THAT THE PURPOSE OF GOD ACCORDING TO ELECTION MIGHT STAND
The Lord Thinks About Me

The Lord’s people are a poor people. God keeps us poor out of mercy and love for He knows if we become rich in the riches of this world our confidence will rest not upon Him and His lovingkindness, but upon our mistaken estimation of our own self-worth.

The Lord’s people are a needy people. True, He supplies all our needs, according to His riches, yet manna-like His supplies are sufficient only for the day and must be refreshed, restored and renewed every morning. So the Lord would have His people return to Him frequently, call upon Him often, and forget not all His benefits.

Poor and needy as His little ones are, here, too, is a marvellous truth. The Lord thinks upon us. David says, “I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me” (Psalm 40:17). Have we remembered the Lord this morning? Have we thought on Jesus today? His love? His mercy? His longsuffering? He has been thinking about us.

Child of God, our blessed Saviour thought about you before the sun ever rose for the first time. Before time began or ever the world existed the Triune God set His heart upon the people of His choice and loved them with an everlasting love (Jeremiah 31:3). He thought upon their poverty, their needs, their helplessness and settled upon a means of satisfying every want. He made with His people an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure.

Then, for the eternal wellbeing of His people, the Lord Jesus Christ “humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” There upon the cross the Godman, heaven’s suffering servant, steeled Himself against the unsheathed sword of justice and thought upon His people. He saw those for whom His soul travailed and was consoled in the midst of His anguish.

Nor does the Saviour’s thinking on us end there. Our blessed Jesus intercedes and thinks upon His people every day. Surely, says David, goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. Lo, says the Christ of God, “I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.” Think on this. Not a day goes by that Christ does not think on you. Such is His love, care and concern. Oh, how frequently we forget Him! And when we do remember Him are not our thoughts too often tinged with selfish motives? He will never leave us nor forsake us though we often feel forsaken by our leaving off from Him.

Do we fear for the future? Does our poverty and need cause us to doubt His faithfulness? When temptations arise and unbelief finds opportunity to undermine our peace and comfort let us hear God’s promises. The LORD of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand (Isaiah 14:24).

No matter what befalls the church in this wilderness, our blessed Jesus shall never forget the people of His choice, the beloved of His heart, the apple of His eye. Again, and again, He will think on us to do us good. So again have I thought in these days to do well unto Jerusalem and to the house of Judah: fear ye not (Zechariah 8:15).
Upon coming to worship God ...

We may well ask the question in all solemnity, Why am I here? Various motives prompt those who assemble together for the professed purpose of worshipping God. But may we hope that all of us here present are moved by spiritual, and free from fleshly, motives? In answer to the question I can truly say that I am here for the glory of God, the exaltation of God’s Christ, the honour of His Blessed Spirit, and the good of God’s chosen. Those of you who are spiritually one with me are longing for the fulfilment of the Father’s promise, “In all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee” (Exodus 20:24). You are also desiring the fulfilment of the Master’s promise, “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:20). May He give us to enjoy the reality of His own sweet words to the Samaritan woman, “The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him” (John 4:23).

Thomas Bradbury (1831-1905)
How often we have stood by the bed of a dying friend or relative. Our hearts ache to lose any who are dear to us. We hurt for the husband or wife, parents, children, and others who will miss the love, companionship, and aide of the faithful one who is passing out of this world. Yet, as we watch our friends leave this world of sin and sorrow, knowing that they are entering into heaven’s everlasting glory, knowing that they are falling asleep in the arms of their Saviour, we say, “Blessed are the dead, which die in the Lord.”

When John heard those words from heaven, he did not have such a picture before him. Far from it. John had in his mind pictures of men and women dying in tormenting circumstances as martyrs. He had before him the picture of those dying because they worshipped Christ and received not the mark of the beast, neither in their foreheads nor in their right hands, men and women who were put to death because they would not deny Christ and His gospel. He says, with regard to those who were thrown to lions, those who died upon the rack in a loathsome dungeon, those who were burned at the stake, those Anabaptists massacred in the Piedmont Easter, and all those countless martyrs who have been tortured to death for their faith in Christ — “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.”

C. H. Spurgeon stated the matter beautifully. “Wheresoever on this earth, whether among the snows of Piedmont’s valleys or in the fair fields of France, saints have died by sword or famine, or fire or massacre, for the testimony of Jesus, because they would not bear the mark of the beast … this voice is heard sounding out of the third heaven, ‘Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.’ ‘Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints’ (Psalm 116:15).”

Precious Deaths
Yes, the Psalmist sang, “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.” Those who die in the Lord have entered into a state of eternal blessedness. The death of a believer is precious to God and blessed to Him. It does
not matter when a believer dies, where he
dies, by what means he dies, or under what
conditions he dies. The blessedness of the
believer’s death is that he dies in the Lord.
Pastor Henry Mahan related a conversation
he had with an old man in his congregation
before service one evening. The aging saint
said to his pastor, “I’d lots rather be going
out of this world than coming in ... We’ve got
things backwards. We rejoice at the birth of a
child and weep at the death of an old man. We
ought to weep when a child is born into this
world and rejoice at the death of the old man if
he is in Christ.”

Very, very soon, we must leave this world.
“Is there not an appointed time to man upon
earth? Are not his days also like the days of a
hireling?” We would be wise to take our minds
off the cares and troubles, as well as the joys
and riches of this world and look across the
brief sea of time to eternity, to that future world
so surely, perhaps nearly, awaiting us. Looking
at things from the believer’s perspective, we
say with John, “Blessed are the dead which die
in the Lord.”

Of Whom?
Of whom are those words spoken? The voice
which John heard from heaven declared,
“Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord
from henceforth.” That is to say, Those who
die in the Lord are blessed, from the moment
of their death, eternally. I want to know who
those people are who die in the Lord, who
are blessed forever. I want to be one of them.
Who are they? Verse 12 tells us, “Here is the
patience of the saints: here are they that keep
the commandments of God, and the faith of
Jesus.”

Those who are blessed of God in death are
the saints of God on earth. Heaven is the land
of saints. None but saints can enter therein.
Since death does nothing to change a person’s
character, if we would be numbered among the
saints in heaven we must be made saints on
earth. Yet, by nature we are all sinners. How
can sinners be made saints? Only a work of
God’s own hand can transform an unholy man into a holy man. Nothing but
grace can make a sinner a saint. That work
of grace which makes hell-bent sinners to be
the saints of God is twofold. First, we must be
redeemed by the precious blood of Christ. Our
sins have to be put away. We must be justified,
made righteous, by divine imputation (Romans
3:21-24). Christ has done that for all who trust
Him (Titus 2:14; Hebrews 1:3; 9:26). Second,
we must be regenerated, set apart, sanctified,
born again, and given a new nature by the
Spirit of God (Ephesians 2:1-9; Titus 3:4-7).
If we would enter into heaven, we must be
made partakers of Christ’s holiness (Hebrews
12:14). Being sanctified by the grace of God,
believers (saints) set themselves apart and
consecrate themselves to the Lord by faith in
Him, devoting all to Him as willing bond slaves
(Exodus 21:1-6; 2 Corinthians 8:5).

Those who are blessed in death are those
who live in the patience of faith, “The patience
of the saints”. Believers are men and women
of patience. They endure the troubles of life,
the temptations of Satan, and the trials of faith
with the patience of faith.

“Patience” here means “endurance”. Those
who are crowned in heaven endure a cross on
earth. Many who would be saints, when faced
with a cross, exchange sainthood for ease.
God’s saints do not give up. They endure. They
patiently run their race in faithfulness (Hebrews
12:1). They patiently endure adversity in
faithfulness (Luke 21:19). They wait for Christ
in faithfulness (Romans 8:25; Hebrews 10:36).
The basis of this patience is the Word of God
(Romans 15:4).

That man is blessed in death who keeps
the commandments of God in life. We know
that John is not saying, “Obedience to the law
is a condition for salvation.” We read in God’s
book, “By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be
justified in his sight” (Romans 3:20). Salvation
is by grace alone. Legal works have nothing to
do with it (Romans 11:5, 6; Galatians 5:1-4).
John is not suggesting that believers are to put
themselves back under the yoke of the Mosaic
law, “because we are not under law but under
grace” (Romans 6:15).

What John is telling us is that the believer,
the child of God, the saint of God, is one whose
life is governed by God’s Word (1 John 5:1-4).
The believer is one who lives by the rule
of God’s Word. He keeps the commandments
of the gospel (1 John 3:23, 24), obeys God
from a principle of love and gratitude, and
keeps and observes the ordinances of Christ.
To the believer nothing revealed, taught, or
commanded by his Lord is non-essential. He
counts every word from God precious.
Those men and women who are blessed
in death are, “They that keep the faith of
Jesus." God promises salvation, eternal life, everlasting, heavenly blessedness to those who persevere in faith (Colossians 1:21-23; Hebrews 3:6, 14; 10:38). All true believers persevere in the doctrine of faith i.e. the Gospel, and in the grace of faith (Matthew 10:22). This faith is called, “The faith of Jesus”, because it is the faith which Christ gives and the faith of which He is the Object.

Those who are, upon their death, forever blessed of God are men and women who are “in the Lord”. That is the great, essential, all-telling point. Those people could not have died in the Lord had they not lived in the Lord. Settle this matter now. Are you in Christ? Is He all your salvation and all your desire? Are you hanging upon Him as a coat hangs upon a nail? Are you in the Beloved? Are you in Christ by the vital union of faith, as branches are in the vine? Blessed indeed is that man, that women who is in Christ! If you are in Christ, you are accepted of God; for we are “accepted in the Beloved”. If you are not in Christ, you cannot be accepted at all.

To be in Christ is to live upon Him by faith, drawing life and grace from Him. The Scriptures speak of us being grafted into Christ (Romans 9:24). Wherever a branch is grafted into a tree, two cuts must be made, one in the tree and one in the branch. So it is with those who are grafted into Christ. He was wounded to death as our Substitute, and every believer is cut in his heart in Holy Spirit conviction. The wounded sinner is bound to the wounded Saviour by the Holy Spirit and draws life from Him. To be in Christ by faith is to have evidence and proof that God has put you in Christ by grace (Hebrews 11:1).

Roll this thought over in your heart. If you trust Christ, God has put you in Christ. To be in Christ is to be in His heart as a bride is in the heart of her husband, in His hands as your Surety, in His loins as your Representative before God, in His fold as your Shepherd, and in His body as your Head. To be in Christ is to be saved forever and kept in absolute security.

Once in Christ, in Christ forever!
None from Him our souls can sever.
While His power and grace endure,
All who trust Him are secure.

To whom are these words spoken? “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.” They are spoken to God’s saints, to those who live in patience, to those who keep the...
commandments of God, to those that keep the faith of Jesus, to those who are in the Lord.

**What Blessedness?**
What is the blessedness of believers in death? Obviously, I cannot begin to tell that which eye has not seen, ear has not heard, and the heart of man has not imagined, which God has prepared for them that love Him. The blessedness of heavenly glory is infinitely greater than our feeble minds can imagine. But John does reveal, by divine inspiration, something of that blessedness awaiting every believer at death. “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours.”

The believer is blessed in his dying, no matter how, when, or where he dies. We have evidence of this fact in the Scriptures. Both Job and Paul were blessed in the prospect of death (Job 19:25-27; 2 Timothy 1:12; 4:6-8). David and Stephen were blessed in the experience of it (2 Samuel 23:5; Acts 7:56-60). Indeed, every sinner saved by grace shall be blessed of God in the event of death. “To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.”

God’s saints are forever blessed after they die, “From henceforth” (2 Corinthians 5:1-9). “God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.” Once we have left this world, we shall have forever left behind us every remnant and evil consequence of sin. In glory, there shall be “no more weeping, no more sorrow, and no more pain,” because there shall be no more sin.

Once we have dropped this robe of flesh, we shall rest from our labours. I do not understand this to mean that the saints of God in heaven have no more service to render to Christ. Not at all. Heaven is a place of unending service. But there we shall rest from labour. In heaven’s glory, there will be no ignorant ones to teach, no erring ones to rebuke, no despondency to comfort, no weaknesses to strengthen, no error to oppose, no needy ones to help, no enemies to engage, no fences to mend, no strife to heal, no sick ones to visit, no bereaved ones to console, no straying ones to correct, no sinners to convert, no tears to dry. We shall rest from our labours.

The word translated “labours” has the idea of woe attached to it. It could be read, “they rest from the woe of their labours.” In this world, all that we do for Christ has a certain measure of woe connected with it. When John says, we shall rest from our labours, he means that we shall rest from all the toils, sorrows, faults, discouragements, and disappointments connected with our labour in this world. “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.”

**Works Do Follow**
What do the believer’s works have to do with his eternal, heavenly blessedness? We know that our inheritance in heaven is the free gift of God’s grace to which we have been predestinated, which Christ purchased for us with His own blood, and which Christ has claimed for us as our Representative (Ephesians 1:11, 14). We who believe are “heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ”. All the glory and blessedness that Christ possesses in heaven today as the God-man, as our Surety, shall be ours forever by grace (John 17:5, 22). Nothing in this heavenly blessedness is earned or merited by or given to us upon the basis of our works. It is all of grace. Yet, the text says, “And their works do follow them.” What does that mean? What do our works for Christ on earth have to do with our blessedness with Christ in heaven?

Our works do not go before us, as a forerunner, to prepare a place for us in heaven. Christ is our Forerunner. He went to prepare a place for us. Our works merit nothing from God, but wrath and death, because our best works are but sin. Our works do not come beside us as a ground of confidence and acceptance with God. The wicked lean upon their works, boast of their works and plead with God for acceptance upon the basis of their works (Matthew 7:22, 23). The righteous are unaware of any good works performed by them (Matthew 25:34-40).

However the works of faithful men and women are not insignificant or unimportant, as many seem to think. “Their works do follow them.” That simply means that the fruits of their works follow them in the earth and follow them into heaven. What a blessed promise this is! Those who are the beneficiaries of the believer’s works follow them to heaven. Children follow their parents, who taught them the gospel, in the path of faith to heaven. Hearers follow their pastors, who taught them the gospel, in the path of faith to heaven. Multitudes who never met on earth will follow humble saints into heaven, who faithfully served Christ on earth, but never thought they did anything of any usefulness to anyone.
True And False Faith

Faith’s a convincing proof,
A substance sound and sure,
That keeps the soul secur’d enough,
But makes it not secure.

Notion’s the harlot’s test,
By which the truth’s revil’d;
The child of fancy finely drest,
But not the living child.

Faith is by knowledge fed,
And with obedience mixt:
Notion is empty, cold, and dead,
And fancy’s never fixt.

True faith’s the life of God,
Deep in the heart it lies;
It lives, and labours under load,
Tho’ dampt, it never dies.

A weak’ning, empty grace,
That makes us strong and full;
False faith, tho’ stout and full in face,
Weakens and starves the soul.

Opinions in the head,
True faith as far excels,
As body differs from a shade,
Or kernels from the shells.
When Sorrow Becomes Joy

Judas, the betrayer, has already left to carry out his devilish deed. The Lord and His eleven chosen and preserved friends remain. It is very near to the hour when the Shepherd shall be struck down and the sheep scattered. Soon, the Lord will be in the Paradise of His Father’s loving presence. But, before that He must walk a path no other man can walk. Agonies await Him none but the damned shall taste, but unlike the damned, He will know those agonies and sorrows to their perfection! He will endure the lesser suffering of cruel beating and excruciating crucifixion. He will die a hard and shameful death, and He knows it.

Yet, rather than focusing on His approaching sorrows, the Lord Jesus Christ speaks comfort to His disciples for the sorrow they will endure over the next few days. Remember that of all that the Lord Jesus will experience in the next three days, the disciples will see only His great suffering and death. They will not understand as He dismisses His Spirit in victory, or see Him entering into Paradise with His Father. From their perspective, the next several days will be full of defeat. Loss joined with confusion, despair, and fear.

So the Lord, in a full display of His everlasting love for His disciples, provides a word to sustain them while He is gone from them: You will sorrow; He says, but your sorrow will turn to joy. And so it was. The Lord’s words proved true, and at the appointed time their sorrow was replaced by joy.

The same is true regarding the disciples of the Lord in this day. Our sorrows always give way to joy, and in time, all our temporal sorrows will give way to the eternal joy of being in His presence! But, strictly speaking, the Lord did not say to His disciples that their sorrow would be replaced by joy. He said their sorrow would become joy. How can this be? The very events which were the cause of their heavy sorrow for three days became the cause of their joy for everlasting days! Christ and Him crucified! Christ’s resurrection changed the meaning of His death in their minds so that the truth that once caused them pain brought them joy!

In Galatians 6:14 Paul says, “May it never be that I boast in anything other than in the cross of my Lord Jesus Christ.” There is no good English equivalent for the word translated “boast”. In other places it is translated “rejoice”. The closest word in English is “exult”. For Paul and all believers, it is a combination of confidence without gloating and joy without pride. It is joy because the cross brings to us every cause of joy. It is pride-less for the cross is not our work but Christ’s. We are proud of Him but not of ourselves. We rejoice in His work, not our own.

We do not experience this “sorrowing becoming joy” like the disciples did. Only those who went through the historical experiences of the Lord’s suffering could experience that transformation. But we do experience something similar. Conviction of sin comes to us in several ways, but no conviction creates such sorrow as that conviction that comes from Calvary. The cross strips us of any pretence to self-righteousness for it teaches us that we are so sinful that nothing less than the merciless slaughter of the Son of God could save us. What sorrow the cross brings to the hearts of those who are convicted by it! But, by a miracle only God can do, the same sight that brings us such great sorrow transforms that sorrow into joy! The same cross that condemns our sin and our “righteousness” testifies to us of those same sins washed away and a perfect righteousness charged to our account. Our sorrow is not merely replaced by joy; our sorrow becomes joy!

Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy (John 16:20).
ETERNAL LIFE
IN CHRIST

Our progenitor, Adam, chose sin, and it compassed him about like a garment; and entered into his heart like water. It ran through his veins, contaminated his blood, polluted every member of his body, and defiled every faculty of his soul. Thus he became a complete mass of moral corruption; and we, his children, inherit his depravity. We are shapen in iniquity, and in sin did our mother conceive us. Being conceived and born in sin, we have conceived mischief, brought forth falsehood, and added sin to sin, till the number of our crimes exceeds all calculation, and our amazing guilt has reached unto the heavens. We are criminals, deserving ten thousand deaths, and to death eternal. The righteous law, which we have transgressed in every point, has justly condemned us; nor is it possible that it should administer anything to us but death and damnation. Yet, under these awful circumstances, we need not abandon ourselves to despair: life, eternal life, is proclaimed; a covenant of life was made by the eternal three, and a promise of life was given long before sin entered into the world, and death passed upon man. The second person of the holy trinity was ordained by the first, with His own free and full consent, to assume human nature and take it into personal union with Himself; and become God-Man. As such in the divine purpose, He was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was, as the head of the body, the church, and the saviour of all His members; and it pleased the Father, that in Him should all fulness dwell. All the fulness of the elect

By nature we are sinners. We sinned in our first father: by his disobedience we were made sinners, and by his transgression judgment came upon us to condemnation and death. Our nature was poisoned in the fountain and cursed in the root.
was chosen in Him by a sovereign act of stupendous matchless grace, and fixed in Him, never to be separated from Him: it is, I think, with respect to this, that the apostle calls the church “the fulness of him, that filleth all in all.”

As God, this glorious head of all principalities and powers, has life eternal dwelling essentially in Himself; as God-Man, and the head of the church, He has everlasting life given Him by the Father for all His people. This we learn from His own gracious mouth. The words are these: “As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself:” “As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.” Indissoluble union to Jesus is the ground on which we partake of eternal life. Being chosen in Him, made one with Him, and immutably fixed in Him, by an eternal act of the divine mind, we are made partakers of His life and of all His fulness. Our title to life, spiritual and eternal, is indisputable. It was freely granted, and made absolutely certain in that covenant which is ordered in all things and sure. These ancient counsels, and these acts of grace; Oh! how glorious! how precious! The eternal God freely gives eternal life, by an eternal act of His own will, in an eternal testament, to be enjoyed by all the objects of His eternal love, through an eternal union with Jehovah Jesus, and all this is confirmed by his oath: “Wherein God willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath.” This has, at once, raised our title to everlasting life, far above every idea of human merit, and placed it infinitely beyond the influence of the caprice of mortals, and the fictitious power of chance.

At the time appointed by the Father, our glorious Immanuel came, that His sheep might have this life in real possession, as well as in title, and that they might have it more abundantly. As the representative of the whole general assembly and church of the first born, whose names are written in heaven, He stood under the law, obliged by His own absolute engagement, to obey its precepts with the utmost exactness, and to suffer its penalty in its full extent. By His obedience He brought in a complete righteousness, through which grace reigns, in the absolute justification of the ungodly, unto eternal life; and by His amazing sufferings upon the cross, He at once made the most complete atonement for all the sins of His people, that God the Father as a judge, could demand; made peace with God, obtained eternal redemption, removed the curse of the law, demolished the sting of death, crushed the empire of hell, and completed the work of salvation. Having conquered principalities and powers by His death, He made an open show of them in His resurrection and ascension, triumphing over them in the man, and brought life and immortality to light by the gospel. Though He were dead, He is alive again, He lives to die no more, and has the keys of hell and of death.

The race of God’s anointed priests
Shall never pass away;
Before His glorious face they stand,
And serve Him night and day.
Though reason raves, and unbelief
Flows on, a mighty flood,
They are, and shall be, till the end
The hidden priests of God.

His chosen souls, their earthly dross
Consumed in sacred fire,
To God’s own heart their hearts ascend
In flame of deep desire.
The incense of their worship fills
His temple’s holiest place;
Their song with wonder fills the heavens,
The glad new song of grace.

Gerhard Tersteegen
All enemies are under His exalted feet, all power in heaven and in earth is His; He is the head over all principalities and powers; and He claims all dominion and authority to give eternal life to as many as the Father has given Him. He is our life; because He lives, we shall live also. In His obedience we have justification; free, complete, eternal. In His death, we have pardon, peace, deliverance from all condemnation, and victory over death itself. His blood cleanseth us from all sin, and through it we shall overcome every enemy, and triumph with Him in the world of light.

The eternal life, which we have in, and from Jesus, is not barely an everlasting existence, but an endless state of being, accompanied with endless delight. It is a life of endless communion with the infinite divinity, in all His persons, perfections, characters, and all the riches of His own supreme blessedness.

The enjoyment of this life begins while we are in this present evil world. He who has said of Himself, “I am the life” causes the dead to hear His voice, and live. He says unto them, “live”, and His commandment is life. A new life, spiritual, heavenly, divine, and inextinguishable, is communicated to all the elect; from the overflowing fulness of their ever-living head, in consequence of which they believe and live a life of faith. This truth is inculcated by our Lord Himself in those memorable words, “I am the resurrection and the life, he that liveth and believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.” The spirit of life, from the incarnate God, is entered into him, and he lives spiritually, believes scripturally, and shall live eternally. Christ and he are one. He lives in Christ, and Christ lives in him: he handles and tastes the word of life, and has real communion with Him as the true God and eternal life. The life of faith is supported in him, by constant supplies of grace from the living vine on which he lives, and on which he grows. He feeds upon the bread of life, and lives by Him; as it is written, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me, hath everlasting life. I am that bread of life. This is the bread that cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread he shall live forever; and the bread that I shall give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the father; so he that eateth me shall live by me.”

From this food the true believer receives present succour, strength, and comfort. In the strength which he derives from it, he stands, he fights, he conquers, and he triumphs. In this his might, still leaning upon his beloved, he marches on his heavenly way over mountains of difficulties; under burdens of afflictions and troubles; through floods of temptations and flames of persecution. He follows the good shepherd, listening to the gracious words of His mouth. “My sheep hear my voice, I know them and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father who gave them me, is greater than all, and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand.” This gracious and faithful declaration of his Almighty Redeemer, is the ground of his hope of immortality and the basis of his confidence, that he shall be with Him where He is, to behold His glory: here he rests. Drawn by the almighty love of His glorious forerunner, he presses after Him, ardently longing to be with Him, to see Him as He is, and to feel a perfect transformation into His likeness, till he enters his everlasting rest, begins his life of glory, and is filled with the fulness of God. Thus divine love, sovereign, free, and immutable, flowing from the eternal throne, through the channel of a well ordered covenant, and in the streams of the mediator’s blood, raises all the vessels of mercy from their lapsed state to glory ineffable.
William Gadsby (1773-1844) is perhaps best remembered for his hymn selection or Gadsby’s Hymnbook which is still used today in gospel churches. Interest continues, Gadsby’s - The Story of a Hymnbook by Matthew Hyde has recently been published by Gospel Standard Publications.

During his lifetime, however, it was Gadsby’s preaching that was most highly valued and under the Spirit of God greatly used to the comfort of many needy sinners and heavy-laden souls. B A Ramsbottom’s biography William Gadsby gives a good overview of Gadsby’s life and ministry, but some will have found this work rather light on Gadsby’s distinctive theology and doctrine, particularly with respect to the role of the law in the life of a believer, what is sometimes called the believer’s rule of conduct.

A new book from CBO Publications called Freedom From The Law is a very helpful compilation of Gadsby’s writings on the subject of law and gospel and will help any believer to get a better understanding of the important issues at stake in this subject. It is the view of the present writer that an over-emphasis upon the law of Moses in Christian pulpits and in the lives of God’s covenant people has had a stultifying and assurance-robbing effect on generations of believers.

Gadsby realised that so much of the preaching of his day that claimed to bring sinners into gracious freedom actually brought them into bondage by leading them away from receiving and enjoying gospel promises to rely on their own strength and resolve in maintaining a legal-works profession. This took the believer’s eye off from his Saviour’s accomplishments and taught him to look to himself and his own achievements.

Gadsby saw that such preaching deters a believer from resting in the completed work of Christ and brings instead guilt for failures and self-pride for successes to those who attempt to follow its instruction. So he wrote:

The law of the Spirit of life,
That takes the old yoke from our neck,
Proves Zion to be the Lamb’s wife,
And Zion with beauty doth deck;
Provides her a clothing divine,
And makes her all-glorious within,
Nor angels are clothèd more fine,
Nor can it be sullied with sin.

Along with the letters is an extract from Gadsby’s Catechism for children on the subject of the gospel. It is reproduced in this edition of New Focus on p.14 and 15. This, together with his hymn “The gospel’s the law of the Lamb” shows how Gadsby sought to establish the principle of the gospel’s superiority over the law of Moses in the minds of children and the poor, often illiterate, hearers and worshippers who attended his chapel services in Manchester.

The gospel’s the law of the Lamb,
My soul of its glories shall sing,
With pleasure my tongue shall proclaim,
The law of my Saviour and King;
A sweet law of liberty this,
Of love it the precious law is,
Unknown unto all but a child.

Sadly, in recent years this principle aspect from the ministry of William Gadsby has been downplayed by those who ought to champion its value and promote its power. It is to be hoped that the recent interest in making William Gadsby and his theology more widely known will result in a clearer appreciation amongst God’s little flock of this valuable gospel truth.
WILLIAM GADSBY

A CATECHISM FOR CHILDREN AND SCHOOLS

(An extract stating the believer’s rule of conduct)

William Gadsby’s *Catechism for Children and Schools* was published some time before July 1809 when it was reviewed in the *Gospel Magazine*. The text given on the title page is: *The father to the children shall make known thy truth* (Isaiah 38:19).

When Gadsby established a Sunday School (built 1825 and extended 1842) at his chapel in Manchester he included in the Trust Deed: “A catechism written by the said William Gadsby and now used in the said School or some other Catechism embodying and inculcating all and singular the religious doctrines aforesaid and none other shall from time to time and at all times for ever hereafter be invariably taught in the said school.”

In his introduction to the Catechism he said: “In the following Catechism I have endeavoured to state the truths in such a way as to lead the child to take sin to itself, and not to suppose that the blessings of free grace belong to it, unless it has an evidence of being born again. That the Great Head of the Church may bless the truths it contains to those who feel they need them, is the prayer of, dear Reader, Yours to serve in the Gospel of Christ, W. GADSBY”

In the extract given here Gadsby is endeavouring to explain to children what it is for a believer to be free from the Law. The comprehensiveness of the Gospel Rule, for every aspect of a believer’s life and conduct, given in this Catechism extract is presented even more extensively in his “Perfect Law of Liberty.” Section Four—Why this Law is called a Perfect Law of Liberty.

Q. What blessings are connected with faith in Christ Jesus?
A. The blessings connected with faith in Christ Jesus are, a freedom from the bondage of sin, Satan, the world, death, and the law; with free access to the Father, and a heartly welcome to all the glory of the gospel, and the blessings of God’s house.

Q. Since a believer is made free from the law, is it any part of his freedom to be at liberty to sin?
A. No; for he is called to holiness; and though he is dead to, and free from, the law of works, he is not now, nor does he wish to be, without law to God, but is under the law of Christ.

Q. What is the law of Christ?
A. The law of Christ is the gospel of His grace, which is the law from Zion, called the law of faith, the law of liberty, and the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus.

Q. What is the gospel?
A. The gospel may be taken in a limited or in a more extensive sense.

Q. What is meant by the gospel in a limited sense?
A. Glad tidings of great joy, or a free proclamation of rich mercy, without money and without price, to poor, sin-burdened sinners; with the glorious invitations, doctrines, and promises of God’s everlasting love, and the blessings these truths contain.

Q. What is meant by the gospel in a more extensive sense?
A. The above things, together with the precepts and ordinances enjoined on the church by Christ and His apostles, and the things connected therewith.

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1 The entire *Catechism for Children and Schools* is available to download from the New Focus website at www.go-newfocus.co.uk
Q. Is the gospel, in all its branches, a sufficient rule of life to a believer in Christ?
A. Yes; for through the life-giving power of the Spirit, faith lives upon Christ, the Living Head, and its precepts are the believer’s rule in the world, in the family, in the church, and in case of personal offences.

Q. Can you give a proof of the precepts of the gospel as a rule to a believer in the world?
A. Yes; for it is written, “I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you. Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.”

Q. Can you give a proof of the precepts of the gospel as a rule in the family?
A. Yes; as it is written, “Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands, as unto the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them. Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing unto the Lord. Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eye service, as men pleasers, but in singleness of heart, pleasing God. Masters give unto your servants that which is just and equal.”

Q. Can you give a proof of the gospel as a rule in the Church?
A. Yes; as it is written, “Let us consider one another, to provoke unto love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another, and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. As God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk; and so ordain in all churches. Neither be ye called masters, for one is your Master, even Christ, and ye are all brethren. Keep the ordinances as I have delivered them unto you. Let all things be done decently and in order. Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another. Love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous.”

Q. Can you give a proof of the gospel as a rule in case of personal offences?
A. Yes; as it is written, “If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between him and thee alone; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother; but if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established; and if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church; but if he shall neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and publican.”

Q. Does the gospel require anything of believers towards God?
A. Believers are not their own, but are bought with a price. God, in the gospel, requires them to glorify Him in their body and their spirit, which are His, and to worship Him in spirit and in truth; and His grace enables them so to do.

He comes in blood-stained garments;
Upon His brow a crown;
The gates of brass fly open, the iron bands drop down;
From off the fettered captive the chains of Satan fall,
While angels shout triumphant,
That Christ is Lord of all.

Charitie Lees Bancroft
Stephen, the first martyr, was stoned to death because he declared that the Jews had not learnt from their own history. As Great Britain is coming more and more under the sway of papist pagan ideas and Rome is exercising her powers in the Protestant Isles more than ever since the Reformation and rumours are being spread throughout Christendom that the churches are allying with Islam in what they call ‘holy oecumenicity’, history is being ignored. We are told that it is wrong to celebrate the Fifth of November as the Gunpowder Plot is mere myth, and, anyway, even if it were true, we should forgive our enemies and forget their deeds. After all, the so-called Plot happened in 1605 and it is now impossible to reconstruct the facts. What we know of the Fifth of November has nothing to teach us but Protestant intolerance, we are told, and so anyone who recites:

Please to remember
The Fifth of November,
Gunpowder, treason and plot.
I see no reason
Why the Gunpowder Treason
Should ever be forgot.

... has the mentality of the Inquisition, is intolerant, un-Christian, an enemy of mankind and very un-British.

The ‘tolerance’ of the Counter-Reformation
Naturally, such ‘tolerant’ ideas are merely self-tolerance and originated in the Counter-Reformation and stem from the very sect who planned the plot. These were the Jesuits who spearheaded the fight against renewal and reform and who are, once again, spearheading the attempt to take-over Britain and enslave her to Rome. Jesuits have never shown much

Portrait by Paul van Somer, c. 1620. In the background is the Banqueting House, Whitehall, by architect Inigo Jones, commissioned by James.
tolerance for England’s Reformed Christians, but they continue to demand that those same Christians be tolerant of them. Indeed, not only do they press for toleration and amnesty for bye-gone crimes, they have turned their criminals into saints and patriots and even campaigned for Plot Night conspirators such as ‘Father’ Henry Garnet to be beatified. A similar candidate for ‘beatification’ was ‘Father’ Oswald Greenway who is presented to modern Englishmen as a hero because he had the gumption to celebrate the Mass with the plotters so that they might be strengthened for their difficult task of blowing hundreds of leading politicians into tiny pieces. Indeed, the only logical conclusion from 400 years of Jesuit apologetics concerning the Gunpowder Plot is that absolute tolerance can only be obtained when no Protestants are around to contradict Rome. If Britain’s Protestants do not watch out, the Fifth of November will soon be called Saint Guy Fawkes’ Day.

How the plot arose
The Gunpowder Plot arose out of Roman Catholic false hopes set on James I of England who was also James VI of Scotland. They had rejoiced at the death of Elizabeth, thinking that Puritan Protestantism must die with her and believed that James was an illiterate Mr Facing-Both-Ways, born of a Roman Catholic fanatic whom they could easily manipulate. They emphasised that his wife, Anne of Denmark was of Roman Catholic persuasion and had great influence on her husband. Thus, before James had reached London, the Jesuits had already pleaded with the new King to give Rome at least equal powers with the Reformed Church of England. Should James not be prepared to listen, the plotters had carefully solicited Spanish help to try and enslave free England a second time. Indeed, the English Roman Catholics had formed a regiment under Sir William Stanley who had joined England’s Spanish enemies as mercenaries in Flanders to help in the renewed plot to bring England under the Spanish yoke. They had not learnt from history regarding the farce of the Spanish Armada but looked upon it as a first-round trial to lead to a second round victory.

Modern pro-Roman Catholic authors still spread the same rumours concerning James’ alleged affinities with Rome, as do many Presbyterians and Freechurchmen not knowing the history of their own country. They tell the same tales of Queen Anne’s alleged conversion to Rome as did their 16th century counterparts but Anne herself rejected all these allegations in a letter to Queen Elizabeth supporting the Protestant cause. When she was crowned Queen of Scotland on 17 May, 1590, Anne swore ‘to withstand and despise all papistical
superstitions, and whatsoever ceremonies and rites contrary to the Word of God.’ At her early death, Queen Anne faithfully pronounced herself a firm believer in the Reformed faith. Also, to the Jesuits’ and some Scottish New-Presbyterians’ consternation, they found James strongly supporting Reformed theology as he had done in Scotland and he gave the Puritans a private hearing in Hampton Court Palace where they discussed further Reforms which Convocation was already implementing. Then, to cap all, James combated Arminianism and Rome seemingly more vigorously than Elizabeth and even openly denouncing Pelagianism as the doorway to Rome. He also campaigned for appointing thoroughly Reformed Professors in the universities both at home and abroad. The Synod of Dort grew out of these endeavours, which explains the presence of a strong British contingent at the Synod.

The Jesuits also found, to their dismay, that there were a number of very influential Roman Catholics in England who wished to live side by side with their Protestant neighbours in peace and mutual tolerance. There were also a large number of Protestants who nevertheless believed in free equality of choice in religious matters. None of these wanted a civil war in which English papists fought their Protestant neighbours and thus leave the country wide open to Spanish, French, Dutch, Danish and Swedish claims. One of the many reasons for James wishing to marry Anne was that Denmark was not only keeping up her joint dominion of the Orkneys with Norway but was also claiming other parts of Scotland. James skill in keeping Denmark at bay without bloodshed was a feat of diplomacy sadly forgotten today by James’ uninformed, or rather misinformed Protestant critics.

**Opposition to Protestant England was not merely on the Roman Catholic Side**

Sadly, the politico-ecclesiastical ideas of Andrew Melville, allegedly strengthened by false claims concerning Continental degrees which were never given and academic posts on the Continent which Melville never held, envisaged a King as a mere vassal and spokesman of his New Kirk which was seeking to suppress the original Scottish Reformed Church and introduce forms of government used in pagan times derived from Jesuit Major’s misunderstanding of history. Happily, the cobweb-myths and legends concerning Scotland’s unhappy break with the Reformation are now being swept clean so that true Reform as begun by Patrick Hamilton in the 16th century can now continue. As the person of Melville produced as much or more opposition to King James as that of the Jesuits and the Ultra-Presbyterian side has rarely been discussed concerning the early plot to end James’ Protestant government, a paragraph must be devoted to this flash-in-the-pan rebel. Happily, the myth of Melville’s introduction of Reformed views from the Continent to Scotland, rather than his implanting new, highly intolerant views, has been thoroughly challenged in recent years. Most modern scholars such as Brown, Reid, Holloway and Mullan question what history has made of Melville, and speak of ‘the Melville myth’, or ‘Melville legend’ and refer to ‘the Melville of popular imagination’ and portray Melville as rather a humanist and politician, influenced by radicals such as Cartwright, Travers and Scottish republican nationalists rather than a theologian and shepherd of souls and a leading Professor of Theology at Continental universities. Much of our knowledge of Andrew comes from James Melville’s writings on his uncle’s importance. These are coloured to the point of great exaggeration and much was penned some thirty years after the events described looking nostalgically back down memory lane. So, for instance, James Melville refers to his uncle as holding the title ‘Professor of Humanitie’ at Geneva, whereas, as Reid and Holloway show, Melville only taught the lowest class of the seven-tiered prep-school in Geneva which had been hit by the plague leaving the teacher dead and the class nigh abandoned so Melville was given the rather humble post as a fill-in. When Melville asked Beza to promote him, he was scolded and told to ‘follow his vocation’ and that his qualifications and practical experience were not proportionate to his zeal. Much has been said of Beza’s positive recommendation of Melville but Reid argues that this was a standard formula at the time, used in lieu of a formal degree qualification which Melville did not obtain. Beza was also concerned to keep up good relations with the Scots despite his disappointment with Melville. Even Melville’s reputation of being a well-qualified graduate of Paris and Poitiers must also be challenged in view of modern research as Melville is nowhere to be found on the matriculation lists as a student, his name does not appear on the lists of graduates and the Scotsman is nowhere recorded as a member of any university staff. It is known, however, that Melville did work as a private
prep-tutor whilst in France and even today, in France, even elementary School teachers are addressed by the children with ‘Monsieur le Professeur’. So as Reid and Holloway show, modern critical reevaluation of Melville as a scholar and theologian shows that we must be far more ‘modest’ in our understanding of his abilities and the views of such as M'Crie concerning Melville’s academic brilliance are without warrant. Indeed, the few works extant from Melville’s pen show him to have had some skill in teaching Latin poetry after the fashion of Buchanan and no experience as a minister, but it was not until M'Crie wrote his artificial novel concerning Melville’s life in the 19th century that Melville was identified with anything like a Reformed faith and Christian ministry. We are thus to place Melville in the realms of Renaissance humanism and radical politics rather than Reformation theology. Keith Brown says of Buchanan’s ‘shocking De jure Regni apud Scotos and the polemic Rerum Scotiarum Historia’ that ‘His ideas had enormous influence among the new wave of Presbyterian ministers who clustered around Andrew Melville.’ This became true also of Samuel Rutherford’s rehash of Major and Buchanan in his Enlightenment work Lex Rex which led to the outlawing of the Reformed Church of England in 1643 and the re-introduction of Aristotelianism and Rationalism in Presbyterian politico-ecclesiastical philosophy.

Sadly, however, present professedly Protestant followers of James’ enemies and true religion keep to less intellectual ideas and continue to claim, in order to denigrate the scholar King, that James, should have proven his manhood by making the fourteen-year-old child Anne a mother when the very-much-in-love couple first planned their marriage. When, two years later, sixteen-year-old Anne was still without a child, the unjust and wicked rumour was spread that James was either a homosexual or a bisexual who never shared his bed with his wife. Happily Anne bore James seven children, though only three survived, putting an end to such evil rumours, but they are sadly kept up by some professing Protestants even today.

The present Queen of England, Elizabeth II, is, by the providence of God, a direct descendent of James and Anne’s daughter Elizabeth Stuart.

Guy Fawkes’ Night at Windsor Castle, 1776
Be this as it may, the plotters were determined to murder not only the King, the Queen and the future monarchical line of Great Britain but also the entire Parliament with the exception of a few friends and sponsors who would be warned to stay away from their Parliamentary duties when the great blow-up came.

The characters of the plotters
The actual gathering of the plotters reads like some Walter Scott cloak and dagger novel. At least thirteen, all upper class or wealthy gentry (except Bates, ring-leader Robert Catesby’s servant), joined the party of conspirators. Most of these were men of very loose lives who were lately converted to Roman Catholicism through hopes of being able to turn over a new leaf and be more respected in a future Roman Catholic society. Papist chroniclers thus emphasise the former loose lives of the plotters when they were Protestants but how they became honest, godly men as soon as they were converted. Lewis Winstock in his Gunpowder Treason and Plot rather doubts this story, especially in his chapter on ‘Catholic Fears’. These turn-coats are also invariably described by their fellow-Romanists as patriotic Englishmen. This is quite untrue because their allegiance was with the Spanish King who was plotting to invade England and they hoped that their blowing up of Parliament would be followed up by an immediate Spanish take-over of England.

On being assembled by Catesby, they all swore a blasphemous oath to carry out their bloody plan of mass murder in the name of the Blessed Trinity and promised one another never to divulge their secret. The central plotters, not counting helpers and helpers-helpers, were: Robert Catesby, Thomas Bates, Sir Everard Digby, Guy Fawkes, John Grant, Robert Keyes, Thomas Percy, Ambrose Rookwood, Francis Tresham, Robert Winter, Thomas Winter, Christopher Wright, and John Wright. A number of Jesuit ‘Fathers’ were present to give the plotters ‘Christ in wafer form’, only one of whom, John Gerhard is said to have been innocent of the actual plot. Perhaps we shall never know who these Jesuit monks were as they all used numerous pseudonyms and false credentials, believing that their goal justified any traitorous or treacherous means.

The odd thing about the main conspirators, however, was that most of them were already suspected by the authorities of being traitors, criminals and rebels, so it is astonishing that such characters were naive enough to think they would get away with what they planned. It is also astonishing that in the relative chaos between the death of Elizabeth and the crowning of James, the law courts had become as lax or non-existent as later in Cromwell’s days. Anarchy seems to always raise its head when a sound government collapses. However, the idea that Mother Church was behind the regicides made the plotters believe that good would come of their evil. Be that as it may, nowadays most of the records we have of the conspirators are from the pens of Roman Catholics who seek to impress on us the fact that these men were the wisest, best, bravest and most educated of men, each with an invincible Christian faith. Never did facts speak more clearly against such misrepresentations used as a cloak of hoped-for invisibility to cover the plotters’ misdeeds. Truth has always been a most relative commodity for Jesuits. It was obviously sheer hatred that motivated these people. Hatred of the Protestant way of life, hatred of England’s independence from the pope’s power but also hatred engendered by being treated throughout the Elizabethan Settlement as second-class citizens. However, the totalitarian scourge of Mary Tudor, the pope’s vassal, had given main-
stream England no wish to give the enemy an inch that he might once more take a mile.

James ideal of religious tolerance was too lax for both Jesuits and New Kirk Presbyterians
James campaigned against intolerance from whatever side, much to the disdain of the Paris Jesuit humanists of the John Major (alias Dr Surbonne) school who were striving to radicalise the Church in Scotland by attempting to make the Church the secular arm of the law against King, Court, Parliament and the old Reformed faith. To instil such ‘religion’ in James, George Buchanan, Major’s student and James’ guardian, had regularly beaten young James raw as had several of the Estate Lords who supported Buchanan’s politics, but James could not be brow-beaten either by the stick or propaganda indoctrination of the kind Buchanan brutally meted out to him. As soon as James came to power, he told his chief advisor, Sir Robert Cecil that ‘I did ever hold persecution as one of the infallible notes of a false church.’ And that ‘I will never agree that any man should die for errors of faith’. This policy caused James to be hated by both the intolerant Jesuits and the like-minded followers of Buchanan, Knox and Melville, who had their roots in John Major’s Jesuitism. James’ guardians locked him up in guarded rooms so that he could not take part in political debates but somehow assassins managed to pass invisibly by the guards and open the doors and attack the young King. When the Church Elders suggested a special prayer-service be arranged to thank God for the rescue of the King from a murderous death, militant New-Kirk Presbyterian ministers refused to organise such services.

When James moved to London, he affirmed his religious convictions by refusing an enormous bribe the rich papists offered him and gave those wishing for a continuation of the Protestant Reformation audience at Hampton Court. He then circulated his great work on Protestant statesmanship, Basilicon dorum, dedicated to his son and heir Prince Henry which warned him to be on his guard against ‘some fiery-spirited man in the ministry’ who ‘fed themselves with the hope to become Tribuni plebis [tribunes of the people]; and so, in a popular government, by leading the people by the nose, to bear the sway of all the rule.’

James had all those clergy in mind who were little use as ministers but felt they could rule their country better than any stable government.

All this was a brave step on James’ part as his rival to the throne, English-bred Arabella Stuart, was said to be both a favourite of Rome’s and of a number of noblemen both Roman Catholic and Protestant who thought they owed ‘foreign’ James no allegiance. She was also considered harmless and voiceless by all sides. Arabella herself seems to have had no ambitions of becoming Queen, though she was James’ cousin. However, there were many Church of England men who were happy to have James as King but did not wish for a union with the severely divided Scottish Church. They feared the revolutionary politics brought over from France by the Major-Buchanan-Melville faction, with their ideas of a puppet monarchy alongside strict monarchical views of Church government under ruling elders. Neither did such revolutionaries desire union with the English Church. James position thus underlined the Shakespearean truth ‘uneasy lies the head that wears a crown’.

The Jesuits were soon faced with fines for opposing the King but they managed to have themselves let off by a most skilful manoeuvre. There was a poor priest named William Watson who was considered mentally and educationally subnormal. He was of pygmy growth and purblind with an enormous squint. This sad victim of the Jesuits was persuaded to hatch a plot to kidnap the King. Swift to cash in on this ruse, the Jesuits told James of the possible threat to his life and then told the naïve King that one good turn deserves another and asked to be let off their fines, to which the King consented. Once this scare of a plot to kill the King died down, plans were now laid to do away with the representatives of the Reformed faith en bloc with one fell explosion.

1. See especially Steven Reid’s PhD thesis Education in Post-Reformation Scotland: Andrew Melville and the University of St Andrew’s, pp. 15-34 and Ernest Holloway’s Andrew Melville and Humanism in Renaissance Scotland, pp. 36-57.
2. See Brown’s Kingdom or Province?: Scotland and the regal union 1603-1715, p. 67.
3. Sadly, in order to stress James’ allegedly unsuitability for the Kingship and as a leader of the Protestants, Dr Alan Clifford still argues that James was twin-sexed as if he were present at James’ birth and all others present were deceived into thinking James was a normal boy. Clifford appears to argue that if James were born bisexual, this would have made him automatically a homosexual. The same superstitious arguments were used to dethrone Queen Christina of Sweden who was allegedly bisexual and was forced to abdicate under great pressure. James was made of more manly stuff. The pre-Melville Presbyterians all praised James for his great chastity and when John Durie asked young James what kind of a wife he was looking for, the King answered that he sought a spouse who was a godly woman and placed herself under the gospel. See Clifford’s article ‘AV or not AV: This is the Question’ and my reply ‘The Relevance of the AV to Today’s Christian Life and Witness’, both to be found in the internet. Happily, modern scholarship is clearing up much dirty-mindedness in James VI criticism.
The Holy Spirit declares why everything is coming to pass, worked together, exactly according to God’s purpose (Ephesians 1:9-11). It is because God’s purpose is toward a people He foreknew before the foundation of the world. The false doctrine of unregenerate man makes salvation to be by the will and works of the sinner. Man says that God’s ‘foreknowledge’ is God looking into the future, seeing that some would believe and choosing them to be saved. But if God chose His people because He foresaw we would believe then the sinner would have room to boast: election would not be according to God’s will, but according to the sinners’ will; not according to God’s grace, but according to the sinner’s works; not of God who calls the sinner, but of the sinner who calls God. This is the difference between the truth and lies. Will-works religion makes man to be the cause of salvation; but the gospel declares God is the cause of salvation. The very purpose of God’s sovereign election is so that salvation is not of man’s works but of God who calls whom He will (Romans 9).

So what does it mean when it says ‘For whom God foreknew?’ At the root of ‘foreknowledge’ is the word ‘prognosis’. Prognosis is a judgment made beforehand. Before the foundation of the world, God made a judgment of His people. God took delight in His people, approving of His people in Christ His Son. In the mind and purpose of God, when God formed His people in His Son, we were conformed to Christ, already called, justified, and glorified in Christ. It was infinitely, eternally complete in the mind and purpose of God. God foreknew His people in His Son.

It is evident God did not foresee who would believe, because those God foreknew, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son. That implies that in time God knew that we would lose the image of God and have to be reformed in that image. So God pre-fixed the destination of His people to be conformed to the image of His Son. Had God foreseen that His people would believe on Him then there would have been no need for this. But the reason, we were redeemed by Christ, regenerated by the Holy Spirit, given the gift of faith, brought into the family of God, in short, the reason we believe, is because God predestinated us to be conformed to the image of His Son (Ephesians 1:3-6; 1 Peter 1:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:11-14; Jeremiah 1:5). Adam’s fall, and our fall in Adam, was according to God’s purpose to glorify His Son. God even made Adam to picture Christ, the last Adam, in representation of His people (Romans 5:14, 19). So in order for Christ to bring us into His image, Christ had to be made flesh, be made under the law, justify us, send the gospel to us, recreate us after His image and preserve us to final glory where we will be perfectly conformed to His image.

Remember, the Holy Spirit is showing us why all things work together for good to them who love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose. Adam’s transgression and fall, evil as it was against God, was worked together for the good of God’s people. It was so that Christ, the last Adam, could receive all the glory for perfectly obeying God, unto the death of the cross, for His people. So Satan, sin, death and hell, all the ages of time, the wars between nations and people, the rejection and crucifixion of God’s own Son, your rebellion and mine, the gospel being brought to us, our being born again, all was worked together for our good by God according to His eternal purpose (Galatians 4:3-7; 2 Corinthians 3:18).

Child of God, what comfort compares to this? We now are sons of God and shall be perfectly conformed to Christ’s image when He returns (1 John 3:2). Nothing shall stop God from bringing to pass this eternal purpose (Philippians 3:21). Rest easy, beloved, nothing shall stop God. And as if to give this a final capstone of certainty, the Holy Spirit says the chief reason is not even for us but for His Son, ‘that he might be the firstborn among many brethren’ (Romans 8:29; Psalm 115:1; Colossians 1:16-18; Revelation 1:5, 6).

Sinner, if you reject God’s sovereign grace then you reject Christ having the glory as the Firstborn and you reject the very joy believers have of knowing why all things work together for our good according to God’s own purpose. May our Sovereign God and Saviour make you to believe God and rest easy in Christ.

For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. (Romans 8:29)

The reason we believe, is because God predestinated us to be conformed to the image of His Son
Though it be a great mystery, yet it is a great truth, that the elect may be at the same time truly related, and in the same sense united to Christ in their election, yet by virtue of their union to their fallen head [Adam], may be said to lie in that wicked one really and actually, till united to Christ in a marriage union by faith. And that they may at the same time be so far discharged in the eternal covenant in God’s sight, as that He should look upon them His people and children, His Son’s members and sheep, and yet them be actually cursed and condemned by the sentence of the righteous law they are under.

Hence it is, that though the Scriptures say the chosen of God were blessed and accepted in the Beloved from all eternity in their eternal predestination, and therefore as mere elect afore conversion named people, and children of God, members and sheep of Christ, vessels of mercy and honour; yet some at the same time are by the Scriptures of truth called sinners, ungodly, enemies in their minds through wicked works, children of wrath, without Christ, and atheists in the world, and therefore actually condemned and pronounced accursed. The former is true of them, because God says so; and the latter is true of them at one and the same time, though not in the same respect; because God says so.

It is a truth they are justified before faith, because God makes it to be so; and it is a truth they are justified when they believe, because God makes it, and declares it to be so; and therefore great is the mystery of the gospel. It is a truth, they are really justified in eternity, in God’s sight and account, who calleth those things that are not as though they were, and to whose view all things He wills, whether past, present, or to come, are always present, and are as real in the divine mind as when they exist to us; and it is as great a truth they are not justified, but condemned afore they have a being, and after they have a being, till they believe; but it is not in the same manner and respect, and therefore these two truths are not contradictory.

Though they were justified in God’s sight in eternity, yet really condemned in Adam, till the righteousness of Christ was actually wrought out, and this and that elect sinner under real condemnation, till it appears to be otherwise, by his receiving Christ’s righteousness by faith. His actual justification does not exist, till God applies the righteousness of His Son, and he receives it: for as much as according to the declared will of God in His Word, things are then so to this and that sinner when they appear to be so.

Though an elect sinner is loved from eternity, yet God’s love does not exist to him, till he makes demonstrations of it in Christ to him, more or less, in the sundry ways of His own appointment. And therefore thus must those Scriptures be reconciled. An elect sinner, unregenerate, is really a child of God, in respect of the eternal decree and covenant: God has made him so to Himself; but at the same time he is really and truly a child of wrath, in respect of himself, and all created beings, till rescued thence by the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus.

The doctrine of eternal election ... is the foundation of all spiritual blessings, of faith and of holiness, of joy and comfort here, and happiness hereafter, and even of complete and everlasting salvation; and is of God’s laying, and is owing to His sovereign pleasure and free rich grace; and stands sure, not on the foot of works, but upon the unchangeable and unfrustrable will of God.

John Gill (1697-1771)
New Focus Conference 2016

Datchworth Village Hall
Datchworth Green
Knebworth, Hertfordshire, SG3 6TL

Preachers:
Clay Curtis (Rocky Hill, NJ, USA)
Allan Jellett (Knebworth, UK)
Peter Meney (Great Falls, MT, USA)

TIMES ... CATERING ... NEW & SECONDHAND BOOKS

Services begin at 11.00am on Saturday 28th May followed by afternoon sessions and an evening session at 7.00pm. We shall start at 10:30am on Sunday 29th. Following Sunday morning’s sermon there will be a communion service. There is no charge for the conference. Refreshments on Saturday and prior to departure on Sunday are courtesy of Knebworth Grace Church. To assist us with catering we request all those planning to attend to contact Allan Jellett 07403 375393 or email: allan.jellett@me.com. A new and secondhand book stall will be provided by Lorna and Jeremy Roe from Christian Bookshop Ossett.

DIRECTIONS FOR TRAVEL

The B197 runs between Stevenage and Welwyn. From either direction (e.g. A1(M) Jn 7 at Stevenage or A1(M) Jn 6 at Welwyn) follow signs for Knebworth (from Jn 7 follow Ware, then Knebworth signs; from Jn 6 follow Stevenage A1(M) North until you see Knebworth signs but do not re-join A1(M)). In Woolmer Green about a mile south of Knebworth on the B197 take the road signposted Datchworth and Watton (Mardleybury Rd) opposite The Chequers public house. Follow the road for less than a mile into Datchworth. About 150yds after the Datchworth name sign, just past a small triangle junction on the left, the entrance to the village hall is on your left. For Satnav use the postcode or co-ordinates 51.8501N and -0.1638E.