable multitude ‘out of every kindred, tongue, people, and nation’ to live with Him in Heaven. This choice or election was not based on their works, their freewill, or efforts but wholly upon the conditions of the Everlasting Covenant which was made with the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit before the foundation of the world. The Covenant embraced the work of the Son of God, who at an appointed time was made flesh, died for the sins of all that were given to Him by the Father. These are referred to in scripture as Elect, Beloved, Sheep, Children of Promise, Saints, Sons, Brethren, and the Sanctified.

   (Matthew 1:21; John 6:37-47; Ephesians 1:1-11; Romans 8:28-39; 2 Timothy 1:9; Hebrews 2:10-15; Revelations 5:9-10; Revelations 7:9-10; John 10:26-30)

3. The Eternal Son of God became flesh and entered the world to make atonement for sin by His blood. The blood of the Lord Jesus Christ was shed for the elect only; those chosen by the Father and given to the Son. Every one of these for whom Christ Jesus died will receive eternal life and shall live with Him in the Heaven for eternity when this life is ended.

   (Matthew 1:21; Hebrews 2:13-18; 1 Peter 1:18-21; 1 Peter 3:18; Hebrews 10:1-18; Romans 8:32-35)

4. All those who were elected by the Father and redeemed by the Son shall be drawn to God by the Holy Spirit. Scripture refers to this work as quickening; being born again; circumcision of the heart; a translation; hearing the voice of the Son of God; a resurrection; baptism of the Holy Spirit; and regeneration. Nothing shall hinder God from carrying out His eternal purpose to save all of the objects of His love.

   (Psalms 110:3; Psalms 115:1-3; Daniel 4:34-35; John 6:37; John 17:2; John 5:24-26; John 10:27-28; John 5:21; Psalms 104:29-31; Ephesians 2:1-10; Colossians 1:12-15; Colossians 2:9-15; Romans 2:23-29; 1 Corinthians 12:12-14; John 3:3-8; Titus 3:4-7; 1 Peter 1:23)

5. None of those chosen by the Father, redeemed by the Son, and born of the Holy Spirit, shall ever be eternally lost. To be so would be a failure of God’s power and purpose. They are redeemed by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ and preserved by the power of the Holy Ghost and secure in the purpose of God the Father.

   (John 10:27-30; Romans 8:28-39; 1 Peter 1:1-5; Psalms 89:29-37)
New Covenant Theology
A Critical Evaluation

Part 3: A New Approach to the Offices of Christ

A rejection of Christ’s offices within the covenant of grace
John Reisinger’s failure to understand Galatians 3 is chiefly because of his dualistic approach to the Old Testament, again reminding us of Marcion’s teaching that everything in the OT was imperfect, but especially the laws of the Creator. Believing that Christ is a mere NT figure, he ignores the covenantal offices of our Saviour in the Old Testament and especially His Mediatorship (Galatians 3:20). Incidentally, whilst on the subject of Christ’s Mediatorship and on the salvation of the Old Testament saints in Galatians 3, Paul explain that there is nothing wrong with the law that curses man since its inauguration but there is very much wrong with mankind who breaks it, thus showing the need for a Mediator and faith in Christ. Salvation was never the result of any law. Reisinger’s argument is that there is very much wrong with the Mosaic law and it needs up-dating that salvation might come of it. The orthodox Reformed position has always been that Christ redeems every one of the elect in all ages from the curse of the same law by grace and through faith. Galatians 3:10 shows this applies to New Testament Galatians as well as Old Testament Jews. Here, there is no talk of a rescinded, altered and extended new law. Thus, in Christ, there is no difference between Abraham, the father of the faithful and his faithful seed whether in the Old or New Testaments. Christ is the Mediator, Saviour and Messiah of all the Old Testament saints as well as the New Testament saints. There is only one Name under Heaven in which salvation is to be found and that is in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Marcion’s denials of these truths caused him to be declared a heretic. Likewise, John Reisinger isolates Christ as Mediator and Messiah of the better covenant, i.e. the covenant of grace, from the Old Testament and rejects the law which curses as having any New Testament validity, because of its imperfections. However, Marcion saw Christ’s Lordship as His perfect Godship in the New Testament coming to deliver man from the Old Testament Creator, whereas Reisinger merely emphasises the human Lordship of Christ in the New Testament in His work as Saviour and Redeemer. Reisinger also stresses that Christ could only exercise His offices within a post-incarnation, time-bound New Covenant dispensation. There is thus, for him, neither grace nor redemption to be found in the Old Testament as Christ was not reconciling the elect world to Himself as Mediator and Messiah there. Without Christ’s Mediatorship, His Lordship cannot be revealed to His Bride and there is no work of saving grace and redemptive justification. Because Reisinger rejects the Reformed doctrine of Christ’s work in and from eternity which pays note to Christ’s Divinity, he is led to believe that all Christ’s exercises of His saving offices refer to His humanity only and thus take effect within His earthly life. Marcion’s unbalanced view of Christ’s Divinity overshadows all Christ’s humanity. Reisinger’s unbalanced view of Christ’s humanity overshadows all Christ’s Divinity. Thus the two heresies, Marcionism and NCT do not fully overlap but one must ask who is the greater heretic, Marcion or Reisinger?

Reisinger’s Dispensationalism and Socinianism
Reisinger claims that he is not a Dispensationist but his views concerning the Jews, the Old Testament, the Body of Christ and the Church are strictly Dispensational. It is this dispensational dualism which denies the work of Christ as Mediator, Saviour and Lord in the Old Testament and which prevents him from seeing that Christ is the all-time Lord over the elect, whether Isaac, Jacob, or Peter and Paul. Reisinger shows his Socinian colours by postulating a time when Christ was not Lord but ‘earned the right’ (Reisinger’s own words) as a man to that title, which he sees as a mere human title. Reisinger claims that here he is following John Murray’s interpretation of Romans 1:4, “And declared to...
be the Son of God with power” found in his commentary on the Epistle to the Romans. Yet in context John Murray is talking about Christ as the Son of God, which is a divine and not human title. Reisinger, is speaking of Christ as ‘the Son of Mary’ and interprets the passage thus:

Paul is saying that the resurrection declares that Christ has been given a power of Lordship as a reward for His successful atoning work. This is a redemptive Lordship that belongs to the Son of Mary as the successful Redeemer, and not an innate Lordship that belongs to the Son of God as a member of the Trinity. The man Christ Jesus is declared to be “the Son of God with power” because He is glorified and enthroned humanity. A true man, the God-Man has been given the right to exercise both the role of Saviour and Judge over all men. This man earned that right.3

Thus we have Christ becoming a modified Son of God, with human offices such as Lord, Saviour and Judge after His resurrection. It was not that Christ’s power was declared and demonstrated by His saving work, it was that Christ was given the power after His work was done. We might thus ask, by what power did Christ overcome sin and save His elect if He had no power as either Son of Mary or Son of God to do this until after it was done? Nevertheless, for Reisinger, all Christ’s offices and titles be they as Judge or Bridegroom or whatever, are a mere matter of Christ’s manhood and what He gained as man in post-resurrection, New Testament times.

The book of Isaiah shows clearly that Christ has His Bride amongst the Old Testament saints and called her out then. Indeed, the Shepherdshep and Lordship of Christ is everywhere testified within the Old Testament’s pages. The numerous booklets I have read from Reisinger’s and Zaspel’s pens on their so-called ‘New Covenant’ gospel appear to ignore Christ’s Mediatorship altogether. However, where Christ is Mediator, He is also Lord, Saviour, Messiah, Reconciler, Redeemer, Bridegroom and Head of His Church. These are Christ’s offices from eternity because the elect were placed in Him in eternity. Furthermore, in all His redemptive tasks on earth, Christ emphasised that He was God in Christ reconciling the world to Himself because He and His Father were One and those who saw Him, saw the Father. This does not sound like a mere human Saviour.

By no other means, my dear brother, will you grow, but by being emptied from vessel to vessel; by ups and downs; by the horrible pit and the joyful mount; by clouds of darkness and rays of light; by the deepest sorrows and sweetest drops; by flames of jealousy and soul-dissolving love; by sad desertions and transient visits; by bitter sighs and sweet supports; by hard thoughts of the best of friends, and self-abhorrence for them; by blasphemous temptations and wonderful preservations; by slavish fears and melting joys; by desponding thoughts and budding hopes; by quitting the field, and renewing the fight; by fainting away and pursuing the end; by sinking in hell and soaring aloft; by starving, for want of eating one’s fill; by dying for love and kissing to death; by boldness in prayer and shame to look up; by urging our claim and doubting the same; by calling Him ours and confessing it is wrong.

William Huntington
Readers of Zaspel’s *The Theology of Fulfilment* (1993) might object to the above because the author does indeed stress the role of Christ in the Old Testament. This is, however, in a future-orientated context only with Christ merely presented as an ‘object lesson’ (his word) to be back-projected from post-incarnation times. This was the beginning of New Covenant errors. By the following year when Zaspel’s booklet on the law was published, we received a more developed ‘New Look’ at the Old Testament which was more in line with what is now a fairly stable NCT position. This is made clear in Zaspel’s chapter, ‘The Messianic Mission’ in his joint work with Tom Wells in *New Covenant Theology*. Gone is the OT picture of the Messiah as the ideal King and Saviour who brings the eternal covenant of grace to fruition. All we have is a picture of the incarnate Christ as a more proficient lawmaker than Moses and He is David’s greater son only because of the better ‘ethical function’ of Christ’s new law. Indeed Christ is pictured as being the fuller of Mosaic redemptive history (sic) because of His new law work and not because of His rule of grace. This connection is most forced as David was famous for being a prophet, priest and king but not a lawgiver. However, Reisinger sees the roles of prophet, priest and king as being mere types pointing to the incarnate human lordship of Christ. This lordship is the result of Christ’s new, ‘eschatological transcendent’ law work.

New Covenant theorists have a different view of the *fullness* of time to former orthodox Reformed theology because they teach that the *fulfilment* is not the central point of time but the *cullmination* of it, ushering in a new covenant end-time dispensation with a new law. The old law and old covenants disappeared when the old conception of time reached what they call the *goal* of time. It is thus clear to them that the scope of Christ’s mediatory work, must be limited to New Testament times only. This, however, fully ignores the fact that the New Covenant, which this author equates with the covenants of grace, is revealed throughout the Old Testament period of redemption from Genesis to the later prophets. The NCT adherents think merely in terms of a new time, a new law, a new ‘new covenant’ (different to the ‘old’ new covenant) and a new dispensation. This is because they cannot accept the finality of salvation and justification as eternal acts of God centred in eternity. The Scriptures do not say that Christ’s incarnation came at the culmination of time but He came in the fullness of time, Galatians 4:4. The culmination of time will be at Christ’s Second Coming and the Day of Judgement. In fulfilling the law, Christ also fulfilled the purpose of time from eternity. His redeeming work was activated from eternity thus giving time its fulfilment. From thence, His atoning and reconciling mediatory mercies permeate all time, not only filling time but fulfilling the purpose of time as a handmaid of eternity. From the point of view of both eternity and the fullness of time, there is no old and new. This is why the New Covenant is called the Eternal Covenant. It is called that because it is exercised for eternity, from eternity. Thus at any point of time since the Fall or in any eternal outworking of God’s purpose, Christ is Messiah, Mediator and Reconciler. Where the Bridegroom, who is from everlasting, is amongst His people, there is the Bride. This is the glorious testimony of Ephesians, which describes Christ’s electing work in the fullness of time before the foundations of the world to that Day when He will present His body, the Church as “the fullness of him that filleth all in all.” This is a dispensation which is quite lost to the New Covenant teaching and embraces the elect of the Old Testament just the same as the elect of today.

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1 After Faustus Sozzini (1539-1604), and his kinsman Lelio Sozzini (1525-62), Anti-Trinitarians. The Italian, French Swiss, Polish and Hungarian Reformation suffered greatly from their views which seem to be experiencing a comeback in formerly Reformed circles.
2 See Reisinger’s *Christ the Lord of the Church*, p. 1-2 and *Christ: Lord and Lawgiver Over the Church*, p. 7.
3 Reisinger’s emphasis throughout. Ibid, p. 2. Reisinger argues that the AV is an ‘interpretation’ and not ‘translation and he prefers the NIV, but nevertheless, he interprets the verse finally as per the AV.
5 *The Theology of Fulfilment*, p. 1.
6 Ephesians 1, whole chapter.
1. Jehovah, in council resolved to fulfill
The scheme from eternity, laid in His will.
A scheme too profound for a seraph to pry,
And all for the lifting of Jesus on high.

2 'Twas not from the creature salvation took place,
The whole was of God, to the praise of His grace;
And all to His glory shall tend by and by
To accomplish the lifting of Jesus on high.

3 His wisdom contrived the adorable plan,
Grace, mercy, and peace, and good-will towards man;
The Great Three-in-One did the same ratify,
And all for the lifting of Jesus on high.

4 Here all the perfections of Deity shine,
Love, wisdom, and power, and goodness divine:
His justice and grace received honour thereby;
'Twas all for the lifting of Jesus on high.

5 When first the great project to angels was known,
They hailed Him in songs as the Lamb on His throne:
The concave of heaven resounds with their cry,
God-man, Mediator, they lift Him on high.

6 Creation proclaims the great work of thy hand,
All beings and things in the order they stand;
Productions of chance, they are led to deny,
'Twas made for the lifting of Jesus on high.

7 All things for His sake did Jehovah prepare,
For of Him, and to Him, and through Him, they are;
All systems and worlds that revolve in the sky,
Were made for the lifting of Jesus on high.

8 Set up as the head of His mystical frame,
He honoured the records of fate with His name;
And nothing was wanting, which God could supply,
To aid the uplifting of Jesus on high.

9 When man was created, what wisdom we see,
The whole he possessed was the image of Thee;
But, O! in his fall, we are led to espy,
'Twas all for the lifting of Jesus on high.

10 When Adam to eat of the fruit was inclined,
It answered the end which Jehovah designed;
No purpose or wisdom was altered thereby,
'Twas all for the lifting of Jesus on high.

11 Here Satan was nonplussed in what he had done,
The fall wrought the channel where mercy should run;
In streams of salvation, which never run dry,
And all for the lifting of Jesus on high.

12 From hence it appears, He made nothing in vain,
For Adam, thus formed, was a link in the chain;
In him 'twas decreed, that his members should die,
And all for the lifting of Jesus on high.

13 The man that betrayed Him, prediction foretold,
The pieces of silver for which He was sold:
To prove His salvation, the world we defy,
He fell for the lifting of Jesus on high.

14 The law that was given on Sinai of old,
Was still the great mercy and love to unfold,
Which did in the womb of eternity lie,
And all for the lifting of Jesus on high.

15 In fulness of time, He came under the law,
Its jots and its tittles, He answered we know;
And, stretching His arms, did on Calvary die,
To accomplish His lifting to glory on high.

16 He slept in the tomb, till the morning arose,
That signed His release, and confounded His foes;
Then, bursting its bars, He ascended the sky,
To reign in His glory, Eternal, on high.

John Kent
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**CO. DURHAM (TEESDALE)**
BARNARD CASTLE. Egglestuburn Baptist Church, Eggleston, off B6282. Sun. 10.30am. Fri. 7.30pm. Preacher: Peter L. Meney, Tel: 01833 650797. Email: pastor@egglestuburn.org.uk Website: www.egglestuburn.org.uk Visitors welcome.

**CUMBRIA (LAKE DISTRICT)**
KENDAL. Bethel Strict Baptist Chapel, Chapel Lane, Kirkland (just off main street at south end of town). Sun. 10.30am. Thu. 7.00pm. Pastor: Kevin M. Price Visitors ring to confirm times. Tel: 01539 821596. Email: bethelsbchapelkendal@hotmail.com

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GUERNSEY. Bethesda Strict Baptist Church, Mont Marche, Forest, Guernsey. All welcome. Sun. 11.00am, 6.00pm. Wed. 7.30pm (please check). Pastor: Graham Miller. Tel: 01481 248016.

**DENBIGHSHIRE**
LLANGOLLEN. Glanrafon Evangelical Church, Princess Street, Llangollen. Sun. 11.00am & 6.00pm. Wed. 7.30pm. Pastor: James Cornford, Tel: 01978 860642. www.glanrafonevangelicalchurch.org.uk

**DORSET**
BOURNEMOUTH. Sovereign Grace Fellowship. 31, Hill View Road, Ensbury Park, Bournemouth. Sun. 10.30am. Thu. lunch and Bible Study 12 noon. Rev. Paul Cartlidge, Tel: 01202 259860

**DORCHESTER**
Grace Baptist Church. Boys Brigade Hall, Sawmill Lane, Weymouth Road, Dorchester. (by Sports Ground nr Tesco’s) Sun. 11.00am. Pastor Frederick Serjeant, Tel: 01300 341670. pastor@gracebaptistchurch.org.uk

**WEYMOUTH**
Independent Evangelical Church, W.I. Hall, Gallwey Road, Wyke Regis, Weymouth. Sun. 11.00am, 6.30pm. Sec. John Mann, Tel: 01305 774523

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SLEAFORD. Ebenezer Reformed Baptist Church, (Plant) Scout Hall, Reform Place. Sun. 10.30am. Others contact: Pastor Peter Cotton, Tel: 01529 460108. Email or visit: peter@reformed-baptist.co.uk, www.reformed-baptist.co.uk

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