THAT THE PURPOSE OF GOD ACCORDING TO ELECTION MIGHT STAND
When I was young a common practice at children’s Bible services was to employ object lessons. We youngsters were invited to bring an object; a piece of bread, a ball of white wool, a nail. The objects had to be linked to a Bible verse such as John 6:35 And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: or Isaiah 1:18 Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool, or John 20:25 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. It helped us to learn Scripture verses and opened up a practical and tangible connection with the Bible stories we heard week by week.

One night a girl came without her object. As others stepped forward to show their items and give their verses we wondered what would happen when it came to her. We did not have to wait long. The girl rose at her turn and held up her empty hand. Somebody laughed, but she said, straight-faced, “This reminds me of Samson killing the lion in Judges 14:6 and he had nothing in his hand.”

We often sing Toplady’s hymn Rock of Ages and the line, ‘Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling.’ We sing it, but I fear we fail to understand just how empty our hand must be to receive first the blessings of grace in salvation and also, the ongoing mercies of our union with Christ. How often do we, the Lord’s people, lament our losses when one by one the things most precious to us are taken from our hand? Yet, do we not find that our compensations are sweeter when the Lord draws near to us in our pain?

Job was made to know empty-handedness. He learned what it was both to have and then to have not. Our natural inclination is to assume that joy is greater in the getting of things, but spiritually speaking, true joy is experienced in the loss of things. Only as the Lord is more clearly heard and seen and felt in our soul do we learn Christ. How shall we hear the still small voice when the world is shouting in our ear, or glimpse, or sense the Spirit move in a heart filled with the cares of this world?

The Lord’s people are most blessed when they hold the things of this world in a gentle grip. One by one every treasure of this life must be relinquished and it is best to let them go easily.

Our Saviour is our pattern. Shall we seek more than Him whose friends forsook Him and fled, whose freedom was forfeit, whose body was wracked with pain unto death? “Therefore”, says Paul, “I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong”.

“For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich” (2 Corinthians 12:10; and 8:9).

He is our object lesson.
So great is the loving concern of God for His people, and so great is God’s complete and utter disdain for the wicked, that He takes more notice in His word of Jacob’s flocks than all the splendour of Greece. He tells us that Mary wrought a good work on His Son, but refuses to call attention to the mighty works of worldly men. He delights Himself in calling our attention to the fact that Mary sat at Jesus’ feet to hear His word and learn of Him, but derides all the impressive learning of the Jewish rabbis who sat at the feet of Gamaliel. He notes the speech impediment of Moses, but passes by all the orations of the philosophers. He calls our attention to two mites given by the poor widow, but says nothing praiseworthy of the sacrifices of the wealthy. He goes to great length telling us the ages of Seth’s descendants, but seems to hurry by the lineage of Cain as if the very mention of his children left a bad taste in His mouth. He takes delight in noticing the strange diet of John the Baptist, but breathes not a word concerning the royal diet of Herod. He counts the hairs on the heads of His saints, but refuses to calculate the riches of Rome. He observes the small kindness of Dorcas in making coats for the poor widows, but says nothing in praise of the exploits of the Caesars. The name of Lazarus is had in everlasting remembrance, but the unbelieving, rich man who fared sumptuously every day—who is he? He even calls our attention to the colour of Lydia’s fabric—a seemingly insignificant detail—but He refuses to describe the royal attire of Pontius Pilate! Oh, children of God, cast all your care upon Him, for he careth for you more than you can possibly imagine!
In Romans 8:18-23, as the Apostle Paul discusses the great privileges and prospects of God’s elect in Christ, he seems simply to get carried away with the great tide of grace. The greatness of the things he is writing about seems to have utterly engulfed him. He says, “If children, then heirs; heirs of God; and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ!” What an inheritance! We possess the inheritance, not by our own rights and merits, but by God’s covenant grace and Christ’s all-sufficient merit as our Substitute. It is true, we must in this world suffer for a season with Him and for His sake; but when our earthly woes are over, we shall reign with Him and inherit all things with Him as the children of God.

In consideration of these things, the apostle says, “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time am not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” This glory that shall be revealed in us is not the glory that shall be ours as soon as we die and enter into heaven with Christ. This is the glory that shall be ours in the consummation of our salvation at the resurrection. It is something indescribable even by one who was inspired by God. Paul seems to search for words to speak...
of it. Notice, just in these few verses, he calls it four different things: First, “the glory which shall be revealed in us” (v.18). Second, “the manifestation of the sons of God” (v.19). Third, “the glorious liberty of the sons of God” (v.21). Fourth, “the redemption of our body” (v.23). This is that “blessed hope and glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour” (Titus 2:13) for which we are to constantly look. This is that for which Peter admonishes us to “Gird up the loins of our minds, and be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:13). This heavenly inheritance is an inheritance of indescribable, universal greatness and glory.

No Comparison
The glory to be revealed in us is of such magnitude that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to it. Paul writes, in verse eighteen, “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” The Apostle Paul uses a kind of spiritual arithmetic here. He places these two opposite things in two separate columns. The amount of our sufferings in this world, he acknowledges to be very great. In the other column, he sees the amount of glory that is to be revealed in us, and says, “the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to even be put in the scales with the glory that shall be revealed in us.”

The sufferings of this present time are, for many of God’s saints, great. I know that compared to what Christ suffered for us, compared to what so many others have and do suffer in this world, compared to what we deserve, and compared to the glory awaiting us, our sorrows here are but “light afflictions”. However, I do not suggest that you try telling a man who has just buried his only child that his affliction is light. The misery of man in this world is great upon him. Viewed in themselves, our woes are hard to bear, heavy, and painful beyond description. We all know some people who carry heavy, heavy burdens. Yet, the heaviest of our temporary, earthly burdens and woes are not worthy to be compared to the glory that shall be revealed in us.

We should always try to remember that our sufferings are confined to this present time. The short duration of any agony makes it bearable, if we are confident that the agony will be succeeded by a long time of relief and enjoyment. Jacob’s fourteen years of service to Laban for Rachel seemed to him but a few days because of the love he had for her (Genesis 29:20). A mother’s travail in birth is forgotten as soon as her baby is in her arms. Our Lord Jesus was sustained in His agony of body, heart, and soul by the joyful prospect of having His ransomed ones with Him in heaven (Hebrews 12:2). So, too, our hearts are sustained in trouble when we look beyond present things to eternal things (2 Corinthians 4:17-5:1).

Such will be the joy of the heavenly inheritance that it will efface from our remembrance the few years of sorrow which have preceded it; so efface them, at least, that we shall never think of them with regret, but as a foil to heighten our bliss.

The glory of that heavenly inheritance awaiting us will be so magnanimously great that it will remove from us every painful memory of sorrow in this world. Our sorrows here will only add to the glory of the world to come. I cannot tell you how, but I know that when we have entered into our glory, our happiness and glory in eternity will be greater because of our sorrows here. “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” “Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations. That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:17; 1 Peter 1:6, 7).

“Such will be the joy of the heavenly inheritance,” an old preacher said, “that it will efface from our remembrance the few years of sorrow which have preceded it; so efface them, at least, that we shall never think of them with regret, but as a foil to heighten our bliss.” The sufferings of this present time, therefore, are not worthy to be compared to that glory that shall be revealed in us.

Influence and Effects
So great and generous is the glory to be revealed in us at the resurrection that it influences and affects the whole of God’s creation.

“For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of
The creature, that is to say, the whole creation of God was brought into bondage by the sin and fall of our father Adam. Adam's sin reached beyond the human race. It affected the whole earth. The whole creation was brought into the bondage of corruption, not willingly, but in consequence of Adam's transgression. The ground itself was cursed. Adam's house cat became a roaring lion and his dog a ravenous wolf. This subjection of the creation to the bondage of corruption was by the hand of God; but it was not to be permanent. God "subjected the same in hope". That simply means that when we are delivered from the curse of sin, God's creation shall also be delivered from the bondage of corruption. The redemption of our bodies in the resurrection will be the birthday of a new creation. By sin everything in God's earthly creation has become in some way subservient to evil; but God will not allow that to continue. He will, when He completes our redemption, completely restore His creation to Himself, so that everything shall serve and praise Him. There is a day appointed when there shall be a restitution of all things to God (Acts 3:21; Ephesians 1:9, 10).

The redemption of our bodies in the resurrection will be the birthday of a new creation.

When the Lord God created the heavens and the earth everything, according to its nature and capacity, displayed His glory. To a very great extent they still do (Psalm 19:1-4). This was the natural order of things by God's design. Either consciously or unconsciously, everything furnished its tribute of praise to Him who is over all God blessed forever. The entrance of sin into the world changed everything. Everything God created for the comfort of man has been abused by man. Everything God gave us to use in serving Him and honouring Him, we have sacrificed to Baal (Hosea 2:8). Everything in the world has been sacrificed to some imaginary deity. Every benefit of creation has been employed by us to serve and gratify our lusts. The creation itself has been turned into a god to be worshipped! The earth is called "Mother Earth". Nature is called "Mother Nature". Even time is worshipped as "Father Time". Nature, with fallen man, occupies the place of God.

Though the creatures have no reason or intelligence, yet there is, as it were, such an instinctive tendency in God's creation to oppose man that the whole of creation is at war with fallen man. Were that not the case, there would be no reason for a covenant to be made on our behalf with the beasts of the field, the fowls of the air, the creeping things of the earth, and the very stones of the ground (Hosea 2:18). The Holy Spirit assures us that this bondage of God's creation is only temporary. God, in His infinite wisdom, saw fit to subject the creation to the bondage of corruption for a season. However, it is specifically said to be a subjection "in hope" because there is a time set by God when He will deliver His creation from the bondage of corruption. The redemption of our bodies from the grave will be for us the destruction of our last enemy and the termination of all the effects of sin. It will also be the termination of bondage and corruption, of all the corrupting effects of sin, upon God's creation. It is for this that the whole creation groans and travails.

Notice the threefold description given of our heavenly inheritance. As we look at these descriptions of glory, remember that Paul is talking about the perfecting and completing of our salvation through the death of Christ, which is the greatest possible display of the glory of God. This will be the last of that great series of events that God has been performing from the beginning of time. This is the thing for which all things were made and to which all things are subjected. This glorious inheritance is the goal of election and predestination and the object of providence (Romans 8:28-30; Ephesians 1:3-6). First, it is called, "The glory that shall be revealed in us." This refers to the manifestation of God's glory that shall be revealed in our consummate salvation (Ephesians 1:6, 12, 14; 2:7). Second, the completion of God's work of grace is called, "The manifestation of the sons of God." Here, God's saints are little known and hardly noticed, except when derided by the wicked; but there is a day coming which will be the day of our manifestation (1 John 3:1, 2). Third, our ultimate salvation is described as, "The glorious liberty of the sons of God." This will be our happy jubilee! When it comes, we will be freed from the penalty and dominion of sin. At death, we shall be delivered from the presence...
The sovereignty of God

The sovereignty of God is an expression that once was generally understood. It was a phrase commonly used in religious literature. It was a theme frequently expounded in the pulpit. It was a truth that brought comfort to many hearts and gave virility and stability to Christian character. But, today, to make mention of God’s sovereignty is, in many quarters, to speak in an unknown tongue. Were we to announce from the average pulpit that the subject of our discourse would be the sovereignty of God, it would sound very much as though we had borrowed a phrase from one of the dead languages. Alas! That it should be so. Alas! That the doctrine which is the key to history, the interpreter of providence, the warp and woof of Scripture, and the foundation of Christian theology, should be so sadly neglected and so little understood.

Our Groaning

Such is the magnitude, greatness, grandeur, and glory of our heavenly inheritance that our highest and greatest enjoyments in this world can never satisfy us; but we groan within ourselves, waiting for the redemption of our body. “And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body” (v.23).

First, the apostle says that we who have the firstfruits of the Spirit groan within ourselves. These are the groanings spoken of in verse 26. Firstfruits are delightful, but never satisfying. We groan for the full harvest (Romans 7:24).

Second, Paul speaks of us waiting for our adoption. We were adopted into the family of God by divine decree in eternal election (Ephesians 1:3-6). We were experimentally adopted into the family of God in regeneration when we received the Spirit of adoption (Galatians 4:6, 7). We shall enter into the full enjoyment of our adoption in the resurrection.

Third, the apostle describes our resurrection, our entrance into heavenly inheritance with Christ, as “the redemption of our body”. Christ is made Redemption (1 Corinthians 1:30) unto us in a threefold sense:

We were redeemed from the curse of the law and penalty of sin by the ransom price of Christ’s shed blood when He died as our Substitute (Galatians 3:13).

We were redeemed from the rule and dominion of sin by the power of God’s grace in regeneration (Romans 6:18).

We shall be redeemed from all the consequences of sin in the resurrection. What a glorious hope is set before us? Let us set our hearts upon it (Colossians 3:1-3).

This great, glorious, indescribably generous inheritance shall be the magnanimous consummation of Christ’s reign as our King (1 Corinthians 15:24-28). It is this blessed hope which fills believing hearts with expectant anticipation in this world.

A.W. Pink
False synonyms

Our duty-faith friends tell us that their idea of responsibility is synonymous with their idea of duty. For Curt Daniel for instance, recently interviewed by Sam Waldron, the synonyms of responsibility have remained constant since before the Fall. These are: accountability, obedience, duty, liability, obligation, morality and what he calls ‘oughtness’. These terms according to Daniel depict the natural obligations or responsibilities of man towards God which man has always had. In these matters man as a natural agent has always had the freedom to say ‘yes’ or ‘no’ to God. This is because, Daniel says, no man is neutral in his response to God. If man were neutral in his relationship to God, he would have ceased to be man. Thus, even though he is now fallen and lost, man has kept his awareness of who God is and what his obligations to Him are.1 This alleged never-lost guide in fallen man, making him continually aware of God, is the basis of duty-faith. When the gospel comes, man is thus duty-bound to accept it.

This is Daniel’s position as a preacher of a free offer gospel based on duty-faith, but in taking this stance, he defines such words as ‘responsibility’ and ‘duty’ quite incorrectly and errs in his list of his other supposed synonyms. For instance, he confused ‘morality’ with ‘obedience’ and ‘liability’. They may have in certain cases a relationship to one another but they are not the same thing. Daniel, and Waldron who seems to agree with him, is also severely mistaken about man’s relationship to God and God’s relationship to man as revealed in Scripture. Daniel’s gospel is, in fact, no good news for sinners at all because he does not seem to understand the basic condemnation of man after the Fall nor the hopeless condition he is now in until God undertakes to save him. If one does not understand fallen man’s problem, one can hardly choose a remedy for it. Certainly, the remedy is not to be found in a ‘free offer’ based on ‘duty-faith’.

For example, scripture shows that a sinner is responsible for his sins but he is not dutifully bound to sin. Sin is not his duty but what he has done wrong ought to have been avoided or put right. This, we call his responsibility, which man is unable to remedy or follow. Daniel believes, however, that man has an

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1 Listen to Daniel’s website talk on Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility and what he calls the ‘paradoxes’, ‘dilemmas’ and ‘tensions’ between them.
innate non-fallen awareness which declares to him that he must follow certain duties to attain faith. If one denies this, one is denounced as a Hyper-Calvinist who does not believe in preaching the gospel to the lost. One may well ask: What has Calvin to do with this new definition of 'faith' and what has it to do with our calling as Christians to go into all the world and preach the gospel indiscriminately? Those who accuse us of being 'Hypers' because we reject that fallen man has the power within him to search for and grasp faith find that the boot is on the other foot. These accusers refuse to preach the gospel of grace laid out in Scripture and preach a gospel of duties on a works basis. This is not the gospel which saves.

The Man Christ Jesus fulfils all conditions
Yet these accusers of the brethren, and now I must add David Mark Rathel who has just published an ill-worked-out theory to denounce non-duty-faith preachers through various media, tell us that we, and John Gill in particular, minimize the agency of man in salvation as if they would maximize it. Of course, they do not mean the Man Christ Jesus here but fallen, lost man who resides in the valley of bones spiritually speaking. Herein lies their greatest error. Gill, Huntington, Brine, Romaine, Hervey, Toplady, Crisp and the whole congregation of our Reformers, held to a doctrine of man which found its fulfilment, perfection and salvation in Christ who performed as Righteous Man all the conditions regarding salvation that man was blind to since the Fall. Man fulfilled all for man. Sadly, this doctrine does not appear in the theology of our accusers who thus minimize Man as man, Redeemer and redeemed.

Man is truly responsible for not believing. I suppose no Christian would deny that, though man can never be responsible for believing. Herein lies Daniel's false view of man and his false view of God. God has made it His self-given task or duty to save sinners. It is not fallen man's duty to save himself. A duty is a task to be done. This task can only be done by Christ. Responsibility is therefore in the case of man's fall not a synonym for 'duty'. He must carry the consequences of his irresponsibility which cannot be remedied by any duty to a faith which he does not have. In the Son of Man it is quite different as Christ the God-Man always keeps to both his duties and responsibilities. Man has failed in his duties to the Law and failed in his responsibilities. So he can never be like Christ, the True Man, in his fallen self.

It is thus ridiculous to speak of 'duty-faith' to a man who does not even understand duty to the law and will always be incapable of knowing what duties to faith are until he finds himself in Christ.

All man's responsibilities point to his fallen nature
Man's fallen responsibilities are thus all on the negative side. He is responsible for everything he has done wrong and still does wrong. Though Daniel's equates duty wrongly with a natural obligation to accept grace and exercise faith, the very Bible passage he gives as proof points in quite a different direction. He builds his duty-faith emphasis on Ecclesiastes 12:13 which says: 'Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man'. We accept this as a divine truth but keeping commandments according to the Bible is the responsibility of all sinners (see below) and is not an entrance to grace as no man can keep God's commandments, not even Adam, and God's commandments merely show up man's inability to keep them. Daniel sees keeping commandments as obeying a moral law only. But there is a difference in striving to keep the so-called 'moral law' and being saved. You can tell a person not to steal or not to lie but you cannot say 'sinner save yourself'. It cannot thus be said that man has duties to a faith he has never been given, has never earned and which he has never owned. Duty-faith teachers tell us that they can get round this difficulty by giving fallen man a so-called 'well meant' offer which brings with it a 'warranty of salvation'. This well-meant offer, they say, when seen for what it is by the sinner, appeals to his duty-faith. Yet the only warrant for our salvation is Christ who has fulfilled all obligations for the salvation of His Bride and only He can pronounce a warranty on such. While we do not know who is and who is not of His Bride, no matter how 'well-meaning' we are, our task is not to warrant, that is guarantee salvation, but to preach it, allowing the Holy Spirit to do His work which is not ours. Thus the 'well-meant' gospel of man to man is a gospel of deceit.

Reception of the call does not rely on duty-faith
Thus the pet word of duty-faith preachers that on hearing the gospel all men receive a 'warranty' or guarantee to enable them to repent and believe is quite false. All men are not
"authorized" to believe and "justified" to believe which is the meanings of being warranted, on hearing the gospel. He who has been given ears to hear and a heart to respond receives this warranty. Man can only have a duty to faith when he has it. To appeal to a non-existent duty-faith is to try to fool man and God.

Man has, nonetheless, duties to the Law but fails to keep them. That is why he needs an act of grace from God or he perishes. Indeed Jesus made it clear in Luke 17 that even if we have done all our duties, we would still be unprofitable servants as it is only by grace and not via natural duties that we are saved. The status 'good and faithful servants' (Matthew 25:21) is only given to those to whom God grants faith. Man is fully unaware of any such faith in himself before that faith is given to him. This is because faith does not exist in fallen man. Responsibility for the Anti-Pseudo-Hypers mentioned above is the duty to grasp faith. This is wrong, responsibility is man's breaking his duty to the law. Belief can never be a reward for performing duties nor ever attained through human responsibilities as it is a free gift of God. With the gift comes the authorization and justification to use it as God's children and not the children of false shepherds. God, however, has bound Himself dutifully to foster and maintain that belief in His chosen children.

 Redeemed man's duties to that belief for which God alone is responsible are outlined to him and given him solely as a belief-carrier and not as an agent of sin. Such duties are God given and are not inherent or innate in fallen man at all. Nevertheless, the call of mercy goes out to all to repent and believe, coming as a savour of death unto death to some and a savour of life unto life for others as the evangelistic work of harvesting goes on.

 Though fallen man's responsibilities, obligations, liabilities etc. are all on the negative side: he being responsible for what he has done against God's Holy Law, duties are all on the positive side concerning what God has done in rescuing sinners from their plight through an act of grace. Just as there is no sin in God and He thus never acts as a sinner; there is no belief in natural man so he can never act as a believer. Daniel is merely flogging a dead slave and believes he can raise the corpses in the valley of bones by declaring his well-meant intentions so that those dead will rise. This is the message of the Council of Trent which was rightly condemned by our Reformers, though not by our duty-faith enthusiasts. Their gospel is useless and if morality is the same as responsibility as Daniel says, it is highly immoral. Only God can awaken the dead. He makes former slaves to sin dead to sin and alive in Christ.

 Man is never duty-bound to save himself whether he hears the gospel or not. If he failed in his duties to the Law how can he be yet under a duty to faith in his fallen foolish state in which he says 'There is no God'? Christ alone has shouldered the whole duty of saving sinners and the sinner only receives saving faith when it is given him. Only then can one speak of duties to faith. Thus the teaching of duty-faith rationalisers, that not the fall but the gospel is where the disobedient trip over their own misunderstanding of duties, is clearly wrong. All men are condemned for falling in Adam but the gospel brings life to those who are already fallen so that they might be lifted up. Duties have nothing to do with it. Man has failed in both his duties and responsibilities and can be given faith only from God's hand. It is obvious that not all men are given faith, although, according to Daniel, all men stand equal in their duties to faith. Daniel merely gets over this problem by saying it is a 'paradox' or a 'tension' and we must leave it at that. Daniel, however, has not left it 'at that' but given us the rational answer that some men say 'no' to God and some say 'yes'. Some recognize their duties, others do not. He will not accept that all men say 'no' and cannot say 'yes' until God changes them.

 Where does this fake-good-news gospel come from?

 The idea of natural duty-faith grew out of the rationalism of such as Andrew Fuller who denied that man was totally fallen in his natural capacities and saw his Fall in his will alone to say 'no' to God, though he could equally well have said 'yes'. Modern free-offer and duty-faith organisations Banner Of Truth and Founder's Conference look to Fuller for their gospel. Fuller, true to his Aristotelian view of man in his enlightenment philosophy, isolates what he thinks is the 'will' from the other elements in man, such as the physical and rational, and illogically concludes from his dissected man that he is only fallen in his will, but his will is still there and he could still believe if he only would. Here we see how Daniel's 'oughtness' follows the so-called Enlightenment theories popularised by Immanuel Kant whose
categorical imperative ‘I ought, therefore I can’ was seen by him as the solution to all man’s problems. For these people, it is the ‘ought’ which motivates all actions in the building up of a perfect will. Thus it is for them a sense of duty to their wills which motivates all their actions. Hence, the gospel of duty faith which must be presented well-meaningly to all.

If man were truly dead in trespasses and sins, Fuller tells us: ‘it were absurd to suppose that they would on this account fall under the Divine censure.’ Fuller forgets here that man has already fallen under the divine censure and this has resulted in his damnation because man has disobeyed God and always does when left to himself. Fuller thought that man was not yet under final damnation and was still on probation, like Adam. Indeed, Fuller saw sinners after the Fall as being more privileged than Adam as they only received damnation if they rejected Christ. Otherwise sinners could not be agents of their own salvation which Fuller believes they are. His motto was God’s provisions must harmonise with man’s agency and man is not yet fully condemned as thus God could not exercise what Fuller called ‘the divine censure’ if he were. This seems to be what Rathel calls ‘Minimising’ man’s duties in salvation if we do not follow Fuller. All men, according to Fuller, like Adam once was, are still on probation despite the Fall. For Fuller, it is as if the Fall had not happened. Indeed, Fullerites forget the story of Adam and maintain that man is on probation until he rejects Christ. In this spirit, Fuller continues by writing: ‘No man is reproved (by God) for not doing that which is naturally impossible; but sinners are reproved for not believing, and given to understand that it is solely owing to their criminal ignorance, pride, dishonesty of heart, and aversion from God.’ He does not understand that belief is impossible with fallen man but nothing is impossible with God. Fuller, however, has an easy remedy for man’s ‘aversion’ which maximizes his agency in salvation. Sinners need only love God, he says, ‘the same as if they had never apostatised’. He appears to believe also that this is what God expects of fallen men, that is, that man should pull his own socks up and is indeed commanded to do so. Hence duty-faith! This is where Fuller gets it wrong again believing that commands from God are proof that fallen man must be

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Prayer for Children

William Cowper

Gracious Lord, our children see,
By thy mercy we are free;
But shall these, alas! Remain
Subjects still of Satan’s reign?
Israel’s young ones, when of old
Pharaoh threatened to withhold;
Then Thy messenger said, “No;
Let the children also go.”

When the angel of the Lord
Drawing forth his dreadful sword,
Slew, with an avenging hand,
All the firstborn of the land:
Then thy people’s doors he passed,
Where the bloody sign was placed;
Hear us, now, upon our knees,
Plead the blood of Christ for these!

Lord we tremble, for we know
How the fierce malicious foe,
Wheeling round his watchful flight,
Keeps them ever in his sight:
Spread Thy pinions, King of kings!
Hide them safe beneath Thy wings;
Lest the ravenous bird of prey
Stoop, and bear the brood away.

Olney Hymns - Book 2 Hymn 12

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still aware of his saving duties. This was true of probationer Adam before he sinned but it is not true of condemned man after he sinned.

The Fall of man is thus to Fuller and his followers merely a neglect in man’s mastering his own ‘oughtness’ or ‘duty’ though he could if he wished. In this capacity of freedom of choice man has not changed since before the Fall. This might suit Kant and Fuller but it certainly does not suit the Christian’s walk with God which is by grace and not by an in-built sense of duty supported by natural capacities to love God and attacks of amnesia regarding the Fall. When God commands ‘repentance’, He refers to needs not duties. When he says ‘believe’, He also refers to needs and not duties. Neither the need is known nor any duty known until the Holy Spirit opens the sinner’s eyes.

Fuller’s son Andrew Gunton Fuller explains in his biographical version of his father’s life prefixed to Fuller’s Complete Works (Sprinkle 1988 edition) that he has a note from his father saying, ‘I maintain that men have the same power, strictly speaking, before they are wrought upon by the Holy Spirit, as after, and before conversion as after; that the work of the Spirit endows us with no new rational powers, nor any powers that are necessary to moral agency.’ We remember that duty-faith is a moral agency or responsibility as far as Fuller is concerned.

If sinful man is the same rationally and morally after conversion as before, one wonders what change that conversion has made in him. This statement corresponds exactly with Fuller’s claim in his The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation that men are not ‘naturally and absolutely blind’ like a dead body in spiritual matters but ‘have the same powers to believe as disbelieve, to reject as to embrace.’ They can thus always follow their ‘ought’ or ‘duty’, according to Fullerites, which has not left fallen man.

Fuller, following Enlightenment theology, was adamant that we could move mountains if we only willed it, that is, we could if we would but we will not. However, those who say ‘I ought’ therefore ‘I can’, therefore ‘I will’ are self-deceivers. Fancy telling a pauper in debt that he ought to pay off what he owed and could do so if he only counted it his duty and thus willed it! This is the Fullerite ‘free offer’ of the gospel based on ‘duty-faith’.

Modern rationalist Errol Hulse agrees with Fuller’s boast that all fallen man’s rational and moral powers are intact and only need to be implemented in salvation by man’s willingness and tells us:

There is nothing to hinder him (the fallen sinner) from being spiritual except his indisposition, his rebellion, his sin, his unwillingness. He is absolutely free to do good, to be spiritual, to repent, to believe. That is, he is a free agent.6

Hence, these people who find fallen man is ‘absolutely free’ to do good, provide him with what they call ‘the free offer’ based on so-called duty-faith to have him perform that good and accept Christ as being ‘the whole duty of man’. However, if God says that man is ‘carnal and sold under sin’ (Romans 7:14) and can only be free from this bondage by an act of God as outlined in Romans 8, how can he be a free agent in his fallen state? This is, of course, the utopian view of man behind Tolkien’s Mythopoeia which ought to be called Myopia. The fantasy writer boasts:

Man is not wholly lost nor wholly changed. Disgraced he may be, yet is not de-throned, And keeps the rags of lordship once he owned.7

So here we have a tight band of duty-faith rationalists, seeped in the philosophy of Immanuel Kant, who tell us that man’s filthy-ragged righteousness is sufficient for saving belief activated through the exercise of human duties. Such false-gospel purveyors even boast that they now dominate modern Christian thinking and old orthodoxy is on the decline. Waldron and Daniel tell us that those who oppose their gospel are a small minority. Perhaps they cannot think beyond their own clique but the Scriptures and the entire historical Church of the Lord Jesus Christ speak against their modern gospel which they feel duty-bound to preach to all men everywhere. May they, by God’s grace, find true divine enlightenment.

4 This statement is also made in Fuller’s 11th letter to Dan Taylor where Fuller contradicts Taylor for saying ‘Man has no will or power to believe in Christ ... prior to the Spirit’s work.’ Fuller contends that man has always had the will and power even after the Fall.


6 The Great Invitation, p. 60.

We will now endeavour to describe the character in whose heart the Holy Spirit has triumphed over the second enemy, namely, spiritual death.

We have said that the Spirit in His triumph communicates Divine Life, creates a new principle in the Soul, which is called in Scripture “the new man”, and sometimes a “new heart”, and a “new spirit”. “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.” Here the triumph of the Holy Spirit in the sinner’s heart is plainly exhibited by removing the stubborn heart, and putting in an opposite principle. The Spirit’s work does not consist in negatives only, but in positives also. It consists not only of the removal of the old heart, but the giving of a new one. The new spirit in the text, I understand to be the mind and judgment called the intellectual part of man; and the new heart in the text, I take to be the will and affections; and by both these I understand the whole Soul with all its faculties. And wherever this new heart and new spirit are found, the following things will also be found, namely:

New sight and feeling of our spiritual state
Previously to the Holy Spirit's triumph there are two principles predominant in the heart; one is ignorance or blindness—the sinner is ignorant of the condition of his Soul, he knows not what he is, nor what he does. "We were in bondage," said the Jews. The way of wickedness is as darkness, "They know not at what they stumble," said Solomon, Proverbs 4:19)—the other is, hardness of heart, or insensibility. A graceless man has a wicked heart, and that desperately so; but he is not sensible of it, he is ignorant, proud, impenitent, serving divers lusts, and under the curse and wrath of God. His sin abounds in the heart and life, rules and bears the sway; and yet, alas, he neither sees nor feels these things. But when the Holy Spirit in His triumph renews the heart by grace, spiritual life and feeling are soon discovered: the subdued sinner then sees things which he never saw before, and experimentally feels that which he did not feel before. "Alas!" says the conquered sinner, "O, wretched man that I am, my heart is full of sin and wickedness, and no good thing dwells in it! Ignorant, vain, worldly, stubborn, sensual and devilish, such is my heart. And the Lord threatens and declares His disapprobation!" So the gracious man groans under the burden of his sinful heart and life. "Mine iniquities," says David, "are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me. I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long" Psalm 38:4, 6. The renewed sinner complains, loathes himself in his own eyes, and bewails his condition with a troubled heart. Here is a new sight, a new sense, and a new feeling.

A new judgement and opinion
The renewed Soul discovers within himself a new judgment and opinion; he has different thoughts of himself and his ways to those he formally had. He now judges righteously, according to the scriptures of truth. The
A NEW SPIRIT AND A NEW HEART

Apostle said, “I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.” And in another place he speaks of himself as the “chiefest of sinners”. The Psalmist did the same, “So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee” Psalm 73:22. With regard to God and His ways, the renewed sinner looks upon them as his only happiness, and could he but enjoy God as reconciled in Christ, as his God he would be blessed forever. He looks upon the ways of God as righteous, good, holy, safe, and pleasant, and on the way of repentance, faith and holiness, as the most excellent and beautiful, to be desired above all creature excellency, or the world calls good or great.

New cares and requests
New cares and requests are discovered. His cares are now more for the Soul than for the body; his cry is, “Lord, what will become of my poor Soul, and what shall I do to be saved? If Christ and pardon are not mine, I am undone for ever; let them who will take the world and its pleasures, but, O Lord, be thou merciful to me, a sinner: be thou reconciled to my Soul, and lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon me!”

New principles are discernible
Every new spiritual and heavenly principle respecting Salvation will be found in the renewed heart: knowledge, spiritual and heavenly wisdom, wisdom for Salvation, wisdom to know what is good, to approve the things that are excellent, to know the time and seasons of the Gospel, and to embrace it, and love it. A holy, spiritual, and serious mind, to serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear, giving all diligence, by prayer and supplication, to make his calling and election sure, will manifest itself in the conquered sinner.

True humility is another new principle to be found in such an one. “All his saints are in thy hand, they sit down at thy feet, every one shall receive of thy word.” A humble disciple of Christ’s is willing to sit at His feet, and be instructed by Him; “Surely,” says David, “I have behaved and quieted myself as a child is weaned of his mother, and my Soul is even as a weaned child” Psalm 131:2. Indeed, except we become as “little children” we cannot enter the kingdom of Heaven; and Paul said that he served with all humility of heart. Obedience is another principle. Cornelius and his friends said to Peter, “We are all here present before God to hear all things that are commanded thee of God” “ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you” was the testimony of Paul concerning true converts at Rome. Sincerity, or uprightness, is another principle. Christ said, “Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile.” The Apostle said, “In simplicity and godly sincerity he had his conversation in the world.” In a word, faith, hope, love, repentance, patience, and contentment, are found in all hearts where the Holy Spirit has triumphed.

New conflicts
New conflicts arise in the subdued sinner’s Soul. The flesh begins to lust against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh, and they are contrary the one to the other. “But I see”, said the Apostle, “another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind.” The flesh is the corrupt nature. The law in the members is the old man. The spirit, the renewed heart, the “law in the mind”, is the new man. All these are in the regenerated person, and are dispersed over every faculty of the Soul; they are contrary the one to the other, and war one against another. This war is commenced the first moment the Holy Spirit triumphs over the internal enemies, and will continue to the last moment of life, until the Soul, through the Spirit, triumphs over death and enters into glory. Every new principle in the gracious heart has an antagonist. As, for instance, faith meets with opposition from unbelief, hope from doubt, love of God from the love of the world, the fear of God from the fear of the creature, or slavish fear, humility from pride, patience
from peevishness, resignation from rebellion, diligence from sloth. Let the living Soul make an attempt to call upon God in prayer, the old nature will try to keep it back or else make some excuse; and if that will not do, it will go off asleep; and if that will not do, Satan will put some other stumbling block in the way, and so assist the old man. If the living Soul be desirous to read the Word of God, except the Holy Spirit assists him, his mind will be filled with confusion and his thoughts will wander; or else some business which must be done will force itself into his memory, and so the Word of God will only gain a divided attention. If he be desirous of going to the house of God, this excuse will arise, “I am tired, or, I am full of confusion, and shall not profit if I go.” Thus, whichever way a living Soul turns, he is liable to meet with opposition, and every step he takes is apt to find obstructions in the way, and himself encompassed with many infirmities.

It is true, that sin shall not have dominion over a living Soul, yet, sometimes, sin, for the moment, gets the mastery. Sometimes Heaven draws up the Soul, and at other times earth drags it down; and when this is the case, the Soul cries, “I cleave to the dust, quicken thou me, O Lord.” The world and our earthly nature will at times keep the Soul down, and without the assistance of the Almighty Power of the Spirit, it cannot shake off the burden, but lies groaning beneath the weight; but when the blessed Spirit comes He removes this burden and communicates fresh strength. The Soul, like Naphtali, is then let loose, giving praises and thanksgiving to the great Deliverer. When the mind is spiritual, heavenly things are precious, and earthly things become insipid; but when the mind becomes carnal, spiritual things are insipid and earthly things rise in seeming value. But “to be spiritually minded is life and peace, and to be carnally minded is death” Romans 8:6. Hence the Apostle exhorts the Colossians to set their affections on things above, not on things on the earth. Sometimes light will get the ascendency, and at other times darkness will envelope the Soul. Sometimes joy, and at other times sorrow; sometimes peace, at other times war; sometimes liberty will be enjoyed, and at other seasons great bondage of soul is felt. Thus, the gracious Soul discovers a daily, yea, an hourly conflict. This is like Jacob and Esau struggling in the same womb. Grace in the heart will oppose sin, the least as well as the greatest, secret as well as public sins. This conflict is natural, not accidental; it is natural for grace to hate sin, and for sin to oppose grace; and where the animosity is natural the opposition will be greater, and the longer grace is engaged in the conflict the stronger and more courageous it becomes, though it may occasionally get foiled, yet it will not give up, but will renew the battle and fight more strongly than ever. When it is cast down by the enemy it will rise again, singing, “Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise,” Micah 7:8. Grace will not quit the field till it is called away by the Captain, and when it is called off the field, it is crowned with glory. Grace must reign, and grace must finally conquer, because it receives daily strength from the Holy Spirit.

**New power**

New power is discovered in the subdued sinner’s heart. Divine grace is in itself a powerful principle. There is a spirit of power and might in it and with it; if it were not so, it could never change the heart of a sinner, nor dethrone sin, nor maintain the conflict with all the powers of sin and Satan; neither could it perform great works of service to its Author, as it does, and that in an eminent way. This also is done through the assistance of the Holy Spirit. Grace confers a power upon the Soul; indeed, grace is given for that very end. When a sinner is renewed it is said he is quickened from death to life; and life implies power, a power which the sinner had not before. Divine grace will enable a sinner to perform greater things than the wisest philosopher or profoundest hypocrite can effect. It will enable a sinner to deny his own opinion, his unholy affections, his supposed worth, his false religion, and all his own ways. It creates sincere love for Christ, and all that belongs to Him; acts out a cordial compliance with the whole revealed will of God; produces a submission of the whole heart to Christ in all His offices; implants an unfeigned hatred of every sin; and enables a man to live by faith upon the promises of God in all the contingencies of his pilgrimage.

Moreover, the power of renewing grace is discovered in the performance of such work as the graceless Soul is incapable of doing, e.g. to weep for sin in outward peace and prosperity, to prize Christ above all, to thirst after Him, take delight in Him, and suffer reproaches for His sake; to forsake the dearest lust, to cry mightily to God, to take delight in Him, in His will and ways. This capability and the power for exertion are communicated by the Holy Spirit.
New works and obedience
New works and obedience are discovered in a renewed heart, and also the means of working. All works and operations are answerable to the nature in man. The old nature will perform old works, and the renewed nature new works. Before Elisha healed the spring in Jericho, it sent forth bitter water; before he cast meal, in the pot, there was nothing but death there; so, before the heart is renewed, the works proceeding therefrom are bitter, corrupt, vile, and abominable; but when healed by renewing grace, its works are holiness and righteousness, suitable to the renewed heart. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”

There are four qualifications in a renewed heart, enabling it to perform good works. First, it performs them in the strength of Christ, by virtue of union and communion with Him, just as the members of the body act by virtue of union with the head; “I can do all things,” said Paul, “through Christ which strengtheneth me.” Second, it performs them with love; the love of Christ constrains the renewed man; he finds delight in doing good works. Third, these duties are discharged with fervency of spirit, not in a cold, careless, and indifferent way. The renewed man seeks the Lord with all his heart. Fourth, there is integrity of intention; the renewed man looks not at himself, but to the Glory of God, in Christ.

New delights and satisfaction
New delights and satisfaction are also discovered in a gracious heart. Every heart is known by its delights. The proud heart finds delight in the vanities and fashions of this world; the ambitious heart, in honours and applause; the covetous heart, in riches and profit; every graceless heart seeks satisfaction from the world, if it could obtain enough of the world it would be satisfied; but not so with the gracious heart, it has new objects, new ways, delights, and satisfactions. If the Lord would say to a renewed man, “I will give you the riches of the whole world, but I will withdraw myself;” the gracious Soul would utterly reject the proposition. The Heaven-born Soul views the world as vanity, and sees a Hell in every sin; his delights and satisfaction are in those objects which are suitable to the renewed nature, viz., a reconciled God, His favours, and experimental knowledge of Him, the fruition of Him, meditation on Him, communion with Him, blessed manifestations of Him to the Soul, the hopes of the future and eternal enjoyment of Him in heaven, Psalm 73:25. These are the pleasures—the Soul-satisfying enjoyments of a child of God. His heart is employed upon the excellent glories of Christ, a near relation to Him, the life of Christ in the Soul, and the comfort and peace which are inseparably connected with the manifestation of His love, His power, and His presence. Such are the new delights of a renewed Soul: they constitute His food and raiment, his riches, his estates, his friends and relations: one smile from God in Christ, one drop of His Love, one Word from His mouth, one streamlet from the river of peace, or one drop of joy from the ocean of bliss, affords greater satisfaction than all the world beside.

The choice of new society
The choice of new society is another mark of a gracious heart. The renewed man has a new master, new friends, and new companions. David said, “I am a companion of all them that fear thee” Psalm 119:63; the Saints were the excellent of the earth to him, and he delighted in their company; he rejoiced to go with them to the house of God, “I went there with the voice of joy” Psalm 42:4. The company of the ungodly was a burden to him, “Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech”, he hated their ways, “Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee?” Psalm 139:21. Paul said, “What communion hath light with darkness?” and John the Divine said, “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.”

Thus I have attempted to delineate the characters in whom the Holy Spirit has triumphed and to whom He has given a new heart and new spirit. Such an one has new rules to walk by; the law written in his heart, and the Word of God are his rules whereby he steers his course the remainder of his days, not by his own judgment, or by supposed revelations, or by his own will, affections, or the opinions of men, or the customs or applause of the world, but by the written Word of God; by it he orders his steps, and judges all matters of faith and importance. This, says the believer, I must believe, because God has revealed it, and commands me to believe it; this I receive as truth, because He has revealed it; by this I desire to walk, speak, and work, by the Word of God, I desire to live and die, through the assistance of God the Holy Spirit.

Edward Samuel was a converted Jew. He was born in the small town of Vinooty in Russian Poland on the borders of Prussia in 1812.
John Bunyan

Bunyan becomes a preacher and writer

Bunyan at this time was still living at Elstow in a little thatched cottage which he owned with a small blacksmith’s forge attached. Though he was preaching regularly, he still, like the Apostle Paul, kept up his trade so as not to be a burden on others. He and his wife had now two children. The first, Mary, was born in 1650 and her sister Elizabeth followed in 1654. Mary, however, was born blind and was to remain so all her life. Soon after Elizabeth’s birth, probably in 1655, Mrs Bunyan died and then Bunyan and his children moved to Bedford to be nearer his church and newly won friends. Bunyan was soon to lose another great support and source of good gospel teaching through the death of Pastor John Gifford in September 1556. Bunyan was now pressed to become the new pastor, but felt that he was too immature to fulfil that office but accepted a call to the deaconship. The new pastor chosen was John Burton, who was also young in the faith but had not the robust nature of Bunyan. He was, however a godly and sincere man but his most delicate constitution overpowered him in God’s providence and he died in September 1660 shortly after the restitution of the monarchy.

One of the last things Burton did was to support and encourage Bunyan to begin writing and helped him publish his first work. Meanwhile, the congregation was encouraging Bunyan to preach publicly, realizing that he had a great gift. He only gradually realized this himself but then Bunyan became so busy preaching that he had to cease being a deacon so that he could spend more time in calling sinners to Christ. It is refreshing to see how practical Bunyan was in his preaching, urging that a change of life, service and action was the lot of all true Christians. The great impulse behind him was that belief is nothing and even preaching is nothing unless one is a doer of God’s Word in changing the world to God’s glory. This truth was as emphasised in his early preaching as it was throughout the ripe years of the 1680s. In his book A Holy Life the Beauty of Christianity (1684) he thus says:

Christian in Pilgrim’s Progress looks for a way of escape outside the City of Destruction.
There are works that cost nothing, and works that are chargeable. And observe it, the unsound faith will choose to itself the most easy works it can find. For example, there is reading, praying, hearing of sermons, baptism, breaking of bread, church fellowship, preaching, and the like; and there is mortification of lusts, charity, simplicity, open-heartedness, with a liberal hand to the poor, and their like also. Now the unsound faith picks and chooses, and takes and leaves, but the true faith does not so. There are a great many professors now in England that have nothing to distinguish them from the worst of men, but their praying, reading, hearing of sermons, baptism, church fellowship, and breaking of bread. Separate them but from these, and everywhere else they are as black as others, even in their whole life and conversation. Thus they have chosen to them the most easy things to do them, but love not to be conscionably found in the practice of the other; a certain sign their faith is naught, and that these things, even the things they are conversant in, are things attended to of them, not for the ends for which God has appointed them, but to beguile and undo themselves withal.¹

In His *Pilgrim’s Progress*, when speaking of a man who is all holy talk but few holy deeds, Christian says:

Let us assure ourselves, that at the day of doom men shall be judged according to their fruits. It will not be said then, Did you believe? But, Were you doers, or talkers only? And accordingly shall they be judged. The end of the world is compared to our harvest; and you know men at harvest regard nothing but fruit.²

Bunyan was in eager demand as a preacher between Lincolnshire and London though he often found it very difficult to express his heart in words. Like so many preachers close to God have experienced, when Bunyan felt he had spoken in a confused and unclear way, his hearers found he had touched their hearts with a most comforting word. His message moved both the uneducated and academics. There is thus the story of a Cambridge don riding on a week-day through a village in Cambridgeshire in Commonwealth times. Here, he spotted a crowd of ordinary people in a churchyard waiting for the church doors to be opened. The learned scholar asked why this crowd was gathering in the churchyard in the middle of the week and heard that a tinker named Bunyan was going to preach. Thinking it would provide a little entertainment for him to hear an uneducated man try to preach, the unconverted scholar gave a boy two pence to hold his horse and joined the supposed ignorant crowd. The university man listened to the poor tinker in amazement and God struck his heart and he left the church a converted man and became a regular attender at Bunyan’s gospel meetings and later a preacher himself. Griffith, following Offor, tells the story of another learned man, a Cambridge Professor of Arabic, who asked Bunyan why he dared to preach although he did not know the original Scriptures, so Bunyan asked the scholar if he were in possession of the actual originals himself. The university man listened to the poor tinker in amazement and God struck his heart and he left the church a converted man and became a regular attender at Bunyan’s gospel meetings and later a preacher himself. Griffith, following Offor, tells the story of another learned man, a Cambridge Professor of Arabic, who asked Bunyan why he dared to preach although he did not know the original Scriptures, so Bunyan asked the scholar if he were in possession of the actual originals himself. The scholar had to reply in the negative but said he had true copies of the originals. ‘So have I’, replied Bunyan, ‘I have a true copy of the Bible in English’.³

³ John Bunyan, pp.120, 121.
GEORGE M. ELLA

Bunyan’s lack of cooperation with the authorities
Nevertheless, Bunyan did not take out a preaching licence as many of his closest Independent friends did and his reluctance to be seen in the public eye as a state accepted preacher soon began to hinder Bunyan’s wider service. He claimed he needed no special official recognition as he was doing merely what every man jack ought to do if he stood in Christ. It is clear that if Bunyan had gone through the normal procedures of legitimizing his status in the eyes of the Commonwealth authorities, his later life would have been more comfortable and secure and at least his initial two arrests might well have been avoided. Bunyan actually courted persecution as a means of demonstrating the freedom which he had in Christ. Here, of course, many would part company with him but one can hardly imagine that Bunyan’s life would have been more productive had he lived the life of a yes-sayer and a political conformist. Bunyan actually thrived on being God’s outsider and so would have been less useful to God placed in a comfortable home with a comfortable job and his family ever around him than he was ministering to his family, fellow prisoners, congregation and the country at large from his open prison cell.

When Bunyan first had trouble with the local authorities, no one seems to know and various times have been suggested from 1656-1558. At that time, licenced preaching was in the hands of the notorious Triers formed from the Dissenting churches whose will was law. True to Bunyan’s policy, he never applied to the Triers for permission to enter the ministry. His initial indictment however, was not religious but due to Bunyan preaching without a licence in a certain field without taking the trouble to ask the owner who happened to be a local magistrate. At the start of Bunyan’s longest imprisonment, Judge Hales advised Bunyan’s second wife who had had a miscarriage at the news of her husband’s arrest, that if Bunyan did one of three things, appealed to the King, handed in a plea for pardon or explained in writing why his arrest was illegal, he would be let off. Apparently, Bunyan was given three years to perform this simple task, the whole time using the prison as a base for preaching around the country, without his trying to change matters by having himself acquitted. Thus Bunyan quite clearly used the establishment to his own advantage. Thereafter, security was tightened for a time and Bunyan lost his privilege of appeal. However, soon Bunyan continued to use his prison freedom to write book after book from 1661 on, including his major poetical works or Meditations and autobiographical works such as his famous Grace Abounding. The last great work from within prison doors was Pilgrim’s Progress. Like Joseph, he found grace in the eyes of his jailors. Such works were mostly published and sold immediately on being written and, with a great production of lacework and other finance-bringing activities, helped keep his wife and children (now four) from poverty and hunger.

The fact that many volumes were published from prison moved critics to say that these were never the work of an inmate but Bunyan defended his authorship in his The Holy War, writing also of his Pilgrim:

It came from mine own heart so to my head
Manner and matter, too, was all my own,
Nor was it unto any mortal known
Till I had done it. Nor did any then
By books, by wits, by tongues, or hand, or pen
Add five words to it, or wrote half a line
Thereof; the whole and every whit is mine.

Bunyan’s first major criticism came from Dissenters
Bunyan’s early persecution was not from the now defunct Church of England, nor the Commonwealth Churches whose Highchurchmanship and externalism first enraptured him. Their criticism concerned merely Bunyan’s humble origin. It was those who dissented from these churches that caused him the most concern. Such criticism came initially and chiefly from the Quakers and the Baptists. Concerning the Quakers, these followers of the ‘inner light’ thought Bunyan relied too much on the text of Scripture and took it too literally, so Bunyan’s first writings were designed to put the light of the true gospel in its right place, that is in the Scriptures and not in the dubious light of fallen creatures’ minds and hearts. The Quakers spoke of living according to the Word of God just as much as Bunyan but their understanding of ‘Word of God’ included very much man’s thoughts. For Bunyan, salvation came through preaching Christ and Him crucified as outlined in the Scriptures alone. Thus in 1656 aged 29, Bunyan wrote his Some Gospel Truths Opened, with his clear confession: ‘Jesus saith, I am the way,
and the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me’ John 14:6; ‘Neither is there salvation in any other’ Acts 4:12.

Bunyan called the Quakers to an open debate at the Steeple House in Bedford on May 23, 1656 which helped both sides to come to a better awareness of man’s fallen state and need for salvation from outside himself. Bunyan continued these debates before the market cross until November. Griffith tells us that ‘The pure springs of Quakerism had not yet cleansed their channel.’

Edward Burroughs, a leading Quaker, responded to Bunyan’s challenges with his The True Faith of the Gospel of Peace thus showing how notable a figure Bunyan had become and that his teaching had become a matter of public debate. Burroughs was sentenced to death at Newgate around 1662-1663 whilst still in his twenties. Many claim that Burroughs was victimized by Charles II’s alleged religious persecutions. Actually, Burroughs stood close to his King and had been Charles’ personal advisor on Quaker matters for some time and the two had great respect for each other. Under Burroughs’ guidance Charles was able to stop the persecution of Quakers in New England. When Charles heard that Burroughs had been arrested, he immediately sent an order for his release to the local authorities who had been mostly set up in Commonwealth times, but these authorities ignored the King. At that time, as history shows, the American Colonists were more true to their King than the English revolutionaries. Republicanism started in Britain before it reached America.

Bunyan responded to Burrough’s answer with his Vindication which in turn was followed by Burroughs’ Truth the Strongest of All. This exchange caused Bunyan to become more and more well-known as a writer and pastor of souls. No less a person than George Fox now joined the wrangle against Bunyan with his The Great Mystery of the Great Whore Unfolded. Perhaps the fierce opposition of the Quakers against Bunyan is due to the fact that the movement had been formed out of the remnant of what they called ‘shattered Baptists’ and believed that they now represented orthodox Dissent. Any opposition against them was thus considered to stem from heresy. Bunyan’s final appeal to the Quakers appears to have been his book entitled A Few Sighs from Hell, or the Groans of a Damned Soul; by that poor and contemptible servant of Jesus Christ, John Bunyan.

Here John Brown, perhaps Bunyan’s chief biographer, parts company with his subject and criticizes Bunyan’s defence of the gospel. He writes concerning Bunyan and his Quaker opponent, ‘If the two angry controversialists could have met and talked quietly to one another, Bunyan would have agreed with Burrough, and he with Bunyan.’ Though Brown calls Bunyan’s condemnation of the Quakers ‘Repulsive’, he nevertheless argues that Burrough beat Bunyan in his insults. This author must confess that when comparing sides as to who was the most orthodox, he must identify himself with Bunyan. He also finds Brown’s own defence of the Quakers’ attitude to Scripture ‘sub-orthodox’. The idea expressed by Brown is that of Andrew Fuller who sees the authority of Scripture with its divinely balanced teaching on law and gospel as being of mere temporary and arbitrary function, a secondary standard at best. This might have suited the old Quakers but not the Reformed Biblical doctrine of the Word of God.

The second massive criticism against Bunyan came from those who one would think had no grounds whatsoever for a quarrel with him. These were the Baptists Henry Danvers, William Kiffin, John Denne and Thomas Paul, men well situated socially, economically and politically. It was typical of their social standing that they ridiculed Bunyan because of his humble background, claiming that Bunyan preached and wrote so that he might be thought to be ‘Somebody’. Their main argument against Bunyan was that he did not place baptism of the kind they specified on the high pedestal they did as the foundation of the Church and a divine law the obeying of which was prerequisite for membership in that Body. In other words, they replaced soteriology by ecclesiology and side-stepped the sole office of Christ as the Way into the Church. Typical of this view was that though Bunyan spoke of his meeting-house and fellow-Christians, Danvers and his fellow-labourers spoke of their ‘Baptist Church’ and even of ‘the Baptist Bride’ of Christ. William Carey, an open-communionist like Bunyan, very much aware of a dangerous interpretation put on ‘Baptist’, called his church at Serampore ‘The Union Church’ for all Christians. It was altered after

4 John Bunyan, p. 112.
5 Brown suggests indirectly that Burrough died in prison of the plague rather than was executed, p. 35, John Bunyan.
his death to the ‘Baptist Church’ by the Baptist Missionary Society. Thus it is no wonder that in his reply to his critics Bunyan, assisted by Henry Jessey, argued that his Baptist foes made an idol of their rite. To show their disdain of Bunyan’s preaching, such Baptist hardliners joined the Quakers in protest and attended Bunyan’s meetings with their hats on to show their disdain for the ‘poor tinker’.

Parliament was to be blamed for Bunyan’s arrest

Bunyan’s arrests are even more difficult to understand when we consider he was under Luke’s protection at the time after the latter had become his personal friend, his MP and his fellow church member. Nor can one, as so often is the case, blame Charles II as he was in exile in 1655 when local government opposition started against Bunyan and was organizing the return of his court and kingship in 1660 and had demanded indemnity for Dissenters as a condition for his returning to England that year. When Mr-Facing-Both-Ways General Monk, the most powerful man in England, greeted Charles’ return, he placed a Bible in the King’s hands who claimed it was the best gift he could think of. Charles now used his new authority to invite the Presbyterians back to become members of the so-called Convention Parliament. The Presbyterians had pledged themselves to serve both Charles I and II if they kept them in Parliament but sadly they became rebels against both kings when they were given parliamentary powers. This background has much to do with the initial persecutions against John Bunyan. Most biographers, however, now agree that Bunyan was initially indicted under Commonwealth ruling. Charles had no jurisdiction over Parliament or local authorities. England had come to a point where bureaucratic pen-pushers at a sub-magistrate level strove to be plus royalistes que le roi or more haughty

To Be A Pilgrim

1. Who would true valour see,
   Let him come hither;
   One here will constant be,
   Come wind, come weather
   There’s no discouragement
   Shall make him once relent
   His first avowed intent
   To be a pilgrim.

2. Whoso beset him round
   With dismal stories,
   Do but themselves confound;
   His strength the more is.
   No lion can him fright,
   He’ll with a giant fight,
   But he will have a right
   To be a pilgrim.

3. Hobgoblin, nor foul fiend,
   Can daunt his spirit;
   He knows he at the end
   Shall life inherit.
   Then fancies fly away,
   He’ll fear not what men say,
   He’ll labour night and day
   To be a pilgrim.

John Bunyan
and busy-body than the King. This goes also for the church courts which were still manned after 1660 by former Dissenters as were a large number of ecclesiastical posts, including church livings.

Thus, after the Restoration, the new King found Parliament most unwilling to leave behind the intolerant laws concerning religion passed during the Commonwealth era, such as their 1648 Act against Baptists and their acts banning Dissenters’ access to areas covered by state appointed ministers. The new Parliament refused to renounce these severe Cromwellian laws on the grounds that tolerance would let in Roman Catholicism. John Bunyan, a fierce contender against Rome, also felt it unwise to claim more freedom which could have included more freedom for the Romanists. This had been forger William Prynne’s argument which the Presbyterians had clung to tenaciously as an article of faith and behind their fierce criticism of Archbishop Laud for writing letters of reconciliation to the Lutheran and Reformed Churches.

When the so-called Cavalier Parliament was established in May 8, 1661, Charles’ plans for indemnity and tolerance were affirmed and the public burning of the tyrannical Solemn League and Covenant which had turned England into a totalitarian state of major intolerance ensued. This gave hope to many prisoners oppressed for their tender consciences. Sadly, the so-called Country Party of William Coventry arose with its exaggerated anti-Rome phobia curbing all religious tolerance in fear that the Roman Catholics might profit by it. This intolerant position was sturdily opposed by the more moderate King’s party but it was not until March 15, 1672 that Charles was able to force through at last, his long urged for Declaration of Indulgence for Tender Consciences allowing Protestant Nonconformists to worship in their own churches. Again, we are faced with a puzzle here regarding Bunyan as all Dissenting churches were now allowed freedom of worship and their pastors and church officials were granted licences to run their churches and to spread the gospel as they understood it. Within a matter of months some 3,500 meeting houses applied for such licences. It does seem, however that Bunyan still did not apply for a licence, though some early sources say Bunyan was given a licence against his will.

Charles’ act of tolerance angered Parliament who ruled that the Declaration was against Parliament and the laws of England. The reason for their protest was because Charles argued that though Roman Catholics could not have the freedom of the Church of England and Dissenting Protestant churches, they should not be persecuted in their own homes in his territories and were thus free to use their own forms of worship privately. We remember that this was the position of Cowper, Newton and Whitfield a century later. Such stalwarts hated any form of religious persecution. Burning with intolerance, Parliament prepared their dreaded Test Act to reverse the King’s Declaration. This appeared after Bunyan was freed from prison. It must be said at this time, such imprisonment for Dissenters had become so laissez-faire that, with tongue in cheek, one might claim that Bunyan was still using his prison as a kind of office where he could write his books in peace and from where he could regularly preach the gospel. Martin quotes figures running into many thousands to show that Dissenters were freely worshipping together despite anti-Dissenting laws. Strangely enough many dissenting ministers gave, as Bryant relates, ‘only a grudging thanks to the King’. Parliament gave no thanks at all and within a year ruled against the edict. This group of intolerant, anti-democratic, anti-royalists which used the term the ‘Protestant Parliament of England’ to describe its radicalism, now declared they would rather be burdened with severe restrictions themselves than have Roman Catholics given any indulgences whatsoever. They were thus prepared to cut off their noses to spite their faces. However, Bunyan was treated most leniently by his jailers and certainly was not tormented and persecuted in the way writers such as Macaulay suggest. Gwilym Griffith writes:

He was never dungeoned with the common fellons but confined in roomier quarters on the upper floor. We know that he was free to receive his family and friends, free to conduct worship and preach within the prison precepts, and able to work for his family’s support and write his numerous books.

8 See Hugh Martin’s Puritanism and Richard Baxter, pp. 59, 60 for a detailed analysis of the growth of Dissenting churches at the time.

9 Puritanism and Richard Baxter, p. 58.
10 Bryant, King Charles II, p. 214.
Bunyan was even given prison-leave to preach in the surrounding localities and even in London besides exercising the duties of a minister in his own church. Griffith claims throughout that Bunyan was persecuted because he rejected church rule by bishops but evidence for such an idea is very scarce indeed. The main argument against Bunyan propagated by the local authorities was that he was an unlearned tinker and preached without any official sanction. Such a snobbish attitude was taken by both sides of the Dissenting-Establishment split-up.

However, social arrogance triumphed over common sense and the district magistrates pressed for Bunyan’s further imprisonment to spite the King. A warrant for his arrest was issued in 1675 but Bunyan was not re-imprisoned until 1677. This quickly came to the ear of the King who pressed for his release. Charles’ new allies were the now famous John Owen who stood very near Bunyan in theology and witness and Owen’s mentor, Thomas Barlow now Bishop of London and well-known for his love of Reformed doctrines and his view that the Pope was the Antichrist. Barlow had written, admonishing the Church of England to be tolerant to Dissenters but ruled out Papists and Quakers in his efforts to legalise Dissenting worship. It is said that even two fine Christians such as Owen and Barlow could only use arguments of a financial nature to persuade the local authorities to free Bunyan again. The money came from Charles.

Bunyan used this final imprisonment to finish off his Pilgrim’s Progress which was first published in 1678. Immediately Bunyan became not only famous in Great Britain and the New World but also in Scandinavia, Poland, Bohemia, Germany, France, Hungary and the Netherlands as Bunyan’s Pilgrim was translated very quickly into many languages. Not even the local magistrates, blown up in pride as to their powers over life and death, dared touch Bunyan now and the King could converse freely with his Church leaders over Bunyan’s call of welcome to the unconverted. Even when ‘the Gospel peddler’ preached at seven o’clock in the morning on his many visits to London, he was guaranteed a crowd of a thousand listeners who thronged chapels and churches to hear him. In spite of his Herculean task of preaching morning, noon and evening into the night, Bunyan managed to publish his

11 John Bunyan, pp. 128, 129.
We are delighted to announce that the 2017 New Focus Conference will be hosted by Merton Evangelical (Baptist) Church in south London beginning Friday evening 26 May, 2017 and running through Saturday afternoon, finishing with a service on Sunday morning 28 May. Our friends from Christian Bookshop Ossett will provide a bookstall.

Don Fortner will preach on Friday and Saturday evening and on Sunday morning. Harry Qazi and Peter Meney will minister on Saturday afternoon. Allan Jellett will lead communion on Sunday morning. A full schedule with times is available on the New Focus website.

Those wishing to travel to the event and requiring accommodation should note hotels in the area get booked up very quickly. The church building is less than ¼ mile from South Wimbledon tube station on the Northern Line for those within commuting distance. Car parking is not at all easy. Those seeking hotel accommodation should look for the London district SW19. The church’s postcode is SW19 2LG and there is Premier Inn, Holiday Inn Express, the Antoinette and many other venues within a mile or two’s distance.

Full details are available at www.go-newfocus.co.uk with car, tube, train and parking suggestions as well as numerous hotel options for which we thank Pastor Harry Qazi.

Further information is available from:

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As always, to assist with catering, we shall be grateful to hear from those planning to attend. The conference is free to attend. Collections will be uplifted to help cover the costs.

We encourage all who can join us to do so. We believe in the importance of faithful men preaching the gospel of free sovereign grace and value the blessings granted by God the Holy Spirit in the mutual fellowship of the Lord’s people gathered to worship their Lord and Saviour.