THAT THE PURPOSE OF GOD ACCORDING TO ELECTION MIGHT STAND
Welcome to another edition of New Focus Magazine. It has been a while! Our last online publication was April 2019, and a lot has happened in the intervening months. We are pleased to be back and hope to return to producing the magazine several times a year, continuing a strong and distinctive emphasis on sovereign grace while proclaiming the full and free gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

One of the aims of New Focus Magazine has always been to blend the gospel witness of bygone years with preaching and teaching from more modern times. By this means we endeavour to introduce modern readers to the wealth of sovereign grace material from previous generations while demonstrating the wonderful continuity of gospel testimony the Lord has bequeathed to His church today; never, indeed, leaving Himself without a witness. In this spirit we hope the articles in the following pages will be both enjoyable to read and a blessing to your soul.

**New Focus Church Online**

During the Covid-19 shutdowns we began ministering online using YouTube and other platforms such as podcasts and social media to reach those who were unable to attend their local fellowship or place of worship. As a result of that experience we encountered a number of the Lord’s people who for one reason or another do not have easy access to sovereign grace preaching. This may be because there simply is none locally, or else for reasons of age or ill-health. We decided to continue our online preaching to serve this audience and our regular church services are open for anyone to share. We meet online on YouTube at New Focus Church Online for live broadcasts. Additional information can be found at our website www.newfocus.church. If you have no Sunday evening service please join us. We meet online at 5:30 pm in the UK and corresponding times are listed on the website for overseas listeners.

**Remembering Don Fortner**

In 2020 our friend and regular contributor Pastor Don Fortner of Danville, KY passed into the presence of His Lord and Saviour. We are grateful for His life and testimony, and honoured that he was such a good friend to New Focus Magazine and a faithful and frequent preacher at our conferences. His book *Going Home* has been serialised in past magazines and this is continued in this edition together with a review of the book from George Ella. The book is published by Go Publications and is available on the New Focus Magazine website.
What is the real gospel?

The ‘gospel’ is claimed and proclaimed by every Christian tradition and denomination and most preachers will happily tell us it means ‘good news’. Yet every denomination’s gospel differs in one way or another, so a sincere enquirer might well be left wondering, “What is the real gospel?”.

The Apostle Paul acknowledged there was another gospel, a false gospel, that really is no gospel at all. He knew the difference between grace and works, between salvation accomplished and applied freely by Jesus Christ to God’s elect, and salvation offered conditionally as a possibility to everyone.

If salvation is accomplished and applied by Jesus Christ it is God alone who saves sinners and we must acknowledge His sovereignty in salvation. If our gospel offers the possibility of salvation the question must be asked, “What else needs to be done?” because to be saved we need to find out quickly and do it!

Furthermore, the gospel can only really be ‘good news’ if this missing part is something we are capable of doing. Otherwise, we are being presented with an offer beyond our ability to take. Religion, of course, has plenty of suggestions about what we must do and we find this ‘something’ to be generously elastic. It stretches from good works to a willing heart, from making a commitment to deciding for Christ, from living a good life in the world to dedicating our lives to God and separating completely from the world. Just find a gospel to suit your taste.

The trouble with this works-gospel, however, is that it does not match the gospel of the Bible; the gospel of Jesus Christ and His apostles. Christ’s gospel tells us we have no ability to do anything towards our salvation because we are weak, helpless and opposed to God. In fact, to emphasis our complete inability, the Bible tells us we are spiritually ‘dead’ in our sin and Jesus told Nicodemus, “Ye must be born again” from above. It is why Paul describes all who are ‘made alive’ as new creations.

Here at New Focus Magazine we believe salvation to be all God’s work; a sovereign act of mercy, freely and unconditionally gifted by grace with nothing at all required from a dead sinner. Preaching the gospel is preaching the doctrine of grace. Occasionally, we describe it in terms like ‘total depravity’, ‘unconditional election’, ‘limited atonement’, ‘irresistible grace’, and ‘perseverance of the saints’ but in the end it is just the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the gospel that actually saves and for that reason, above all else, it is good news.
Going Home

Part 15

Precious Deaths

Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints (Psalm 116:15).

Psalm 116 is one of the great Psalms of David. It is a psalm that flowed from a believing heart, from the heart of that man who was a man after God’s own heart. David did not take the words of this psalm from books of theology, or from religious tradition, or sentimental stories. These words flowed from a regenerate, believing spirit. These words arose from David’s heart and express his thoughts, emotions, and sentiments. Yet they are also words of divine inspiration, written for our learning, admonition, and consolation. As Peter said, this psalm was written by one of those ‘holy men of God’, who, ‘spake as they were moved by God the Holy Ghost’ (2 Peter 1:21). We cannot be reminded too frequently of these two facts: first, all Scripture expresses the thoughts, sentiments, emotions, and personal characteristics of the men who wrote it, yet, second, every word of Holy Scripture is God breathed, inspired by God the Holy Spirit, so that the Volume of Holy Scripture is, in its entirety, the very Word of God (2 Timothy 3:16).

Let me show you nine things God says to us in this 116th Psalm by the pen of His servant David. Then I want to answer some more questions about death.

1. David talks about loving the Lord (v. 1). ‘We love him because he first loved us’ (1 John 4:19). His love for us precedes our love for Him. His love for us infinitely supersedes our love for Him. His love for us causes our love for Him. Still, this is the true confession of every regenerate, believing heart, ‘I love the Lord!’ ‘We love Him!’ ‘I love the Lord because he’ heard my cry for mercy, my prayer for forgiveness, and my supplications of repentance!

2. The psalmist talks with confidence of persevering faith (v. 2). He believed, according to the Word of God, that God gave him faith, kept him in faith, and would keep him in faith. David came to God just like we do, the only way any sinner can come to Him, by faith in Christ (Hebrews 11:6).

3. He talks about trouble and sorrow causing him to call upon the name of the Lord (vv. 3, 4). Without question, there is much more in the psalm than I will bring out in this brief study. Yet, the sense of the text is obvious. ‘The sorrows of death’ are the sorrows wrought in the heart by Holy Spirit conviction (John 16:8-11). ‘The pains of hell’ are the torments of a self-condemned heart (Luke 18:13). ‘Trouble and sorrow’ are the struggles of a soul seeking
peace with God (Psalm 103). The result of real, Holy Spirit conviction, is always faith in Christ. ‘Then called I upon the name of the LORD: O LORD, I beseech thee, deliver my soul.’

4. Next, David talks about the character of God (v. 5). The Lord our God is gracious, righteous, and merciful. He is full of mercy!

5. Then the psalmist speaks of God’s unfailing faithfulness (vv. 6-8). ‘The Lord preserveth the simple.’ That is the single-hearted, the sincere, the believing. ‘I was brought low, and he helped me.’ He who helped David will help us (Hebrews 4:16). The psalmist essentially says, ‘I will trust him to deliver me now, and in the future, who has delivered me in the past’ (vv. 7, 8).

6. In verse nine, David speaks with assurance of a blessed hope. All who trust Christ alone as Saviour and Lord, all who look to Him alone for righteousness and acceptance with God have reason to live in the assured anticipation of eternity and heavenly glory with Christ (2 Timothy 1:12; Psalm 23:6).

7. In verses 10 and 11, this man after God’s own heart talks in one breath about faith, confession, and affliction. These three things always go hand in hand. All who trust Christ confess Him as their Lord and confess their faith in Him as the only Way, Truth, and Life. And all who confess that the Christ of God, as He is revealed in the Scriptures, is the only Saviour of sinners will suffer for their faith.

8. In the latter part of the psalm, David seems to direct all his thoughts to the worship of the great, gracious God of salvation. He speaks of gratitude (v. 12), commitment to Christ (v. 13), public worship and praise (vv. 14, 17-19), and the believer’s voluntary surrender and consecration (vv. 16-18).

9. Right in the middle of his talk about worship, David talks about precious deaths. ‘Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints’ (v. 15). While the Bible speaks of many things as being precious, it only reveals two things that are precious in God’s sight. His Son is precious (1 Peter 2:4). His people are precious (Isaiah 43:4). As far as God is concerned, everything about His people is precious; and that fact is precious to me. ‘The redemption of their soul is precious’ (Psalm 49:8). Their lives are precious (Psalm 72:14). And ‘Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.’

What is death? You could get many answers to this question. To the family, death means a vacant place, a loved one gone. To the physician, it is a patient lost. To the biographer, it is the last chapter, the book finished. To the newspaper, it is a spot in the obituary, or a brief story, maybe. To the insurance company, it is a payment claimed. To the theologian, death is the separation of the soul from the body. However, when we think about death, either our own death or the death of a friend or loved one who has just passed away, none of those factual answers satisfy us. What is death? Here are four answers to that question. This is one thing we are all going to experience much sooner than we imagine.

Death is the result of sin. ‘By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin’ (Romans 5:12). ‘The wages of sin is death’ (Romans 6:23). There is no greater proof for the biblical doctrine of original sin than the universal fact of death. All die because all are guilty. All die because all are sinners.

Death is an act of God. ‘The Lord killeth and the Lord maketh alive.’ It does not matter what the secondary cause of a person’s death is, the first cause is God (Job 14:1-5).

Death is the decay of the body and return of the soul to God. The body returns to the earth from which it came and the soul to God, who gave it. Whether that soul meets God in judgment or in mercy is not the issue being considered here. The fact is all men die. Soon, you and I must meet God. The prophet of old spoke faithfully, ‘Prepare to meet thy God!’ Meet Him we shall, very shortly.

Death is the end of life on earth and the beginning of an eternal existence. Life after death is not a supposition. It is not a superstition. Life after death is a fact, a fact so thoroughly stamped upon the human conscience that it simply cannot be erased (Matthew 25:46; Hebrews 9:27).

This is what death is: the result of sin; an act of God; the decay of the body; and the return of the soul to God with the beginning of an eternal existence. Yet, the Holy Spirit says, ‘Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.’ So I cannot help asking this second question ...

What makes the death of a believer precious? All believers are saints, people who have been sanctified. We were chosen to holiness in election (Jude 1), declared holy in redemption and justification (Hebrews 10:10, 14), and actually made holy in regeneration by God the Holy Spirit imparting to us a new nature (2 Peter 1:4; 1 John 3:5-9). This is our threefold sanctification by the grace of God. When a saint dies God looks upon his death as a precious thing. Why?
The death of God’s saints is precious in His sight because God does not see things the way we do. ‘The Lord seeth not as man seeth.’ It is difficult for us to talk about death being precious because everything we see and know is limited by our experience here. God sees things as they really are. He knows that for His saints death is not a loss in any sense at all, but only great gain (Philippians 1:21). Death for us is not a penalty, but a promotion. Death is not the end of life, but the beginning. ‘To die is gain’, says Paul. To lose a weak, mortal body is to gain an immortal, everlastingly strong body. To leave this world of sin is to enter the heavenly world of perfect righteousness. To drop this house of clay is to enter our house not made with hands in Immanuel’s glory land. To leave this temporary state is to enter an eternal state. To leave this world of sorrow is to enter the world of endless, heavenly bliss with Christ. ‘To die is gain’!

The death of God’s saints is precious to him because the blood that redeemed them is precious to Him. We belong to God by the blood atonement of His dear Son. We have been reconciled to God by Christ’s precious blood. As our Surety He received His elect from the Father as a trust in the covenant of grace (Ephesians 1:12). As our Redeemer He received His ransomed ones from the law as a purchased possession (Galatians 3:13). As our Saviour the Lord Jesus receives each of His chosen, ransomed ones at the appointed time of love and grace from the Father by the gift of God the Holy Spirit (John 6:37-40). Christ the King shall receive all His people in resurrection glory by His power. Christ our Priest receives the chosen, one by one, when they are called from earth to heaven in death, as the Father’s answer to His intercessory prayer (John 17:24).

‘Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints’ because His saints are precious to Him! (Jeremiah 31:3; John 13:1; 1 Corinthians 2:9). He has done wonderful things for us in election, redemption, justification, regeneration, and sanctification. He is doing wonderful things for us in preservation and providence. Yet, our God has wonderful things in store for us which no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has conceived. He has wonderful things yet to show us (1 Corinthians 13:10-13). He has wonderful things yet to give us (John 14:1-3). He has wonderful things yet to do with us (Ephesians 2:7).

This statement applies to all believers. It is an unlimited, unqualified, unconditional statement of truth with regard to all God’s saints. ‘Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.’ It matters not who the saint is. We can understand how that the death of a martyr like Stephen would be precious in God’s sight. Yet, his death was no more precious than that of the most insignificant saint. All believers have the same attending angels to carry them into paradise, the same Saviour waiting their arrival in heaven, and the same glorious inheritance with Christ (Romans 8:17).

It matters not when the believer dies. We talk of untimely deaths, and accidents, and of lives ending prematurely; but there are no untimely deaths. Every believer’s life is a completed, fulfilled plan. God takes His saints when it pleases Him, at the time He has appointed. Our Master plucks the grapes of His vineyard when they are ripe and ready to be taken. He never picks green fruit and never leaves His fruit to rot on the vine. With regard to every believer, the hymn writer was correct, when he wrote ...
Mortals are immortal here
Until their work is done.

It matters not where the believer dies. It may be in a lonely hospital room. It may be on a busy highway. It may be upon a terrible battlefield. It may be in his own bed. That does not matter. ‘Precious in the eyes of the Lord is the death of his saints.’ Years ago, an old preacher in England rose one Sunday morning and announced a hymn, giving out the first verse like they used to do ...

Father, I long, I long to see
The place of thine abode,
I'd leave these earthly courts and flee
Up to thy throne, O God.

Then he closed his eyes, slipped down behind his pulpit, and died.

Let me go a step further. It does not matter by what means the believer dies. I have known some to die in very odd circumstances and by very strange means. I have known many to die suddenly, without warning. I have seen others die very slow, lingering, painful deaths. No matter how a believer dies, he dies by God's appointment, by God's hand, and his death is precious in God's sight.

What about the death of the unbeliever? There is nothing at all pleasant, comforting, or precious about the death of an unbeliever. I once knew a young lady whose father died in a state of rebellion and unbelief. As she stood by his coffin broken-hearted, almost everyone who came by said to her, ‘Well, your daddy is better off now.’ After hearing that statement countless times, the young lady finally said to one, ‘He’s in hell now! Do you call that better off?’ The unbeliever’s death is a horror, a tragedy, an indescribable woe. God says, ‘Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.’ That is what God says. The world says, ‘Blessed are the rich, the famous, the healthy, and the honoured.’ The world takes you into its lavish, luxurious club. There men and women are laughing, singing, and dancing. The room is filled with earthly joy. Nothing is beyond the reach of the rich and the mighty. Autographs are sought from smiling heroes. The best is none too good for those whom the world calls blessed. But all is vanity, a puff of wind, nothing more.

Now, go into a darkened room. There is complete silence. A wife sits by the bed of a dying husband and holds his hand. The children stand around the foot of the bed. Tears run silently down their cheeks. Only the ticking of the clock can be heard. For a brief moment the man opens his eyes widely, a smile crosses his face, and he breathes deeply for the last time. His spirit is gone. Of that man, God says, ‘Blessed! Blessed!’ You cannot write cursed where God writes blessed; and you cannot write blessed where God writes cursed! Frances J. Crosby wrote:

Some day the silver cord will break,
And I no more as now shall sing,
But oh the joy when I awake
Within the palace of the King.

Some day my earthly house will fall,
I cannot tell how soon t’will be
But this I know my all in all
Has now in heaven a place for me!

Some day, till then, I’ll watch and wait,
My lamp all trimmed and burning bright,
That when my Saviour opens the gate,
My soul to Him will take its flight.
This name is familiar to every one who is conversant with the things of nature. And in Scripture we meet with the continual mention of rocks by particular names, such as the rock of Horeb, the rock of Adullam, the rock of divisions, called Selahammah lekoth. See the margin of the Bible (1 Samuel 23:1-29). But it would have been unnecessary in a work of this kind to have noticed the word had it not been for the special application of the term, in a figurative way and manner, to the person of the Lord Jesus Christ as the visible JEHOVAH. He is, if I mistake not, the glorious person all along spoken of in the Old Testament Scripture, and explained most clearly in the New as “the rock whose work is perfect”.

Beautifully to this purpose doth Moses, the man of God, speak of Him under this figure, “He is the rock, (saith Moses) his work is perfect; for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is he.” And speaking of the defects of Israel, and his departure from the Lord, he saith, “he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the rock of his salvation. Of the rock that begat thee, thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee.” And then tracing the sad effects of their being brought into captivity by their enemies, to the cause of having forsaken their confidence in the Lord, Moses adds, “how should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, except their rock had sold them, and the Lord had shut them up? For their rock is not as our rock, even our enemies themselves being judges;” (Deuteronomy 32:4; 32:15; 32:18; 32:30, 31).

But the most striking and particular use of the term rock, as a figure applied to Christ, is that we read in the eventful history of Israel, beginning at Horeb, (Exodus 17:6) where we find the Lord speaking unto Moses in those remarkable words; “Behold, I will stand before thee upon the rock in Horeb, and thou shalt smite the rock and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink”. Now it never would have been known to any farther extent concerning this miracle of grace, but that the Lord did here, as upon many other occasions, work a miracle to supply the pressing occasions and wants of His people, had not the Holy Ghost in his love and condescension to the church, thought fit to explain this transaction, and not only declared that it was Christ which wrought this miracle, but that this rock was Christ himself. If the reader will turn to the tenth chapter of Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians, (1 Corinthians 10:1-33) and first and following verses, he will behold the gracious comment of the Holy Ghost upon it. “Moreover brethren, (saith the apostle) I would not that ye should be ignorant how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and did
all eat the same spiritual meat, and did all drink
the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that
spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock
was Christ.” The margin of the Bible is stronger,
for it saith that this rock went with them.

Now I beg the reader’s close attention to
this most interesting of all subjects. It is what
intimately concerns true believers in Christ to
have just and right apprehensions of what the
Holy Ghost hath so graciously explained.

Nothing can be more certain than that the
Gospel was preached to the church in type and
figure to Israel then, as much and as fully as it is
now to the true Israel in sum and substance. For
so the Holy Ghost declares by Paul, (Hebrews
4:2) — so that Christ was the one great ordi-
nance and design of the whole. And whether he
was preached as the rock, or the paschal lamb,
or the manna, or the brazen serpent, all pointed
to Jesus, and in him all had their completion.

But what I more particularly beg the reader
to observe is, the manifestation that is made by
the rock, and the streams flowing from it of God
in Christ. The proclamation of the Lord was on
this occasion, “Behold, I will stand before thee
upon the rock in Horeb;” intimating, as plain
as words can shew, when opened to us by the
Holy Ghost, that the whole dispensation is God
in Christ. For as God in Christ was, and is, the
foundation of all reconciliation, so is it God in
Christ which was, and is, the source of all the
blessings of redemption flowing there from.
Hence the several manifestations of JEHOVAH
in both Testaments of Scripture are all to this
effect.

And as these several dispensations pointed
all to Christ as the only possible supply for the
church, so the church is uniformly considered
under every estate, both in the Old Testament
and New, as living by faith upon Jesus, and
deriving all supplies from him. We are told that
“they did all eat the same spiritual meat, and did
all drink the same spiritual drink.” There was no
difference in the supply, neither in the privilege
of the receivers, for all was Christ. Hence it
proves that from the beginning all the grace the
church would stand in need of through the whole
period of time in every individual instance of it,
this glorious Head of His body the church had in
Him; and whether it was the manna or the rock,
He, and He alone, was the sum and substance
of all. Sweet consideration to my soul! Hence,
with one of old, I would say, “when my heart is
overwhelmed, lead me to the rock that is higher
than I” (Psalm 61:2).

1. Convinced as a sinner, to Jesus I come,
Informed by the gospel for such there is room;
O’erwhelmèd with sorrow for sin, will I cry;
“Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I.”

2. O blessèd be Jesus, for answering prayer,
And raising my soul from the pit of despair;
In every new trial, to him will I cry,
“Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I.”

3. When sorely afflicted, and ready to faint,
Before my Redeemer I’ll spread my complaint;
’Midst storms and distresses, my soul shall rely
On Jesus, the Rock that is higher than I.

Turner/Bennett
No Prophet, Nor Dreamer Of Dreams

If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul (Deuteronomy 13:1-3).

1 No prophet, nor dreamer of dreams,
No master of plausible speech,
To live like an angel who seems,
Or like an apostle to preach;
No tempter, without or within,
No spirit, though ever so bright,
That comes crying out against sin,
And looks like an angel of light;

2 Though reason, though fitness he urge,
Or plead with the words of a friend,
Or wonders of argument forge,
Or deep revelations pretend,
Should meet with a moment’s regard,
But rather be boldly withstood,
If any thing, easy or hard,
He teach, save the Lamb and His blood.

3 Remember, O Christian, with heed,
When sunk under sentence of death,
How first thou from bondage wast freed;
Say, was it by works, or by faith?
On Christ thy affections then fixed,
What conjugal truth didst thou vow!
With Him was there any thing mixed?
Then what wouldst thou mix with Him now?

4 If close to the Lord thou wouldst cleave,
Depend on His promise alone;
His righteousness wouldst thou receive,
Then learn to renounce all thy own;

The faith of a Christian indeed
Is more than mere notion or whim;
United to Jesus, his head,
He draws life and virtue from Him.

5 Deceived by the father of lies,
Blind guides cry, “Lo here!” and “Lo there!”
By these our Redeemer us tries,
And warns us of such to beware.
Poor comfort to mourners they give,
Who set us to labour in vain;
And strive, with a “Do this and live”
To drive us to Egypt again.

6 But what says our Shepherd divine?
For His blessèd word we should keep;
“This flock has My Father made Mine,
I lay down My life for My sheep;
’Tis life everlasting I give,
My blood was the price that it cost;
Not one that on Me shall believe,
Shall ever be finally lost.”

7 This God is the God we adore,
Our faithful, unchangeable friend,
Whose love is as large as His power,
And neither knows measure nor end;
’Tis Jesus, the first and the last,
Whose Spirit shall guide us safe home;
We’ll praise Him for all that is past,
And trust Him for all that’s to come.
Shortly after John Gill’s profession of faith and baptism at the age of 19 some of his friends encouraged him to re-locate to Higham-Ferrers a village about six or seven miles from Kettering, England. Nearby, in Higham, was a newly established gospel church. His friends hoped the young man would be able to assist in this new church, and to support and teach the young converts in it, as well as preaching occasionally in other local villages. The following account describes Gill’s introduction to his future wife which occurred at this time.

Here he continued the year following; and in this time, and at that place, he contracted acquaintance with a young Gentlewoman of great piety and good sense, whose name was ELIZABETH NEGUS; a member of the new gathered church, and whom he married in 1718. The Doctor was always of opinion, that his marriage with this excellent person, was the principal thing for which God in His providence sent him to that place: and he ever considered his marriage to her, as one of the capital blessings of his life, For she proved affectionate, discreet, and careful: and, by her unremitting prudence, took off from his hands all domestic avocations, so that he could, with more leisure, and greater ease of mind, pursue his studies, and devote himself to his ministerial service.

“His wife of his youth lived with him unto the year 1764, and by her he had many children, all of whom died in their infancy, except three: one of which, whose name was ELIZABETH (a most lovely and desirable child for person, sense, and grace) died May 30, 1738, when she had entered into the thirteenth year of her age, her Funeral Sermon was preached by her father, from 1 Thessalonians 4:13, 14, and was printed, with an account of some of her choice experiences. The other two are still living: (as at July, 1772) the one, a son, whose name is JOHN, a goldsmith, who lived in Gracechurch-street, London; since retired from business. The other, a daughter, whose name is MARY, married to Mr. GEORGE KEITH, a Bookseller, in the same street. Both these children have been a great happiness to their parents; and they have always had reason to be thankful to God for their family comfort, peace, and harmony.

With regard to the death of his wife the following extract is taken from the Earthen Vessel Magazine of 1853.

“A sermon (was) preached by Dr. Gill, October 21, 1764, the first time of his appearing in public, after the decease of his beloved wife, Mrs Elizabeth Gill, from Hebrews 11:16, ‘But now they desire a better country, that is an heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He hath prepared for them a city.’ It is indeed a most blessed discourse, in which is set forth,

I. The Saint’s future state of happiness.
II. Their particular regard to it, their desire after it, and looking for it.
III. The notice God takes of such persons, and what is said of Him with respect to them.—‘He is not ashamed to be called their God. He hath prepared for them a city.’

“At the close of the sermon, the Doctor observes,—‘What has been said, may serve to wean us from this world, and draw off our hearts from it, and to cause us to sit loose unto it, and all things in it; since this is not our rest, our house, our home, our native place; that is another country. And this may be of use
to quicken our desires after another world, to seek a better country, and to look for it; and this may also point out to us the happiness of those that have gone before us, they are in this better country. But I forbear saying any more.'

"The bereaved husband could say nothing in the pulpit respecting his late partner; but he had written the following character of her, which was afterwards found among his papers. It is indeed a most blessed testimony to the memory of a sterling Believer in Christ.

"It pleased God to call her by His Grace in the early time of her life, and in a place of great darkness and ignorance; where there were scarce any, or very few Professors of religion; so that when she took up a profession of it, she appeared very singular, and became the object of the scoffs and jeers of her neighbours and former acquaintance; but this did not deter her from pursuing the good ways of God she had entered into, and from persisting in them. She soon drank in the Doctrines of the free Grace of God in the Salvation of men by Christ, of which she had a comfortable experience.

"In the after-time of her life, her afflictions and troubles were many, but under all she was favoured with Divine supports, and was frequently indulged with gracious words on different occasions, and yet often doubting and fearing; for none could have meaner or more humble thoughts of themselves than she always had, looking upon herself as less than the least of all Saints.

"Lord's Days were usually delightful to her; she often met with refreshings from the presence of God in them; which made her earnestly desire the return of them; and when the day drew nigh, longed until the morning was, and the time came to attend public worship. The loss of these precious opportunities, through her long confinement, was greatly lamented by her.

"She was one that greatly feared God, and was ever desirous of having a conscience void of offence both towards God and man, and of doing her duty to both; careful as much as in her lay, to give no offence by word or deed, to the world or to the Church of God, studying the things which make for peace among all with whom she was concerned; as her whole deportment, for the space of between forty and fifty years, has abundantly shewn, of which many here are witnesses.

"Her last affliction, though long, tedious and painful was borne with the greatest patience: that passage in Scripture was truly verified in her,—'Tribulation works patience;' and though she was not 'carried out,' as her expression was, which she observed some were, on their dying beds, in raptures of Joy, and strong expressions of Faith, yet it pleased God to drop comforts into her Soul at certain times; and sometimes she would be longing to be at home in her Father's house, saying, 'Let me go, O let me go to my Father's house:' repeating it over and over again.

"The Scripture which has now been discoursed on, was expressed by her as it had been at times before, with great pleasure and delight; and also those words, 'them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.' In a view of her own Soul-affairs, and those of her family, those words appeared to be of considerable use, and were quiet and comfortable to her, 'Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you.'

"But a few Lord's Days ago, as her surviving relative was taking his leave of her, coming hither to preach, she expressed the following words with strong application to herself, 'Having made peace through the blood of His cross:' and with the greatest vehemency and eagerness added, 'AND FOR ME TOO;' and repeated it, 'AND FOR ME TOO.'

"One morning, being asked how she did, she declared she had much comfort that night in her meditations on the sufferings of Christ for her, in comparison of which her afflictions, though heavy, were but light. At another time those words were very staying, supporting, and satisfying to her—'Nevertheless, the foundation of God stands sure;' and very often declared she had comfort, but had not strength to express it; and indeed the enemy of Souls was kept off from her through the whole, and was not suffered, as far as could be discerned, to disturb and distress her in the least. The last words of any moment that were heard from her were, when asked whether she had comfort, she said she had, but not always alike; and added, 'the covenant is sure.' Quickly after this she grew delirious, and slept much, till death seized her; of which she seemed to be sensible by the motions of lifting up her hands, and by the words she uttered, which were, "Lord, Lord!" when something followed not understood by those that stood by, and then drawing her breath quicker, immediately, without a sigh or groan, fell asleep in the arms of Jesus."
The Apostle in Romans 11:13 declared: ‘I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles’ but to trace out the dealings of God in bringing this about is interesting and instructive in the Acts of the Apostles. Persecution was the chief means God employed to widen the spheres of early missionary labour: Acts 11:19; 13:50; 14:5, 6; 17:4, 5. At Corinth the Apostle remained ‘a year and six months’, until the Jews made insurrection against him, and brought him to the judgment-seat—their persecution of the Gospel being as inveterate as that of the heathen. To mollify the Jewish enmity no doubt, the Apostle shaved his head at Cenchrea, and took a vow according to Leviticus 27. Hence we read, ‘Paul purposed in his spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem’ (Acts 19:21) in order to fulfil this vow. At Caesarea Paul was warned by the Spirit of prophecy in Agabus, ‘Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles’ (Acts 21:11). Paul purposed in his spirit to see Rome (Acts 19:21), but he little knew the winding way God was about to take in order to send him there. The joy of Christians at Jerusalem to see Paul we have told out in chapter 21:15-19. But the Apostle was now put upon his trial, for despite the verdict given by the first convocation of brethren that met at Jerusalem, and the letters sent through Paul to the Churches, as recorded in Acts 15, all of which set forth the great fact that Jewish forms and ceremonies were ended by the coming of Christ—yet was the great Apostle to the Gentiles caught in the trap of Jewish conformity, as we have, plainly stated, in chapter 21:20-26. At the suggestion of the Jews he went into the temple to give proof that he walked orderly and kept the law; and we read that ‘Paul took the four men, and the next day purifying himself with them and entered into the Temple, to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, until that an offering should be offered for every one of them’. This Cenchrea was the eastern harbour of Corinth in Greece and about 5 miles east of the city. Today the remains of the port are called Kenkris. It is 820 miles north-west of Jerusalem. Cenchrea is mentioned twice in the New Testament. It is the port from which Paul sailed to Syria with Pricilla and Aquilla, and where Paul took this vow. There was a church in Cenchrea from an early date, probably established by Paul. From there, Pheobe, a valued and trusted friend of the Apostle carried his epistle to Rome. Of her, Paul writes in Romans 16:1, “I commend unto you Pheobe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea.”
By Allan Jellett

Price £17.95 ($23.95) + p&p
198 pages hardback

The Kingdom Of God Triumphant

The book of Revelation can sometimes appear difficult to understand with its visions and plagues and symbolism. Too many writers have used this fact as an excuse for far-fetched and bizarre notions about the end times. This in turn has made some believers wary of delving too deeply into the message John gave to the Church for its blessing.

Pastor Allan Jellett has produced this book from a series of sermons from the book of Revelation. In it he provides an overview and interpretation of the prophecy to comfort and encourage the Lord’s people, and to remind them that whatever happens in this world, be it in the personal lives of the saints, or the struggles amongst the nations of the earth, the Lord God is sovereign. He is in control and the Kingdom of God is now, and ever will be, triumphant.

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Bible student reads that portion of scripture in the liberty of the Gospel, he will trace the enlightenment of the Spirit of God in the heart of the Apostle, which led him to expose the snares of Judaizing teachers, who would draw brethren back to legal observances, and neutralize the grace of God by setting up in part or in whole the covenant of works; hence he admonishes believers to ‘stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage’ (Galatians 5:1). We hear no more of a shorn head or legal vow. Paul had had his lesson beaten into him, and his testimony henceforth was ‘Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us,’ (Galatians 3:13). The Epistle to the Hebrews, written at a much later period, carries out the same truth, the fulfilment, and therefore, removal, of all the Jewish types and ceremonies. Christ, the sum and substance of the law, having by His own blood entered in once into the holy place and obtained eternal redemption for us, (Hebrews 9:12). Hence the ‘carnal ordinances, imposed upon the Jews until the time of reformation’ (Hebrews 9:10), were all swept away by the power and glory of the Gospel, of which the law was but the shadow, (Colossians 2:16, 17). The true use to make of Paul’s vow is, not for example, or encouragement, but for warning! It shows us the dangers of a legal spirit, and the effects of compromise with error. The Apostle under the teachings of the Holy Ghost was led ultimately into the nature and character of the wide difference between Law and Gospel, and that all attempts to add to the perfect and finished work of Christ was a blow at the truth and struck at the very root of gospel liberty, (Galatians 2:16). We live in a day when this subject is of vital importance to the people of God, from the temporizing spirit abroad, which for the sake of peace and unity sacrifices the truth of God. But this is not the characteristic of the religion of Christ Jesus, who came not to send peace but a sword (Matthew 10:34), to set His people at variance with all that is opposed to Him, whether in the heart, in the home, or in the world.

With regard to enmity on the score of mere denominational differences, and the kindnesses of life that believers should show toward one another, we cordially agree with our friend and brother, that we have much to learn; but let us have the right scriptures in the right place for our instruction in this matter: let us distinguish between things that differ, and while we trace faults even in an apostle, and the history of circumstance in Paul’s history, and others of a similar character (Galatians 2:11), show to the children of God that, though regeneration is complete, yet illumination is gradual. But Paul had to learn his lesson out of a hard book, and with many stripes, for when the seven days of legality were ended, we read, ‘that the Jews which were of Asia when they saw him in the temple stirred up the people and laid hands on him,’ for this imaginary offence that he had brought Greeks, and not four Jews, into the temple, (vv. 27, 28). At this the City was moved, and they took Paul and drew him out of the temple, and as they went about to kill him tidings came to the chief captain, and on his appearance they left off beating Paul, who was bound with chains, and lodged in the prison. On his trial, Paul declared himself a free man, and claimed the privilege of a Roman citizen, ‘I appeal unto Caesar’ and Festus’s reply was, ‘Unto Caesar thou shalt go’. By these unexpected and painful circumstances Paul reached Rome, which arose out of this apparently small beginning: ‘He shaved his head at Cenchrea, for he had a vow’ (Acts 18:18). But let us notice the use God made of Paul the while, in bringing him before both the Jewish and pagan authorities, so that in the presence of both he was to tell the story of his miraculous conversion, and preach the Gospel, though in bonds, both to Jew and Gentile (Acts 23:11).

In chronological order, the first epistle Paul penned was to the Galatians; and, when the
progress in the knowledge of the truth, may we, as humble followers of Christ, avoid where they fell, and ‘stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free’.

But many may be ready to object, ‘Did not Paul in an after-day declare “he was all things to all men, that he might gain some. To the Jew he became a Jew, that he might gain the Jews”? The analogy of Scripture shows us that the Apostle’s meaning here is, that he acknowledged he was a Jew to the Jews, even as he claimed the privilege of being a Roman Citizen to the Gentiles, of which he took advantage on his trial to appeal unto Caesar (Acts 23:6; 25:10). But Paul’s catholicity extended no further than to ‘the remnant according to the election of grace’ (Romans 11:5); his limits were bounded by this experience, ‘If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maran-atha’ (1 Corinthians 16:22) and, with regard to the doctrines of grace, his verdict was, ‘Though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you that that ye have received, let him be accursed’ (Galatians 1:9). In our day, union with error is called ‘a good spirit’. Far be it from us to make a man an offender for a word (Isaiah 29:21), or impute all these conclusions to the few and friendly remarks of our brother; but God’s people who love the truth as it is in Jesus are made to feel the evils so rife in our day, and that they are the solitary exception to a world-wide charity. There is no quarter given to Calvinism; of all sects and parties it is the most abhorred. Paul’s vow did not screen him from persecution; and nothing short of concealing or denying the doctrines of grace will please a godless world. Let those who know and love the truth of God stand by it, be valiant for it, fight the good fight of faith, (1 Timothy 6:12) and leave to another period the fulfilment of the promise, ‘Them that honour me, I will honour’ (1 Samuel 2:30). Paul’s vow only brought him into trouble; and all carnal attempts to please the world, or beguile them into a profession of religion, only weakens the influence of the truth as a separating and distinguishing principle; entangles the believer in worldly conformity; and lessens the experience and enjoyment of truth in the soul, till at last, like Ephraim, he gets broken in judgment, cannot see afar off, and forgets that he was purged from his old sins (Hosea 5:11; 2 Peter 1:9). Never was there a time when the Apostle’s exhortation to the children of God was of more importance than the present: ‘Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit ye like men, be strong’ (1 Corinthians 16:13; 1 Kings 2:2).

The Lamb is always at the forefront in the book of God. ‘The lamb slain’ was the first object held up to the view of Israel when they were about to be delivered. The same is true today. ‘Behold the Lamb of God’ is still the cry that first reaches a sinner’s ear, the very first message a sinner hears. Christ, the Lamb of God, our sin-atoning Saviour, is the very first thing the chosen, redeemed sinner sees in his experience of grace.

The very first feast with which God would have His people to worship Him, the very first feast which the God of all grace required fallen, sinful men to keep, the very first day of every year was a display of God’s infinite mercy, love, and grace to sinners in Christ. It was a feast of redemption. It was the feast of the lamb.

How gracious our God is. ‘He delighteth in mercy!’ What grace meets the sinner. God meets us with the Lamb; and that Lamb is His own beloved Son. ‘Behold, the Lamb of God.’ In the Lamb, God shows us life out of death, life for sinners rising out of the death of His own darling Son!

The first death recorded on the pages of history was the death of a sacrificial lamb (Genesis 3). The first altar erected upon the earth was an altar covered with the blood of a lamb slain (Genesis 4). The first act of God for Israel is the slaying of the lamb. The first deed of the new dispensation was present—unto Caesar (Acts 23:6; 25:10). But Paul’s catholicity extended no further than to ‘the remnant according to the election of grace’ (Romans 11:5); his limits were bounded by this experience, ‘If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maran-atha’ (1 Corinthians 16:22) and, with regard to the doctrines of grace, his verdict was, ‘Though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you that that ye have received, let him be accursed’ (Galatians 1:9). In our day, union with error is called ‘a good spirit’. Far be it from us to make a man an offender for a word (Isaiah 29:21), or impute all these conclusions to the few and friendly remarks of our brother; but God’s people who love the truth as it is in Jesus are made to feel the evils so rife in our day, and that they are the solitary exception to a world-wide charity. There is no quarter given to Calvinism; of all sects and parties it is the most abhorred. Paul’s vow did not screen him from persecution; and nothing short of concealing or denying the doctrines of grace will please a godless world. Let those who know and love the truth of God stand by it, be valiant for it, fight the good fight of faith, (1 Timothy 6:12) and leave to another period the fulfilment of the promise, ‘Them that honour me, I will honour’ (1 Samuel 2:30). Paul’s vow only brought him into trouble; and all carnal attempts to please the world, or beguile them into a profession of religion, only weakens the influence of the truth as a separating and distinguishing principle; entangles the believer in worldly conformity; and lessens the experience and enjoyment of truth in the soul, till at last, like Ephraim, he gets broken in judgment, cannot see afar off, and forgets that he was purged from his old sins (Hosea 5:11; 2 Peter 1:9). Never was there a time when the Apostle’s exhortation to the children of God was of more importance than the present: ‘Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit ye like men, be strong’ (1 Corinthians 16:13; 1 Kings 2:2).

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See Him yonder, seated in glory upon His throne. See Him in lofty majesty with the book of God in His hand. Heaven gazes upon Him with admiration. All the redeemed sing His praise with delight and gratitude.

Extract from Don Fortner’s new book Discovering Christ In Leviticus

Discovering Christ In Leviticus

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The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books but especially the parchments.

(2 Timothy 4:13)

Paul’s Cloak Left At Troas

Did Paul need inspiration to inform him that he left his cloak with a certain person at Troas? Did he need inspiration to enable him to express this request to Timothy about the cloak? Is it not absurd, then, to suppose that everything in Scripture is inspired, especially that all things are equally inspired? Human wisdom has reasoned this way; and the theories of inspiration have been invented to enable us to distinguish in Scripture between the things that are inspired and the things that need no inspiration, and to regulate the different kinds and degrees of inspiration that different things in scripture require. The message about the cloak has been degraded from all kinds of inspiration, as a mere matter of worldly business, which admitted no interference of the Spirit of God.

But all such theories of inspiration directly contradict the testimony of the Holy Spirit, which attests that all Scripture is given by inspiration. The meaning of this testimony must be ascertained by grammar and the use of language – not by theory. To speak of settling the meaning and extent of inspiration by theory is as absurd as to call the verdict of a jury the theory of the jury. The men who have invented these theories, and those who adopt them, show themselves unacquainted with the fundamental laws which regulate the investigation of truth, and trespass against the philosophy of evidence, as well as against the testimony of the Spirit of God.

It did not, indeed, require inspiration to acquaint Paul that he had left a cloak with Carpus at Troas. It did not require inspiration to inform him that he now needed the cloak. But as his letter was the work of the Holy Spirit, such a message could not have found a place, except it was for the use of the people of God. It must convey some useful lesson, else it would not stand where it is.

And do we not learn from it the humble circumstances of the apostle and the attention that it was necessary for him to give to his worldly concerns even in small matters? We learn also the propriety and duty of attending to worldly concerns even in the most devoted men. The service of God is no cover for indolence, thoughtlessness, waste or inattention. It shows us also that Paul did not set a value on exposing himself, without necessity, to cold or hardships. But, above all, this message appears to have been designed to manifest the petulance of human wisdom in the things of God. Paul providentially left his cloak at Troas, that occasion might be given for this message, in the words of the Holy Spirit. It is a gin and a snare to those who do not, like little children, submit implicitly to the testimony of scripture. In the wisdom of God the enmity of the human heart to the ways of God is detected. The truth revealed before the eyes, in this plan of revelation, lies hid from the wisdom of this world.

Those who deny inspiration to some parts of Scripture, or who modify it, keep people from searching the Scriptures as the word of God, and from discovering much of the riches contained in them.

Troas was a city on the coast of Mysia, in the north-west of modern day Turkey. It was here Paul, on his second missionary journey, saw the vision of a “man of Macedonia,” who appeared to him, saying, “Come over, and help us” (Acts 16:8-11). He visited this place also on other occasions, and on one of these visits he left his cloak and some books there (2 Corinthians 2:12; 2 Timothy 4:13).
On turning eighty and after much illness and a dozen operations, I had started, like good old John Gill, to jot down for myself all the blessings of the eternal joys of our heavenly mansion prepared for us by our Saviour. The fact Christ said ‘Were it not so, I would have told you’ gave me a certain and sure hope of soon being with my Lord. I then received the March edition of New Focus and read Brother Don’s fine article from his new book on this eternally welcome subject. Reading Don’s sample pages couched in thrilling eloquent words which I could not express myself, I found a divine message which caused me anew to praise our Maker and Saviour.

Now, on reading the whole book, the chapter titles alone, aside from their fine contents, brought further heavenly directed praises to my lips. Here are a few sample chapter names: ‘Grace And Glory’; ‘Heirs of God’; ‘Paradise Regained’; ‘The Magnitude of Our Heavenly Inheritance’; ‘The Believer’s Easy Passage from Death to Glory’; ‘Face to Face with our Saviour’; and then again, in the final chapter, that lovely, promising blessing ‘Going Home’.

This is not just Brother Don speculating about the after-life but Brother Don giving us a continuous look into God’s Word which has caused and underlies all Don, as God’s ambassador to God’s children, has to say about heaven. We know there are rare occasions when God puts His children to bed in the dark but for the bulk of us there is the illumination of God’s Word to make us fully trusting when dying in the arms of the Bright and Morning Star.

Chapter One deals with the regenerating, justifying, sanctifying, preserving, comforting, all-sufficient grace of our dear Lord and also describes the eternal glory that comes with it, starting from the time we are made elect in Christ. Then Don looks briefly at the hopelessness of those who die without Christ and the hopelessness of those the unbeliever has left behind. Don is writing as a believer to believers but his vivid description of the eternal sorrow of unbelievers made me pray I would keep faithful to my task of winning sinners for the Saviour until my dying day and even later through my books and writings. Obviously, our Election and Predestination are gained in Christ so we are only elect in Him and it is this fact that should keep us knocking at heaven’s doors for the salvation of those still lost. This is very much part of the faith given us for our justification.

It was comforting to read here how souls who die in Christ wake up at once in glory. This was the faith of our Old and New Testament Fathers and our Reformers before all these Jesuit and Jewish millennial horror-scopes arose which are still ruining many men’s preaching. To be absent in the body is to be present with the Lord. Yes, dying is as simple as that. I was so happy also to find Don arguing from Scripture all the time whether from the Old or New Testament showing how God was always choosing out a people for Himself to populate heaven with ‘numbers which cannot be counted’.

Don’s third chapter ‘The Hope of Glory’ rids any still doubting believer of any ‘pie in the sky’ primitiveness concerning simple heavenly glories. Those glories are vast, immeasurable and everlasting. Nothing on earth can be compared with them apart from our knowledge of the love of Christ which makes us citizens of heaven as soon as His faith is placed in our hearts. Read Don on God’s promises to His people and how He carries them out eternally and one will have cause to praise God for just as long! Don sees all this as the outworking of the eternal covenant of grace and says:

All God promised and pledged to his elect in the covenant was made sure to us by Christ, the Surety of the...
covenant (Hebrews 7:22-25). Christ became a Surety for his people in the covenant of grace. As such, he pledged himself not only to bring the blessings of grace to us in time, but also to bring us to glory in eternity. He pledged not only that he would bring us to himself in faith and into the fold of his church upon earth, but also to set us before his Father’s face in heaven (John 10:16).

So, for Don, the Bible and all Christians, ‘Our Hope of Glory’ is our security in Christ. He has not only promised us a secure and everlasting future but has gone before us to secure that blessed place for us according to His promise that He will never leave us nor forsake us. These ‘Images of Heavenly Glory’ which are already absolute facts are outlined in Chapter Four using solid Biblical vocabulary such as ‘a house’; ‘a city’; ‘a kingdom’; and ‘an inheritance’. These all provide eternal joys for the ‘dead in Christ’ who now dwell under God’s eternal pleasure. Chapter five goes on to explain the eternal satisfaction for the soul which this brings.

Going back to pre-glory scenes in Chapter Six, Don relates what he has learnt from the late Henry Mahan whom Don always loves to quote for good reasons. The preacher spoke of how we get things back to front in this life as we rejoice when a child is born and weep at the death of an old believer. We should rather weep when a child is born into this valley of tears and rejoice when the believer goes to meet His Saviour face to face! We know the dead are in a blessed state who die in the Lord, and that blessedness will soon be ours.

Chapter Seven took me back to William Perkins’ check-list of marks of Christ in the human soul. Here Don lists five characteristics of all those who are children of God. I would look at the list not so much as a check-list of my own personal faith as this might cause silly pride when ticking off the list too lightly. It is, however, a fine gospel list for unbelievers to check through to make them yearn for Christ to come into their souls by the prayerful influence of the Holy Spirit. Some New England ‘Puritans’ used Perkins’ check-lists to extol themselves. However, Perkins true purpose was to make us see how we still fall short of the glory of God whilst still in Adam whilst rejoicing that ‘in a twinkling’ we will be with Christ and free from all worldly allurements.

Chapter Eight deals with the question of whether or not there are degrees of rewards in heaven. This is a man-praising dogma in which some Reformed men still trust. Here, Don comes down on these unreformed ‘Reformed’ men like a ton of bricks and rightly so, showing how such ‘Reformed Men’ have obviously been re-formed in a very worldly way quite contrary to scripture. Fancy thinking Christ feeds some of His heavenly fold with old straw and others with new mown hay!

Chapter Nine assures us there will be no tears in heaven which makes the hymn-writer sing in sighs, ‘Oh, how I long to reach my home / My glorious home in Heaven!’ True to his calling, Don asks at the end of this chapter, ‘Will you be among the happy company of the redeemed? This is the most existential of all questions. May this book move many to turn to the Lord, their only hope of glory!

Chapter Ten is really a continuation of Chapter Seven on our heirship with Christ as Don again informs the re-born of the incomparable blessings of their eternal redemption. I have been dismayed to read recently that many of my Reformed heroes have been lately criticized by their much less ‘Reformed’ brethren who claim that sin and salvation have nothing to do with the physical state of the World in which we live. Perhaps this is why their politics are so anti-environmental. Don shows how ‘The glory to be revealed in us at the resurrection is so great and marvellous it influences and affects the whole of God’s creation.’ Don shows clearly that though ‘the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now,’ what man’s sin has marred in creation, God will rectify in the re-birth of this physical world as our good Bible teaches us. I found Don’s teaching on the influences and effects of sin and salvation on the entire creation extremely helpful.

Chapter Eleven on Paradise Regained is where Don compares the first Eden with the greater Eden to which it pointed, drawing out parallels where they fit and where they fail because of the abrupt ending of the first paradise through man’s fall. Again it was good to see Don arguing from Genesis to Revelation, seeing Christ in all the scriptures.

In Chapter 12, Don concentrates on the move over from death to resurrection, again starting wisely with the Mosaic Books, then turning to the Psalms and the Prophets and working through the New Testament. If anyone should leave any of the Bible books out of his
or her theology, then their view of heaven and the way there is incomplete. They all point to being with Christ which is far better than any other joys.

Back to a more solemn note on who may enter into heaven in Chapter Thirteen, Don warns that those who are not washed in the Blood of the Lamb and cleansed from all sin will never gain glory no matter what ‘Church’ ticket they may have in their hand. Though sin has much dominion through God’s providence on earth, nothing sinful can enter heaven and the only way to be rid of sin is on earth. Again, Don denies with Biblical justice the idea of becoming more and more holy until Heaven is forced to let us in. John Gill, in his final thoughts on going home said that such people will never be ready for death. Our only hope is built on our names being written by God by His divine will in the Lamb’s Book of Life. Don closes this chapter with a few fine verses from the pen of Gerhard Tersteegen of my home town of Mülheim whose story of moving from earth to Heaven you will find in back-copies of New Focus.

Don mentions in his book his long struggle with cancer. During a period of severe illness an unsigned card was sent him. There was no ‘Get well soon’ remark on the card but a quote from Romans 16:20 announcing that God will bruise Satan under Don’s feet shortly and he will stand sure and safe in the grace of his Lord. Though medicine and operations put off death for a while, our true hope and healing comes when we shall stand before the throne of grace and be welcomed in. This is because, as the theme of Chapter Fifteen tells us, ‘precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints’. Don knows, as all should know, that death is not the end but the real beginning of life and God is thrilled with the fact that we shall soon be with Him and dwell face to face with the Saviour. This is Don’s next point in Chapter Sixteen which describes our seeing the love in Christ’s dear eyes for us which He has had for His Bride from the foundation of the world.

Chapter Seventeen, Don’s last chapter on going home will be a surprise for many who think our busy days will be done and our activities cease. I remember visiting a dull and dreary compartment for the terminally ill in a large London hospital overlooking an enormous statue of Karl Marx who did not do much at all to bring eternal life to his co-workers. We were an evangelistic team from the London Bible College and someone announced his or her favourite hymn ‘Nothing Changes Here’ sung to a dismal dirge. Looking around, the scene was like a mix between an ancient workhouse and a medieval barrack room where nothing had obviously changed for centuries. Don does away with this never-ending, boring totally false picture of Heaven and tells us how active and busy we shall be in glory. You must read Don yourselves on ‘Heavenly Employment’ here as I could not verbalise this blessed employment half so well. In this last chapter, Don prepares you for a sweet, highly desirable, glorious, exciting taste of Heaven.

Though this book is about the Going Home of Christians, it must be bought and distributed widely amongst non-Christians of whatever colour, class or creed they might be so that they too, will gain a taste of Heaven which will prepare them for the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

Going Home

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

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

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

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

Extract from Foreword by Pastor Earnie W. Lucas

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GEORGE M. ELLA

William Cowper And Home-Schooling
Part Four: Putting Children Into the Right Hands

Cowper advises parents who have no time or ability to teach their children themselves
So far Cowper has been addressing fathers who were Gentlemen of leisure and lived off their estates and inherited incomes. He now turns to those fathers who, because of their businesses, have no time to instruct their children and to those who have not the ability. They should seek out a private tutor who would be willing to coach one or two boys. This person should be neatly, though plainly dressed. He should be articulate but not a chatter-box, prone to laugh but equally prone to be serious when the occasion demands. This ideal teacher should be no jester but be able to discourse lively with rhetorical skill. He should have the ease of a Frenchman rather than the stiffness of an Englishman. He should be a man of letters and morals and many parts. Cowper only lists one 'should not', the private tutor should not be patronised. Cowper is thinking here of the parasitic parson who has been given his living by some rich man to whose pipe he must dance.

Knowing how private teachers were usually looked down upon by the gentry, Cowper pleads with his readers that when they have found such a 'pearl' he should not be treated as a servant and made to eat his meals in a corner alone, whilst the family jest about him to guests and friends. He should be regarded as the treasure he is and an important member of the family and take part in their family life.

Cowper, the author of many fables, was always comparing his fellow men with the animals he believed they resembled. Now he turns to a third category of parents whom he likens to ostriches saying,

The ostrich, silliest of the feather'd kind,
And form'd of God without a parent's mind,
Commits her eggs, incautious, to the dust,
Forgetful that the foot may crush the trust;

This is the obscene mouthed heavy drinking glutton whose table-talk is all of vice planned or already committed. His card-playing wife goes from one late evening party to another, spending the day in bed. Cowper begs these parents to board their sons out with some trusty clergyman and spare them the double plight of being influenced by their wicked family background and being corrupted in a public school.

The social class or group Cowper had most in mind for his educational experiment were those:

… tenants of life's middle state,
Securely placed between the small and great.

Are such men rare? perhaps they would abound
Were occupation easier to be found,
Were education else, so sure to fail,
Conducted on a manageable scale,
And schools, that have out-lived all just esteem,
Exchang’d for the secure domestic scheme.

The poet's view was that a good man, given the right encouragement, is like a gas, able to fill any form he is put in. He also believed in the law of supply and demand and thus wrote:
and for the last hundred lines of the poem the poet reiterates and deepens his arguments for their ears alone. Abuses of the public school system are heaped one on another as Cowper factually but very emotionally lays before these parents their Christian duty to their sons. In his final argument he uses the simile of the shepherd and the hireling, asking their parents if they would pay good money to a careless hireling to keep their flocks when they know he will spend his time sleeping and let the lambs run away. This is what is happening in the public schools, Cowper argues, and if Britain is to have a future worth having, it must be stopped.

Cowper led educational thought in his day
With the possible exception of Adam Smith, no British writer of the 18th century has used such caustic, scathing, critical language against the public school system. Nor was Cowper exaggerating. Even John Sargeaunt, the Westminster historian, admits there had never been a time in the history of the school when so little learning was imparted. He is quick to add, however, that in spite of the low quality of teaching, there was never so much learning acquired as in those days. In other words, bright boys make progress even under dull teachers. Sargeaunt is himself typical of the system Cowper criticises. The historian scoffs at the Christian faith and romanticises the corruption of youth. He accuses Cowper of dishonesty in outlining the educational weaknesses of the public schools but his own list of what went on at Westminster reads like some chapter out of a Billy Bunter Album. He alludes to far more negative aspects than Cowper but apparently to him they depict merely boys being boys.

Applying Cowper’s criticisms to today’s schools
Most readers of this magazine will probably be familiar with other educational systems and may be tempted to look upon Cowper’s criticism of public schools as that of a system which now hardly exists and thus is of no relevance for today. It is also easy for teachers in the relatively few public schools of today to look upon Cowper’s portrait of school life as a thing of the past as the whole public school curriculum has been reformed to include many of the subjects and teaching methods which Cowper recommended. Westminster, especially, is now a world apart from the Westminster of Cowper’s days. A valid question would therefore be, what would Cowper think of the largely state owned and controlled educational systems which have supplanted the public school.

Modern reading methods need correcting
Cowper’s first shock would be the way children learn to read in today’s schools. In his day schools did not claim for themselves the sole right to teach children to read and write. Thus Cowper would look upon what goes on in our primary schools as a further neglect of family life and abuse of family privileges and duties. On examining the reading and writing methods used, he would accuse the schools of adopting

1. What various hindrances we meet,  
   In coming to the mercy-seat!  
   Yet who that knows the worth of prayer,  
   But wishes to be often there?  

2. Prayer makes the darkened cloud withdraw,  
   Prayer climbs the ladder Jacob saw;  
   Gives exercise to faith and love;  
   Brings every blessing from above.

3. Restraining prayer, we cease to fight;  
   Prayer makes the Christian’s armour bright;  
   And Satan trembles when he sees  
   The weakest saint upon his knees.

4. [While Moses stood with arms spread wide,  
   Success was found on Israel’s side;  
   But when, through weariness, they failed,  
   That moment Amalek prevailed.]  

5. [Have you no words? ah! think again;  
   Words flow apace when you complain,  
   And fill your fellow-creatures’ ear  
   With the sad tale of all your care.

6. Were half the breath thus vainly spent,  
   To heaven in supplication sent,  
   Your cheerful song would oftener be,  
   “Hear what the Lord has done for me.”]

an evolutionary approach to language learning and in the drilling in of arbitrary sounds, syllables, morphemes and phonetics instead of teaching words in a sense context, he would see an un-Christian, unscientific attempt to substitute grunts for language. The fact that so many children learn to read (although very slowly) using modern methods would merely strengthen Cowper’s opinion that children learn in spite of schools. Those poor youngsters who are hindered and frustrated in learning to read and write by unnatural methods would strengthen Cowper’s low opinion of a non-Christian school system. It is interesting to note, however, that Cowper believed the best way to learn to read was the ‘story’ approach, whereby the child is confronted with complete sense units such as The Lord’s Prayer or a parable or short Biblical account. Old Lob and Mac and Tosh carried on the ‘story’ method during the early nineteen-forties when this author learnt to read, but the post-war period went to extremes in experimenting with less practical systems. Happily, the story method is again being introduced into schools throughout Europe. Learning by meaningless sounds, syllables and phonetic fantasies has failed.

**Viewing children as empty vessels is wrong**

Cowper was always posing the question, “Is formal 18th century schooling necessary for learning?” On viewing the highly programmed curricula of today, he would certainly ask the same question of this century and probably find that we are farther away than ever from his educational ideal. In Cowper’s day there were many learned men, autodidacts who had received a very poor schooling. John Newton the great preacher and letter writer and author of one of the most adventurous stories ever written, Thomas Scott the commentator, William Carey the missionary and Professor of languages, Captain Cook the mathematician and explorer were all men of little schooling. Newton learnt mathematics and Latin by writing in the sand when kept as a slave in darkest Africa. Scott taught himself languages whilst working as a grazier, Carey learnt whilst mending shoes and Cook gained nearly all his schooling through practical experience. Modern education rules out such learning completely as pupils are seen as vessels to be filled rather than organisms which are able to nourish themselves given the right means. When pupils are fed with facts seven lessons and more a day, how can they find the muse and leisure for independent thinking and growth? Each child is taught to write in the same way, to read in the same way and to take in the very same facts. And we moderns feel quite falsely that this is leading children into the paths of truth. The truth is perhaps that some learn in spite of being forced into passivity whilst taking in instruction like a computer being filled with data. Only when
Many are too exhausted to bother. Cowper emphasised more personal guidance in schools because there was little or none offered in his day. He also advised that the pupil should have great liberty. Nowadays in schools guidance has become absolute control and the pupil has no liberty in dealing with the curriculum forced on him. He must like it or lump it.

**Public education creates pagans**

Cowper’s criticism that public education creates pagans still holds good. One day he was reading the ‘Monthly Review’ when he came across a harsh criticism of John Newton for modelling his life on the Bible. Cowper’s hand went automatically to his pen and he wrote in the margin:

> These critics, who to faith no quarter grant,  
> But call it mere hypocrisy and cant  
> To make a just acknowledgment of praise,  
> And thanks to God for governing our ways,  
> Approve Confucius more, and Zoroaster,  
> Than Christ’s own servant, or that servant’s Master.

We are still living in days when Christian teachers are refused posts in R.I. departments because they do not treat Christ as if He were on a par with Buddha or Mohammed. Science teachers are still penalised for presenting the Bible account of creation along with the syllabus’s account of speculative evolution. School curricula in many regions give more time to so-called Comparative Religion than they do to the Christian culture and history of the mother-country. Educational Authorities in many areas are now calling out for Koran schools but turning their backs on pleas for Christian schools. Children are now taught to criticise the Christian way of life but are reprimanded if they say anything detrimental to Islam.

**Education should put pupils first and ‘subjects’ second**

Cowper campaigned for a school that put the pupil first and ‘subjects’ second. Forming and recreating boys in God’s image was at the forefront of his plan of education. Nowadays we educators are becoming more and more caught up in the subject-orientated rat-race of pseudo-learning. Facts are thought to be more important than thinking, statistics are thought more important than character. Pupils are burdened almost yearly with new ‘open’ subjects and new textbooks which are increasingly textless. Geography, History, Scripture and Literature are disappearing from our curricula and the three Rs are laughed at as a fossil of the past. Hoping to find more scope as a teacher in a reform school, based on encouraging pupils to develop their skills and freedom of expression, I found the cast-offs from the normal school system provided with entertainment rather than means of learning. The illiterate pupils were taught in two and a half years of project lessons how to make a multi-media video film by rote, using extremely expensive equipment which they would never see again outside of school, but they were not taught how to read and write. They were thus not shown how to freely express themselves in the basic and essential media of written communication. These ‘reform’ teachers did not realise that reading and writing are the basic means of acquiring further knowledge and also imparting it. Imagine job applicants not even being able to state in writing that they can make a movie but nothing else! The more the pupil absorbs information but is denied the means of expressing what he has learnt, the less useful that person will be either to himself or society and he will know nothing of the meaning of life. Nowadays, even at degree level, students fail or pass their examinations via multiple-choice tests and are left inarticulate, empty of expression and quite unable to cope with life whether in the factory, laboratory, office or educational establishment.

Thus Cowper would still argue that our modern school education is still groundless and aimless and therefore meaningless. Where is the Minister of Education who is prepared to agree to Cowper’s high view of man? Where is the educator who is prepared to accept Cowper’s educational aims – the rebirth of a child and his integration back into God’s plan for him? Where is the school syllabus that makes any attempt to define mankind and his purpose in life? Such thoughts compel the Christian teacher to consider Cowper’s solutions once more. They are certainly not far-fetched, and, from a Christian point of view, not impractical at all. Naturally, they will be thought to be so by contenders for the status quo, but the Christian was never one to mark time, but is one according to his new-born nature who sticks his neck out and campaigns for better things to come.
New Focus Church Online
That the purpose of God according to election might stand

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

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

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

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

All our services are conducted using the KJV of the Bible.

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

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

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

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

Service times in different time zones are available on the NewFocus.Church website on the Upcoming Service page.

“What time is that where I am?”

Pastor Peter L. Meney

New Focus Church Online YouTube channel