

## Sovereign Grace Union: Doctrinal Basis

### ***The Holy Scriptures***

The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as originally given, as the inspired and infallible and inerrant Word of God, and as the sole, supreme, and all-sufficient authority in every matter of Christian faith and practice.

### ***The Trinity***

One living and true God, Sovereign in creation, providence and redemption, subsisting in three Persons – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit – the same in substance, and equal in power and glory.

### ***The Lord Jesus Christ***

The Eternal Sonship and the essential, absolute, and eternal Deity, and true and sinless humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ; His virgin birth, death, and burial; His physical resurrection and ascension into heaven, and His coming again in power and glory.

### ***The Holy Spirit***

The Personality and Deity of the Holy Spirit, through Whom the sinner is born again to saving repentance and faith, and by Whom the saints are sanctified through the truth.

### ***The Fall of Man***

The fall of mankind in Adam, by which they have totally lost their original righteousness and holiness, and have come under the righteous condemnation of God.

### ***Unconditional Election***

The personal and unconditional election in Christ of a multitude which no man can number unto everlasting salvation, out of God's pure grace and love, without any foresight of faith or good works in them.

### ***Particular Redemption***

The personal and eternal redemption from all sin and the penal consequence thereof, of all God's elect, by the substitutionary sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ.

### ***Effectual Calling***

The effectual calling of all the elect by the irresistible grace of God.

### ***Justification***

The justification of sinners by faith alone, through the atoning death and resurrection and imputed righteousness of Christ.

### ***Final Perseverance***

The final perseverance in the state of grace of all those who have been elected by the Father, redeemed by the Son, and regenerated by the Holy Spirit, so that they shall never perish but have eternal life.

*In reference to the above, consult the XXXIX Articles of the Church of England, the Westminster Confession, the Savoy Declaration and the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith.*

## *Editorial*

If there is one sin the Lord condemns throughout His Word, it is disobedience.

It was by “one man’s disobedience” that “many [and O how many!] were made sinners.” (Romans 5.19)

It is because we are all now by nature dead in sin that the Holy Spirit calls us “children of disobedience.” (Ephesians 2.2)

It is “upon the children of disobedience” (Ephesians 5.3-6), who commit “fornication . . . uncleanness . . . covetousness . . . filthiness . . . foolish talking . . . jesting,” and who are covetous, or idolaters, that “the wrath of God” is poured out.

It was for “disobedience” that those who were among God’s people at Sinai (but were not of them) “received a just recompense of reward.” (i.e. eternal death) (Hebrews 2.2)

It was in disobedience that the Jews rebelled against God, cast His law behind their backs, slew His prophets, and refused to repent, after so many favours had been shown them. (Nehemiah 9.24-26)

It is for disobedience to parents (and through them, to God) that children are “worthy of death,” and fall under the judgment of God. (Romans 1.30-32)

It is from the disobedient (and those persisting in other abominable sins) that believers are to “turn away.” (2 Timothy 3.1-5)

It is the disobedient who are “unruly,” “vain talkers and deceivers,” false teachers, lovers of “filthy lucre,” those who “turn from the truth” to listen to “Jewish fables, and commandments of men,” the “defiled and unbelieving,” those who “profess that they know God, but in works deny Him,” who are “abominable . . . and reprobate unto every good work.” (Titus 1.10-16)

It is the disobedient who find the only Saviour “a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence.” (1 Peter 2.7-8)

It was the disobedient whom the long-suffering God destroyed in the Flood, when the Spirit of Christ in Noah “went and preached unto the spirits [that are now] in prison. (1 Peter 3.18-20)

Dear friends, who can stand before this disobedience-hating and disobedience-punishing God?

Only One! Only One! Only He who was “found in fashion as a man,” who “humbled Himself, and became **obedient** unto death, even the death of the cross.” (Philippians 2.8)

And who is this? God (no less!) manifest in the flesh (1 Timothy 3.16) our only Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The word ‘fashion’ speaks of His outward appearance before men, rather than what He is in Himself, the eternal Son of the eternal Father.

And how did He humble Himself? By taking the form of a servant and being obedient unto the shameful and accursed death of the cross. “There were no lower depths possible, for the cross bespeaks the whole curse of God upon sin. It is humiliation inimitable, unrepeatable, unrepeatabe.” (John Murray)

And why was He so obedient? That He might be the One through whom every one of His brethren (the children whom His Father gave Him in the eternal covenant of grace) shall be brought to glory. (Hebrews 2.9-10) This is the ultimate fruit of God’s free, unmerited grace. Our guilt was transferred to Him, so that His righteousness might be imputed to us. What an exchange, says Luther, ‘my sin for His righteousness!’ or, in other words, ‘my disobedience for His obedience!’ O, we shall never know the bitterness that was in the cup that our disobedience deserved, but which the Lord Jesus in His obedience drank.

When we consider the preciousness of God’s distinguishing grace to those (and only those) for whom Christ was obedient, let us adhere to John Murray’s resolute reminder: “But there is not the slightest warrant in this text [i.e. Hebrews 2.9-10] to extend the reference of the vicarious death of Christ beyond those who are most expressly referred to in the context [i.e. children, brethren, sons]. This text shows how plausible off-hand quotation may be and yet how baseless is such an appeal in support of a doctrine of universal atonement.” And let us “consider Him, lest we be wearied and faint in our minds.” (Hebrews 12.3)

“There was no other good enough to pay the price of sin; He only could unlock the gate of heaven, and let us in.”

## ***“Lord, remember me!”***

**“And he said unto Jesus: ‘Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.’ (Luke 23:42)**

[The following sermon, kindly sent us by Miss Muriel Stonelake, was preached by the late Philip Kinderman, a much-loved former member of the Sovereign Grace Union central committee. It is dated 27 January 1974, and is lightly edited. Before reading it, beg the Lord in His grace and mercy to bless it to your salvation. Ed.]

### **Context**

How is one to begin upon such a wonderful, sacred, blessed and sovereign subject? I thought I knew, but when I come to it I find I really don't know. It is a simple word, a prayer; not many words in length, but oh! How much it means, and what an answer it obtained!

I want to start with the scene on this hill of Calvary (or Golgotha = the place of a skull.) There is that well-known hymn: “There is a green hill far away,” but the picture is not a beautiful one, not one of a pleasant countryside, with all things very wonderful. Whether the hill was green or not is very doubtful; whether it was a beautiful day or not is less doubtful – it was dark, the sun was veiled. It was a dreadful day.

On this hill were three crosses, the rough wood where three men hung and suffered a terrible death. And one was the Son of God, Jesus Christ. It was a dreadful scene, and yet how much it means. I wonder if we really realize in our hearts how much it means. For here, on Calvary, when the sun was darkened, when Jesus cried with a loud voice: “It is finished,” and the veil of the temple was rent in two – here, on this day, the greatest work ever undertaken was completed. How do you realize what it means, that Jesus Christ died to redeem sinners? As He gave Himself, He brought sinners back to God, and brought heaven and heavenly glory to all

who come to God by Him. We must think of this, realize what it means in our hearts, know what pardon and forgiveness is through the blood of Christ. Never was a day like this day. Many wonderful things have happened, many dreadful things have happened, many have been born and many have died, but never was a day like this day, and never will be till the Lord returns. What was done on Calvary was done for all ages; the benefits, the blessings, the salvation, the support that are to be known today and every day till the last great day, when all believers are gathered into the paradise of God.

Here, then, was the scene. There were three crosses, one on which the Son of God hung. There were two others with Him, and one of these two spoke the words of our text. Here was one who was saved by the blood of Christ. Simply, then, I want to think of this person, his prayer, and the answer to the prayer.

### **His Person**

We don't read much about him. He was a malefactor. What was his crime? We do not know. Whether it was dreadful as men count things dreadful we do not know. It has been said that the Romans, although they could be cruel and revengeful, only condemned to this painful death those whom they considered the worst of criminals. We know that he said that he justly deserved it; so that, whatever he did or did not do, we know that he realized that it deserved the punishment of death. Although it was a terrible punishment, he believed it to be just and right. He is often referred to as the dying thief, but whatever it was for which he was sentenced, he came to this place and hung on the cross.

I want to speak with care and with feeling. I ought to speak with shame. I said he is often referred to as the dying thief. You know the hymn-writer says:

“The dying thief rejoiced to see  
That fountain in his day;  
And there have I, as vile as he,  
Washed all my sins away.”

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I have known what it is to steal, although I was brought up to know what honesty was, to realize the awfulness of such a sin, and although realizing it, yet still committing it! I have known other sins. When I say this I need much care. The very thought should be a shameful thought – *it is* a shameful thought. There is no glory in being sinful, in being sunk in sins of lust or theft or moral wrongdoing, and that which even ordinary men esteem sinful and wrong. There is no glory in that; but the blessedness, the beauty is that these sins are forgiven and blotted out by the blood of Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul says: “And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” You are not what you once were because Christ has redeemed you and forgiven you. Here, then, was a man who was suffering for his sins, but who realized that he suffered justly.

He was not alone. Remember what the other malefactor said: “If thou be the Christ, save thyself and us.” Remember how he railed on the Lord Jesus Christ. There was one who had no thought of repentance, no sense of the justice of his condemnation, no knowledge of the goodness and greatness of the One who hung between them – “If thou be the Christ.” What a word was that!

### **His Prayer**

But He did save; He saved one, the one who prayed to Him. He said: “Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.” It is a remarkable prayer. Look how he addressed the Saviour: “Lord”! He had just said to his fellow criminal: “This man hath done nothing amiss,” but now he addresses Him personally and says: “Lord.” See how he speaks of Him, recognizes His authority, as One able to save even him. See how he turns to Jesus in the extremity of his need, and speaks of His kingdom.

We have no means of knowing what he may have heard before of Jesus Christ, or whether he had any understanding of His miracles; but if he had, they had no previous effect on his life. Nothing until this time had had any effect at all on his heart. But now his eyes

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were opened. As he beheld the inscription over the cross of the Lord Jesus, he realized that He had a kingdom to enter into. “Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.” What a wonder of faith, that he should see, in One dying, a King who had a kingdom to enter into, a kingdom not of this world. It was plain that His kingdom was not of this world, for He was soon to leave it. The malefactor did not suggest that he should be saved from a natural death. No! “I suffer the condemnation of my sins justly.” He must die, but he would enter into that kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Do you know that the Lord Jesus Christ has a kingdom? Do you see the King in His glory; A King of love, of glory, of heaven; the King of eternal life to those who long for that life, who know that they have no hope of sins forgiven except through Another dying in their place?

There was this in his prayer: a hope of mercy and forgiveness. “Lord, remember me.” He could not base his prayer on any worthiness in himself, or anything he had done; and yet see how he prays: “Remember me.” What a lesson this is, a lesson of mercy. He cannot use any argument, just: “Remember me” – a simple payer, but it was a sufficient prayer.

### **The Answer**

We must think of the answer to this prayer: “And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise” – an immediate answer, a blessed answer, a saving answer. How fully his prayer was answered, and how wonderfully! “Today!” That very day! “Thou shalt be with me in paradise.” Paradise is the word that expresses the satisfaction of heavenly bliss, of all that the soul can wish. It represents the place where the Lord Jesus provides all, where He places His people in the mansions He has prepared for them, where He blesses them. “Paradise” – what an answer! He deserved hell, and the Lord promised him heaven. He deserved the just punishment of his sins,

and the Lord promised him pardon, immediately, with no waiting, nothing further to be done! “Today - with me!”

What an answer it was! How could it be? Could such a man really enter heaven, even at the very point of death?

Yes indeed, for these reasons:

Firstly, because Jesus Christ came into the world to seek and to save those who were lost. This malefactor was a lost soul indeed. Bishop Ryle calls him Christ’s greatest trophy, because he had almost come into the kingdom of Satan, and yet the Lord snatched him from the jaws of death, and brought him to be with Him in heaven. It is no credit to draw so near to destruction, and then to be pulled away, not at all. But what a triumph it is of redeeming love and grace.

It shows us the faithfulness of that promise of God that whosoever believes in the Son shall have everlasting life.

It shows the certainty of that word which the apostle Peter repeats: “And it shall come to pass that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

It shows the certainty of the love that was set upon His people. Here was one who could not perish, even though he was so close to death, because he was redeemed by the precious blood of Christ. He was brought to hear the voice of the Lord, and was snatched from eternal death.

It shows us the greatness of forgiveness. Here was one who could not possibly do anything for himself. He had no time to live a life of good works. He had no possibility at all of bringing forth anything at all that was good. He must rely only on the grace and mercy of God, and he was saved.

This is not to say that we should not live a godly life. Why? Many die unrepentant. There was another malefactor. Very solemnly his case is brought before us. Here was one who was close to Christ, and yet, really, in his heart, he was far away – so near, and yet so far! That blessed Person was so near in His redeeming and

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wonderful death, and yet the malefactor was so far away! His unbelief showed clearly through his words. His rejection of the Saviour stands out: “If thou be the Christ, save thyself and us.” What an unbelieving “If,” and with this unbelief and ignorance that dreadful distance! A veil is drawn over his dreadful end. How truly awful to be so near Jesus Christ and yet so far away, never to turn to Him! There was no seeking, no prayer for mercy, no repentance, no confession of his guilt, no understanding of the Person who hung there beside him.

One malefactor was no better than the other. They were both alike in this; they were brought to the same level as they came together in that awful place – and yet they were so different! One saw the King in His beauty, the other saw only a man who could not help him!

### **Application**

Oh, what do we see when we look at Jesus Christ on the cross? Do we know that He died for sinners? “Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.” Here is a suitable prayer for us, and while we pray it let us remember that we need not be at the point of death to pray it, or to receive a sweet answer to it. Indeed, it is far better that we should not wait till we are at the point of death before we pray it. How do we know the point of our death? We do not know if we have days, or months, or years before us, or what opportunity there may be to repent and turn to the Lord in days to come. If only the Spirit of the Lord would imprint these things on your heart, and make you feel them deeply, you would go to Christ with this prayer in your soul: “Dear Lord, remember me.”

We do not deserve mercy any more than the dying malefactor did. Let us not imagine that if we have not gone to such lengths of sin as he did, then we are worthy, and that we have a claim on the grace of God. His grace is freely bestowed, freely given. He deals with sinners on His terms. He gives to them from His fullness, in the way of mercy through His own precious blood. Think of this. If we come to Him we must come in this simple and unpretentious

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spirit. We must seek from Him, confessing openly to Him all the darkness of our hearts, all the blackness of our past. If we come to Him like this, He will receive us, because He died for sinners. His very death, the just for the unjust, was a reconciliation, a bringing back to God those who are so far away. Because of this all our sins can be forgiven.

Well, I have spoken simply, from my heart, very poorly I know concerning these great things. I cannot describe to you the majesty of His Person, the wonder of His cross, or open to you that mystery of His love who died for you. He gave Himself for others, and in dying brought this wonderful trophy of a malefactor with Him into paradise. I hope the Lord will imprint on your hearts that picture of the cross of Christ that will do your heart good. Then He will be praised with the praises of the redeemed, because He has washed them in His own blood, and made them kings and priests unto God. Amen.

**S.G.U. Pamphlets: Free to Subscribers  
(A5 s.a.e. £1.30 postage)**

Behold Me! Behold Me!

The Centrality of the Cross – Samuel Chapman

Was the Reformation Necessary? – Graham Bidston

Shall Everyone Be Saved? – John Brentnall

Justification – James Battersby

An Accomplished Redemption – W J Grier

Augustine and Prayer – John Brentnall

**Book Allocation**

In keeping with the stated aims of the Union, the Committee has agreed to allocate books setting forth the doctrines of grace to students who are being called to minister to the churches. Anyone wishing to benefit by this grant of books should apply in writing or e-mail to the Treasurer, whose name and address may be found inside the front cover of Peace and Truth.

## *City of God*

### **Introduction**

Some of our best-known psalms recount the blessedness of the Church of the living God. In Psalm 48 the sweet singer of Israel writes:

*Great is the Lord, and greatly he  
Is to be praised still,  
Within the city of our God,  
Upon his holy hill. (Psalm 48.1)*

Here her blessedness consists in the presence of God Himself in her midst.

Later on we read:

*Things glorious are said of thee,  
Thou city of the Lord. (Psalm 87.3)*

Here His presence communicates life to her dead and strength to her living.

The hymns: *City of God, how broad and far* and *Glorious things of thee are spoken* also dwell fondly on the Church's divinely-bestowed privileges.

R. B. Kuiper's *Glorious Body of Christ* is only one of many fine modern prose works setting forth her God-given beauty.

What is little known, however, is Augustine's monumental treatise entitled *City of God*. In these days of revived paganism and widespread persecution of Christians, we would do well to remind ourselves of its main themes and learn a few of its leading lessons.

### **Origin**

On 24<sup>th</sup> August 410 a cry of dismay began to ripple through the Roman Empire when Alaric the Goth sacked Rome, presumptuously termed 'the eternal city.' The western world's foundations appeared to be shaken. Immediately, vehement complaints broke out against 'the God of the Christians' for failing

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to shield Rome from the disaster, and against His disciples for having forsaken Rome's ancient deities. Over in North Africa, Augustine felt the shock no less than Jerome in Bethlehem, who cried out: "O God, the heathen have come into thine inheritance." With such evil tidings as the massacre of monks and rape of virgins reaching him, what answer could Augustine give to the taunts of the pagans? To meet the assault, he penned his *magnum opus*, *City of God*. It occupied him for fourteen years (413-427).

### **Form**

On completion, the *City of God* filled twenty-two books.

The first five refute the polytheism of Rome's 'gods many and lords many' and the false charges laid at the door of Christians. Augustine demonstrates that calamities and sorrows fall on Christians and heathen alike, but that their purpose and effect are very different.

God sends trials on His people to purge them of their sins and make them holy. Such disasters as the sack of Rome are severe but salutary: to believers they have a disciplinary value far greater than their cost.

By contrast, the calamities of the heathen are punishments. The fire that melts the gold hardens the clay. Though appalled by the sack of Rome, Augustine saw it clearly as a divine judgment on its idolatry, luxury and immorality. In a sweeping survey of the Empire's history, he proves beyond doubt that selfish greed was both its ruling principle and the cause of its destruction. Enlightened by the Spirit of God, his penetrating mind probes beneath surface events: heathenism itself is the product of man's moral depravity, and its deities are demons.

The next five books are addressed to those who claimed that many gods were needed to secure happiness in the future life. This thesis he refutes from both Scripture and history, sometimes tediously digressing and repeating former arguments.

The remaining twelve books contrast two cities – the city of God and the city of this world – in their origin (11-14), development

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(15-18) and final destiny (19-22). We shall concentrate chiefly on these.

### **Contents**

Though it deals with both cities, the treatise receives its name from the one eternal city of God, embracing first the Jewish theocracy and afterwards the Church as developed in and after the New Testament. Its opening words – ‘Most glorious City of God’ – sets the tone of the whole. Besides offering a thoroughly Biblical philosophy of history (namely, as governed by God’s providence over individuals and nations), it outlines Augustine’s view of what the Christian Church is in His sight.

Ever since the historic Fall of Adam from original holiness through his one act of disobedience, in which the whole race was germinally included, Augustine claims that mankind has been divided into two great communities or cities: the City of God, symbolized by Jerusalem, and the earthly city, symbolized by Babylon and occasionally described as ‘the devil’s city.’

He does not have in mind two natural cities with geographical boundaries, but two spiritual entities whose citizenship is not determined by our place of birth or parentage, but by the object of our love and the end of our actions. In the one, the love of God regulates our lives, in the other, the love of self. In the one, the praise of God is its end, in the other, praise of self.

Put another way, those in the City of God place themselves beneath the divine authority of the Scriptures, adhere to Christ, and live godly, righteous lives. By contrast, those in the earthly city are motivated by self-love, and live according to the flesh, or human thought, desire, speech and activity not ordered by God. They are the ungodly multitude, the mass of men alienated from God and hostile to the cause of Christ.

At root, this distinction between the two societies is traceable to a special election of a people of God from the corrupt and

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condemned mass of mankind. Augustine follows their history in two antagonistic lines, and ends in a consideration of the determined end of both ‘cities’ – their eternal separation. For the elect there awaits an eternal heaven, for the reprobate an eternal hell. Forever, the citizens of the heavenly city enjoy the blessedness of God for which they longed during their earthly life, while the citizens of the worldly city are excluded from such blessedness.

In developing his theme, Augustine is in no doubt that the punishment meted out to the citizens of evil is thoroughly deserved, for even their supposed virtues are ‘splendid sins,’ unworthy of praise – the beauty of Greek literature, the earnestness of the philosophers in knocking at the door of truth, the noble example of self-sacrifice that marked the early days of the Republic: these all show that mankind, outside the election of grace, is the same everywhere and at all times. Therefore the incipient separation that begins in this present life is deservedly prolonged throughout eternity. The awful difference then is that the separation is absolute and irreversible.

### **Assessment**

It would be unfair to judge “The City of God” by the standard of modern exegetical scholarship. Augustine’s interpretations of Scripture, although often profound, are at times very fanciful; they also lack the foundation of a grasp of the original languages. He knew very little Greek and no Hebrew, and had to depend on the Latin version. His learning was confined to biblical and Roman literature and the systems of Greek philosophy. He often wastes arguments on absurd opinions, and some of his views are obsolete. With all its defects, however, and despite the perversion of its doctrine of development by John Henry Newman and his fellow Romanists, the *City of God* remains a masterpiece by a great and godly man.

## Lessons

Even a cursory look at Augustine's great treatise yields several lessons for our own day.

1. In the first place, *City of God* clarifies the relationship that Christians should have towards the godless order of this world.

The Church and the world (not to be confused with the state) are spiritually and morally antagonistic. Christians should therefore work and pray for the salvation of the ungodly – 'he who is your enemy today may be your friend in Christ tomorrow' – but should never capitulate to their godless ethos and depraved life-style.

Tragically, in many quarters today the two cities have merged and become indistinguishable: indeed, in many places the ideals of the world dominate the Church. The very sins for which God punished classical Rome – idolatry, luxury and immorality, in such forms as status worship, the 'prosperity gospel,' and sexual promiscuity – are only a fraction of the worldly baggage that the Church has taken on board. According to Augustine, we who name the name of Christ should never cross the boundary line separating the City of God from the City of This World. Like young Margaret Wilson, urged to acknowledge the lecherous Charles II as head of both State and Church or drown, we should cry: "I am one of Christ's children, let me go!" Let worldly men, women and children come over to us, but let us not go over to them.

2. Secondly, we should always keep in mind the transcendent nature of the kingdom of God and His Anointed. When the nations rage, and their rulers take counsel together against the Lord and His Anointed, scheming to "break their bonds asunder and cast their cords from them," the Lord both scorns them and vexes them in His displeasure. Furthermore, He assures His people that He has set *HIS KING* on His holy hill of Zion. (Psalm 2.1-6) And did not our Lord and Saviour say to Pilate: "My kingdom is not of this world"? (John 18.36) Comments J. C. Ryle: "He did not aim at establishing a temporal power . . . The only dominion He exercised

was over men's hearts, and the only weapons that His subjects employed were spiritual weapons." It is a kingdom that no earthly government need fear. On the contrary, the more Christian principles leaven a nation, the more secure from real evil it will be.

The transcendent nature of Christ's kingdom means too that Christian governments should seek where they can to deliver the victims of totalitarian states from their overlords. This is what Oliver Cromwell did when he threatened to invade Rome for slaughtering the Waldensians of Piedmont for not submitting to the Pope. Today we are in great danger of falling under the control of a totalitarian European or even World super-state that seeks to meet all its citizens' needs and realize their hopes, imposing sanctions on all who 'opt out.'

Another corollary is that, without renouncing our citizenship of the temporal society to which we belong, we Christians should seek to demonstrate visibly the unity we possess with our fellow citizens in the City of God, where alone salvation is found. This is not to encourage a shallow ecumenism or multi-faith society, but to promote the fellowship of all believers. Tragically, most western Christians today are known more for their divisiveness than their unity. Were we all united by allegiance to the doctrines of grace, we would leave a more durable mark on the conscience of worldly men, whether they hear or forbear.

A third corollary is that we Christians should live above the world. As a transcendent society, with our own King, laws, communities, ethos and life-style, we should reflect the order of heaven, our true home. Though living in this world, we are not of it. Therefore, let us set our affections on things above, not on the earth, and live for eternity, not time.

3. Thirdly, we need to acknowledge in heart and life the over-ruling providence of God. "God's works of providence," says our *Shorter Catechism*, "are His most holy, wise and powerful preserving and governing all His creatures and all their actions."

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Let us never forget that in fulfilling His eternal purpose our God is “wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working” (Isaiah 28.29). Even the evils of mankind form part of the overall plan which He is unfolding to the glory of His mercy and justice. When, therefore, we are tempted to complain of the wickedness of the wicked, let us recall that “the Lord reigneth” and that “all things work together for good” to those who love Him and are called according to His purpose. And when we find ourselves in distress or calamity, let us remember with the Puritan John Flavel that our God has a thousand doors in His providence through which He is able to lead us to deliverance.

4. Fourthly, let us keep our eyes on the Last Day, when the two cities will be finally and eternally separated, for, as Augustine says: “only in heaven has been promised that which we seek on earth.” Perhaps the words of Bernard of Cluny express our desire for this day. May they resonate in our hearts whenever we find the men of this world refusing even in death to come to Christ that they might have life:

*Jerusalem the golden,  
With milk and honey blest,  
Beneath thy contemplation  
Sink heart and voice oppressed:  
I know not, O I know not  
What joys await us there,  
What radiance of glory,  
What bliss beyond compare.*

*O sweet and blessed country,  
The home of God's elect!  
O sweet and blessed country  
That eager hearts expect!  
Jesus, in mercy bring us  
To that dear land of rest,  
Who art, with God the Father  
And Spirit, ever blest!*

## *Puritans and Covenanters* *(Continued)*

### *Memoirs of Elizabeth West* *(Conclusion)*

#### **Sermons**

“This night,” she records, “I was sitting, myself alone, thinking on a sermon which I had heard” (on the Healing of the Gadarene Demoniac). Her three quaint observations are:

1. The devil will take little rather than have nothing: “he lost the man; he is content with the swine.”
2. “They run fast that the devil drives.” Sinners are quick to do evil.
3. “The devil brings all his hogs to an ill market.” Sinners inevitably perish.

Clearly, Elizabeth’s meditations simply continue where the ministers leave off preaching. John Moncrief’s sermon on Micah 6.9, for instance, after a devastating fire in the Canongate – ‘The Lord’s voice crieth in the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name: hear the rod, and who hath appointed it,’ draws from her the beautiful reflection: “it lets me see the vanity of all time’s created pleasures, and that they are the only happy folk that have their treasure in heaven.” Then follow seventeen remarks on ‘the world.’

Again, following the same minister’s sermon on Taking Up the Cross of Christ, Elizabeth found two crosses in her heart, “the which I would not consent to: the one was an absent God in the time of trouble and trial, the other (was) to be given up to a selfish disposition of spirit.” Then, with disarming frankness, she concludes: “O Lord, if Thou deliver me from these two, I would take up any other Thou pleasest.”

After hearing a sermon from Isaiah 43.22-25, she records: “I was wonderfully helped to that duty of meditation, so that I could scarce cast my eyes any way but I got some spiritual meditation. I got new discoveries of the miseries of an unconverted soul, and the blessedness of those that are interested (ie. have a saving interest) in Christ, and the vanity of all created enjoyments under the sun.”

Once, after hearing a sermon on Drawing Near to God, she “came home” and inquired why God had allowed her to stray so far away from Him. “In answer to this inquiry,” she writes, “I saw these four reasons: It was to let me see:

The great difference betwixt the way of sin and the way of godliness;

That though I would wander out of the way, yet I had neither strength nor power of mine own to turn myself into the right way again. It must be the strength of another, even Jesus, that I must lean to;

That when the Lord had a mind to come with a visit to a soul, nothing can hinder Him;

That a walking with God in His own way was more difficult than to find God. I saw many things in my nature that were apt to lead me away from God, even after I had found Him.”

A further case indicates just how impressionable Elizabeth was to the preached Word. Following a sermon on Ezekiel 16, describing God’s time of love to an outcast and discarded soul, she records: “For many days the impression of this woman went not out of my mind, and many sweet meditations I got from it, all which consisted in these three:

Ist, what I was by nature.

2ndly, what Christ had done for me.

3rdly, what I had proved, and was like to prove, after all this love.

The more I read in this chapter, I still saw my own picture the more drawn to the life, but especially how ungrateful I proved to so kind a Lord.”

In the summer of 1703 she records that after a “strange (ie. unknown) minister” had preached on ‘O love the Lord, ye his saints’ (Psalm 34.9) she “retired to the fields, where the Lord Himself preached a sermon of love” to her soul.

### **Meditation arising from Prayer**

We notice too how Elizabeth’s meditations sprang spontaneously from her prayers. As a corrective to those who confine prayer to speaking with God, various places in the Memoirs indicate that communion with Him includes the Lord speaking to us. Several examples demonstrate this:

“Weighed with the sense of indwelling sin,” she took her burden to the Lord. “O the sweet intercourse I got with heaven this night!” she exclaims. “I was more experienced what communion with God was.” The meditations He gave her are two things in believers that grieve the heart of their Saviour:

1. “That for all He had done and suffered for His people . . . they should doubt of His love at every trifle.”
2. “That for all the tokens of His love He had given” them, “they should entertain other lovers in their hearts, where He should dwell alone.”

A second example occurred while she was praying alone in a field. “The eyes of my soul were opened,” she recalls, “and I got a sight of sweet Jesus, and there I saw two things: First, that the soul of a believer was like a chair that nothing could fill but Christ . . . Secondly, I saw that in Christ which satisfies the soul completely.”

A third case followed a fierce inward struggle at a Communion in Prestonpans. Not expecting to get anything for her soul, having abused so many mercies, she was nevertheless led to reflect on her “sad case – First, that an unholy, untender life . . . is the worst enemy that the work of grace hath. Secondly . . . the sins of the godly . . . were more piercing to Christ . . . than the sins of the wicked.”

## Scripture Passages

Frequently her meditations are observations on passages of Holy Scripture that she was studying. Having read Psalm 118, she says: “It begins with so many ‘my’s’ . . . there are nine my’s, every one of them sweeter than another – My strength, my rock, my deliverer, my fortress, my God, my strength, my buckler, my salvation, my high tower. O how sweet were these my’s to me!”

Towards the close of 1705, while pouring out her heart over her “body of sin and death,” she received “many sweet and comfortable promises” from Psalm 41, which she compares to cordials that warmed her “cold and frozen heart . . . half distracted with unbelief.” “I saw so much joy, and felt so much delight in His Presence, that it is beyond expression. I can say I never heard the most lively minister preach on what communion with God was, as now I felt it. No! the one half was not told me of that intimacy and familiarity that is between Christ and believers when they are admitted to communion and fellowship with Him.”

Early in 1703, when the Presbyterians were afraid of the possible imposition of Prelacy on the land, Jude 3 – ‘Earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints’ – came into Elizabeth’s mind; “from which,” she says, “the Lord taught me two lessons: First, that as the Lord had handed down a faith to His people, so it was their duty to be settled, confirmed and established in it, that they may be able to contend for it when it is called in question. Secondly, that in all ages of the Church there have always been some to contradict and oppose the faith, otherwise there had been no need of contending for it.” She then sets down several points that the Lord had “cleared up” to her; namely, some things that every one should contend for, and some things that every one should contend against:

“First, the Lord’s own people should contend for Christ’s rights and prerogatives, that none lay a claim to them but Himself. Secondly, that all the ordinances, worship and government of His house be according to His own appointment, and that it should be kept free from the inventions of men mixed in with it.”

She then enumerates “six particulars” in which Presbyterians should contend against the Prelatic Party:

- “1. They have invented a new head to the Church (the king).
2. They invented new officers in the Church (Lord Bishops)
3. They have invented a new sort of worshipping God (by a set form of prayer).
4. They have invented the observation (observance) of some superstitious days as an ordinance in the Church (Yule Day, etc).
5. They have invented a new doctrine (viz. that morality is the whole duty of man).
6. They are avowed enemies to the covenanted work of Reformation in Scotland, especially the Solemn League and Covenant.”

### **Authors**

At other times her thoughts were stimulated by the authors she was reading. Among these were Samuel Rutherford, Andrew Gray, John Bunyan, John Flavel, John Knox, Alexander Shields and one of the Wedderburns (James, John or Robert). She was also well read in the Westminster Confession and knew the life of the Italian apostate Spira. Let one reference suffice: “I was one day reading on Mr. Samuel Rutherford’s Letters, where I found him have this expression, ‘O self! Self! That woeful thing self! It will not be satisfied unless it ride side for side with Christ!’ This was a little comforting to me, that any other of God’s people had been in this case beside myself; and I also found Mr. John Knox, in his life and death, was strongly tempted with it, even on his death-bed.”

### **Parables**

More frequently still is Elizabeth’s habit of turning her observations into brief parables. Once, arriving a day late for the Lasswade Communion, she noticed the millwheels turning and the women bleaching their webs. “I thought this not very suitable for a Fast Day,” she recalls. Then, while watching the webs bleaching, she was given a “very sweet meditation.”

“I saw some webs that were new laid down to the water, and these were very ill hued (coloured); I saw others that had lain longer,

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and these became white, and changed their natural hue; then I thought, That white web was once black, and as useless as the other (for an unbleached web is of little or no use), but there hath been a great deal of pains taken on it ere it came this length, what steeping, knocking, wringing, watering, rubbing has there been wared (spent) on it?

Now the meditation was this: the unbleached web was like the unrenewed soul on whom the Lord bestowed a great deal of pains before it changed its natural hue; what knocking by His Word; what wringing and washing by affliction; what watering by His Gospel; then I thought the white web was like a renewed soul, on whom these pains had taken effect; and, for as white as the web was, yet, by reason of its being used, it very soon grew nasty, so that it must be frequently washed; again, so the renewed soul, though it be sanctified and made white in the blood of the Lamb, yet by reason of its being in a corrupt world, soon defiles itself, and so must frequently resort to the fountain for cleansing.”

Expressing her gratitude for “the assistance of the Spirit . . . especially in reading of the Scriptures,” which had previously been “dark” to her, she compares the Word first, to a cabinet of jewels, “but the cabinet was fast locked, so that I saw nothing but the outside, and the keeper of the keys was gone, who was the Spirit of God;” second, to a candle she held in her hand, but “the candle was not lighted, which made me to stumble, and that frequently; but in His own due time He opened the cabinet and lighted the candle, so that I saw very excellent sights, well worth the recording!”

While recovering from the shock of a fire in the city, she thought on the folly of those who spend so much time “laying up treasures on earth,” only to see them quickly consumed. “I think a man or woman,” she continues, “in their gathering the world, is like a spider working its web: O what pains doth it take in spinning it out! And when it is spun, it sits down in the midst of it to take its rest; but when the maid comes to sweep the room, one touch of the besom (brush) sweeps it clean away, as if it had not been!”

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One further, Bunyan-like meditation is worth recording. She compared herself to “one going a long journey in the winter season, it being dark and gloomy, the way also being full of mires, sinks and snares, all which are very dangerous; but this I must observe, before I came at these places, I got either sun- or moonlight to discover them, so that I might never be surprised at, nor entangled in them, so as to despair of a recovery. And was not this great favour conferred upon me?” she asks with evident delight.

### **Songs or Poems**

Occasionally, Elizabeth’s meditations found expression in “little songs” or poems, which she sang when alone. At a Communion in 1694 the love of God was so shed abroad in her heart that she could not refrain from casting her sense of acceptance in Christ into a poem of seventeen eight-line stanzas on the Incarnation. The verses have little poetic merit, but her simple, sincere piety and the pervasive influence of the Scottish Metrical Psalter are evident throughout. We quote the first and last stanzas:

*Most holy Lord, I Thee intreat,  
Teach me Thee how to praise;  
I of myself unworthy am  
To speak of all Thy ways.  
But here I beg of Thee, O Lord,  
Not for mine own name’s sake;  
But in the name of Jesus Christ  
My prayer to Thee I’ll make.*

*O Lord, ’tis all I crave of Thee,  
While in this world I live,  
To give me grace and wisdom to  
Acknowledge what I have.  
Because that Thou hast suffered me  
These little songs to make,  
While I live, I will call on Thee,  
And for my Lord Thee take.*

## **Providence**

Events in providence, both great and small, also stimulated Elizabeth to meditation. On a November day in 1699, finding her thoughts wandering and a spirit that “wearied mightily of the sermon,” she was bitten on the leg by a dog. “I no sooner received this,” she confesses, “but I saw the hand of God in it” and confessed the righteousness of the stroke. Looking for the goodness of God in it she found on returning home three encouragements:

1. The Lord seemed still “to be in speaking terms” with her.
2. He sent a doctor to the house uninvited, who applied medication to her leg.
3. Though the house was thronged with visitors that day, she was left free to pour out her soul to the Lord.

So, she concludes, “I . . . could not but bless Him, though I had been made a cripple, which He prevented. And that word ran much with me: ‘He doeth all things well.’”

Early in 1700 a fire that broke out in the Meal market prompted in her some very solemn thoughts. As the sparks showered into the night sky, and Parliament Close glowed all “in a red flame,” “it was to me,” she writes, “as an emblem of hell, and oftentimes Sodom came in my mind that night.” Further reflection brought her to see the retributive yet merciful hand of God in the catastrophe:

First, in that the fire broke out in the property of the very town baillie (councillor) who had handed the Covenant to the hangman to be burnt.

Second, as it began there, so it never stopped “till it came to the place where” the Covenant “was burnt, and there it stayed without any cause whatever, but it had its commission from the Lord, ‘Hitherto shall ye go and no further.’” This event opened the mouth of both good and bad to remark: “O the burnt covenant! O the burnt covenant! This is come upon us for the burning of the covenant!”

Third, “this fire did resemble the fire of the late persecution, kindled by a Prelatic Party against the Presbyterians.”

One of Elizabeth’s choicest meditations is related by her as follows: “On the Thursday before the sacrament, I was in the College Kirkyard a while before the sermon began; which place hath been a sweet retiring place to me many times. I remember one morning as I was going into it, being frost and very cold, I was something unwilling to bear the cold, thinking to return back. Then that meditation came in my mind: It was a colder night when our Lord Jesus Christ sweat drops of blood for you in the garden, and will you not endure some small trouble to the body for to seek Him? This was a sweet meditation to me.”

### **Conclusion**

Time would fail us to tell of Elizabeth’s intelligent interest in the deliberations of the National Assembly of the Church of Scotland, the death of King William III, the Union of England and Scotland and other significant events. It remains only to draw a few practical lessons from her Memoirs.

1. We cannot but marvel at the distinguishing grace of God to “this diligent and godly servant-maid” (Principal John Macleod). When so many ‘great ones’ are passed by, she was singled out to become a remarkable trophy of sovereign grace. How easily can God make something beautiful out of ‘things that are not.’
2. We may see too how real and rich is the life of God in the souls of some of His children. Though Elizabeth West viewed herself as a “poor, sottish, simple creature,” she speaks to us as one of the most deeply exercised Christians of her day, worthy to be named alongside such godly women as Ruth Bryan and Mary Winslow.
3. We are exhorted and encouraged to seek deeper and more satisfying communion with our great God and Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. May covenanting, prayer and meditation mark our spiritual lives as much as they marked the life of Elizabeth West.
4. May we be constrained by her example to cry to God to make us willing to part with anything and everything rather than Himself.

**Sermon**  
**by**  
**Donald A. Macfarlane**  
**(1889-1979)**

**Biographical Introduction**

“Rev. D. A. Macfarlane was a minister of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland who was very warmly loved and highly respected within her borders. Gifted with a remarkable memory, deeply read in theology and related subjects, with a very wide general knowledge, he was an outstandingly humble man.” (Lord Mackay of Clashfern)

Born on the Scottish island of Raasay in 1889, Donald Macfarlane first attended the local school, then Kingussie High School in Inverness-shire. Here he studied Latin and Greek as well as other subjects on the curriculum. From Kingussie he went to Glasgow, then Aberdeen University. It was during a university vacation, while he was teaching in Torran, at the north end of Raasay, that Mr. Macfarlane was won for the Gospel. No sooner had he been converted than he began to show concern for the salvation of others.

Following graduation in 1910, he felt the Saviour’s call to serve Him in the ministry, and commenced a course of theological study in the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, supplying vacant congregations during the summer. In 1914, just as World War I broke out, he was ordained and inducted to the four charges of Lairg, Bonar Bridge, Dornoch and Rogart. Here he proved to be a true minister of Christ – scorched by the law, melted by the gospel, and sifted by Satan – as Alexander MacColl used to say.

Sometime in 1927 he suffered a nervous breakdown, and on doctor’s orders convalesced at Connel, near Oban, then Crieff, in

Perthshire. Here his burden was lifted, especially through the loving prayers of friends and the reading of John Owen on Psalm 130 – “Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord.”

In 1930 Mr. Macfarlane was called to the joint charge of Dingwall and Beaulie, near Inverness. Here his self-effacing ministry and kind pastoral visits became ‘legendary.’ He gave much away to the poor (including rabbits, chickens and legs of ham that had been given to him!) Once he saw a poor tramp by the roadside in the snow and cold of winter. He stopped the car, gave the man a chicken that had been already cooked, took off his shoes and gave them the tramp, then knelt down in the snow and prayed for him! That night a snowstorm raged over Dingwall. Around midnight, a loud knocking was heard on the manse door. On opening the door, Mr. Macfarlane saw a local farmer’s son holding two chickens in his hands. “My father has sent you these,” he explained. “He couldn’t sleep until he was sure you had them!”

Meanwhile he immersed himself in the most profound of the Puritan writers – Owen and Charnock, to name only two. Calvin, Thomas Halyburton, Charles Hodge and Benjamin Warfield were also favourites of his. Their thick tomes were read and re-read till they became tatty, the fly leaves and margins being filled with jottings! It is on record that he derived great satisfaction in serving the Lord as a minister, regarding such service as a divinely bestowed honour. Besides caring for two congregations, Mr. Macfarlane was engaged as a theological tutor for the denomination, teaching Hebrew and Greek. He is known to have given his students a chapter in New Testament Greek to be translated into Hebrew!

In 1957 he married Helen Finlayson, a member in the Dingwall congregation. When James Fraser and his wife, missionaries in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) passed away, the Macfarlanes took in their two daughters and son, bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

During the sixties, Mr. Macfarlane's strength declined, though he was still marking students' examination papers in the seventies, and he and his wife retired to Inverness. His presence at prayer meetings and communions there was a means of great blessing to the Inverness congregation. Weak in body, but strong in spirit and the joy of the Lord, Mr. Macfarlane exemplified the triumph of grace. Just before passing into His Lord's presence in 1979, he said: "I'm going Home."

## Washing Disciples' Feet

**Jesus saith unto him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all . . . If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. John 13:10,14.**

### Context

We find that the Saviour here put His 'Amen' to the fact that He was Jehovah manifest in the flesh. "Ye call me Master and Lord, and ye say well, for so I am" (verse 13). He who could say: "Before Abraham was, I am," rose from supper, laid aside His garments, and began to wash His disciples' feet. He who is the High and Holy One, who inhabits eternity, the infinitely Holy One, the heart-knowing, heart-searching, heart-purifying One, is giving Himself to poor, needy, rebellious sinners.

May He be precious to us. The One who took a basin with water was in the Father's bosom before the mountains were brought forth. This is a revelation, the food of faith, and when this supernatural revelation enters into the soul, it is an earnest, a foretaste, of heaven. May the Holy Spirit seal it upon us, so that He who said to Moses: "I AM THAT I AM" was here in the upper room with His disciples, and put His 'Amen' to the truth that He was God.

The disciples were being taught gradually. There was a little leaven or yeast in their souls – Christ the hope of glory was there – and He would abide with them till the whole was leavened. The Lord’s people are not perfect in this world. Like Peter, they may sin sadly, but Christ never loses any of His sheep. He may have to give them many a stroke, but He searches them out in the dark day, and brings them home, and they shall never perish. He will chastise them for their faults, but will fulfil His covenant promise to the Father and to them, that He will deliver them in six troubles, yes, in seven. No evil shall touch them, till at last He presents them faultless before the presence of His Father with exceeding joy.

### **The New Testament Moses and Aaron**

The One who said: “If I, then, your Lord and Master,” was the New Testament Moses. It is He who speaks to you and me here. He is the divine Prophet set up from everlasting who cannot lie, through God the Holy Spirit given to Him above measure. (It was the same Spirit who wrote the Bible, the spiritual library of the Church of God in all ages, using divinely directed men as His agents. If you love the Holy Spirit today, surely you love the Redeemer, and this chapter of God’s Word. If its substance is lovingly hid in your heart, you desire to listen to Him and to be a servant of the New Covenant Moses.)

Then Christ was also the divine Aaron. The Redeemer is the golden plate that was on the front of Aaron’s mitre – *Holiness to the Lord* – to bear the iniquities of His children. If you know that truth, before you know where you are it will wash the feet of your soul. The Redeemer is also the breastplate, and censer, and incense. If you love the Redeemer as your incense, then He has a basin of water, and is cleansing your feet today. If you love the Redeemer because He brought everlasting satisfaction to the Father, then that satisfaction is brought into your soul.

You say: “That cannot be, because His satisfaction is infinite, and I am finite, and the infinite can never be contained by the finite.” That is good! I am pleased you are well exercised! But the food of

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the Lord's people for eternity is the infinite satisfaction brought to the Father by Christ. And they feed on Him whose atoning sacrifice has infinite efficacy. And if you spiritually receive this and like it, you are bathing your conscience in the atonement of Christ – whatever sin you may have committed, and in spite of the bad nature that is within. Where Christ as the New Testament Aaron is the incense and the sacrifice, the everlasting atonement is of such boundless, bottomless value that it can save even to the uttermost. No one in the Church below, nor any of the godly who have gone Home, can measure 'the uttermost' in Christ.

You may say: "If you only knew what sins I have committed – drunkenness, thieving, telling lies . . ." Go to your knees and tell the Lord about them as if He did not know. Though you are a Manasseh, or all the vagabonds rolled together into one, over against the infinite merit of Christ's sacrifice it is like a grain of salt in a saltcellar! If you are on your way to the Father's house, then that is all you have – the merit of Christ's atonement. You will be in hell if you are not in Christ Jesus, and have a suitable, sweet, intelligent espousal to this atoning death of Christ.

He *can* save to the uttermost. He is the promise-making, promise-sealing One. He is the New Covenant Moses and Aaron, and is incense in glory, the uncreated Angel with much incense. He has bells and pomegranates on His robe, and those in glory are hearing the bells and praising Him for ever and ever. "Worthy is the Lamb." They hear the bells on the robe of their Great High Priest, who is there at the right hand of the Father.

There are those in the Lord's house today who hear what God the Lord speaks. The divine Melchizedec is on the right hand of the terrible Majesty on high. Remember: without Christ we can never go there, to heaven; for our God is a consuming fire. Even the seraphim veil their faces before the infinite Majesty of the Most High, dear, dear soul.

## **Washed and Unwashed**

The Saviour was pleased as part of the everlasting covenant to give this example of washing His disciples' feet. Simon Peter said: "Thou shalt never wash my feet." But when Christ replied: "If I wash thee not thou hast no part in me," Peter went the other way; his pendulum swung to the opposite extreme: "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head" (verse 9). My hands are unclean! And my head is full of roving thoughts and imaginations – spiritual midges that cannot be numbered!

Yes, said the Redeemer, if you are washed you are clean every whit – "but not all!" Christ knew that Judas would betray Him. His was a terrible case, left to himself and his covetousness!

We should ask the Lord to save us from whatever is in us – our carnal wisdom and self-will. Is it troubling you? Is it a body of sin and death to you? Do you desire to be saved from a self-pleasing spirit? May God the Holy Spirit make it a secret burden!

### **'He that is washed'**

Here we have two things brought before us: the washing of regeneration in the new birth, and the washing of sanctification as we grow in holiness.

#### 1. The washing of regeneration

Peter was washed in the sense of being born again. He was not perfectly holy, for Christ warned him: "the cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me." All the same, he was a new creation in Christ Jesus. All the disciples were born again. They were brought to see that they were lost for eternity, and that there was a dunghill of sin within them. They knew their poverty.

Have you had that experience – to know yourselves as 'dunghill sinners'? Every one who goes to the Lord's Table puts his 'Amen' to this truth: that by nature he is a dunghill, and cannot think one holy thought. He is carnal, sold under sin.

But he is secretly brought to discern the Lord in the Gospel, and to get a God-created inclination to say: "That's the Gospel I need,"

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and to bring his load of guilt and unholiness to Christ, and to touch Him with the supernatural touch of regenerating grace. Those who do this are the Lord's covenant people for all eternity. God is not mocked; but also He will not mock you if you put your 'Amen' to His Gospel, and cordially receive it. For in receiving His Gospel, you receive His Son. If the Gospel is honey to your heart; if you see yourself as a lump of unholiness but the Gospel as holily excellent and sweet, then you will be pleased with Christ. Grace may be only as small as a grain of mustard seed, but where He begins the good work He will carry it on and complete it.

John Owen says: "Faith, in the first place, is a receiving of the revelation of the Gospel, and this is a means of resting on Christ Himself." When Peter received Christ he was washed with the washing of regeneration; and his prayer was 'May thou come into my soul and stay there.' Then something happened: he pounced on the person and finished work of Emmanuel. This is the fruit of regeneration, or the new birth. 'Jehovah our Righteousness' becomes your very own. Faith is a disposition of soul to pounce on the Redeemer!

2. Though perfect in point of regeneration, the soul still has need of continual washing from indwelling sin. Peter, dear man, was justified by faith, yet once and again he fell into the mire (though not into condemnation). He said something once that made the Saviour answer: "Get thee behind me, Satan!" Then again, Satan whispered in his ear: 'though others will leave Christ, you will stand by Him.' Peter had genuine love for the Saviour, but he did not know himself; so Peter had to climb down and down. This creeping down is part of the life of sanctification. It is a promising sign, to be climbing down. People naturally like to climb *up*.

But 'now, now, Peter, there is a cock nearby, and it is going to crow, and you will deny me.' Unbelievable! But soon the maid said to him: "Thou also wast with Him." Ah, when Peter was left to his own carnal wisdom, the fear of being arrested and perhaps even crucified took possession of him, and he used strong

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language to deny Christ. Yet all that time he had saving faith. "I have prayed for thee," Jesus told him, so he was preserved from forsaking Christ altogether.

We can never understand how the tide of grace can be at such a low ebb in the soul while faith is still there. May you and I be preserved from thinking censoriously of Peter, as if we stood on some big stool and were given permission to speak.

All this was over-ruled for Peter's good. He had a place in the intercession of Christ. He went out and wept bitterly. It must have been an *awful* Sabbath day for Peter. The Lord preserved his reason, but what anguish he suffered because he said what he said! For he did love the Redeemer, and was united to Him for eternity!

When Jesus rose from the dead He met Peter alone. We are not told what happened then, but we may be sure He kissed Peter's soul. So here He took a basin of water and washed his feet, and strengthened and refreshed him. 'I must wash your feet; there's a great deal of dust on them.'

### **How to wash one another's feet**

Later, at the lakeside, there were six of the disciples in a boat, and the Saviour was on the shore, with a fire of coals and some fish. The Saviour said: "Bring of the fish which ye have now caught." 'Come along now, Peter, and I will wash your feet.' How? "Lovest thou me?" At last Peter said: "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." 'Thou, the High and Holy One, who inhabitest eternity, know that I love thee.' The Lord never said a word doubting his sincerity. But He gave him this command: "Feed my sheep; feed my lambs."

This is a beautiful, God-glorifying example of taking a basin of water and washing Peter's feet. It is as if Christ said to him: 'if you come across a man or woman who needs help, you will copy me, and wash their feet suitable to their need. Seeing you went through

this yourself, you will know how to help and soothe and refresh others by the blessing of the Lord.’

Another example we have on the Day of Pentecost, when three thousand were regenerated by the Holy Spirit. Peter was the mouth-piece and his ministry was blessed. He spoke of Psalm sixteen: “thou wilt show me the path of life.” While Peter was preaching through the love of the Spirit, his feet were being washed afresh. He must have felt his need of daily cleansing. But ‘Oh, it washes my feet to be allowed to preach on Psalm sixteen, to tell how the Redeemer took the sting out of death, went to the grave, and then ascended to glory.’

Moving on to 1 Peter, we find basins of water to wash the feet of millions. They will thank God for ever that He gave a basin of water to Peter, even this one: “whom having not seen ye love, in whom though now ye see him not, yet believing ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”

Do you believe the Gospel as the truth of God, and do you desire to be washed in the Fountain opened for sin and uncleanness? Where that is, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, you are a believer in the Redeemer. You have been washed in the washing of regeneration, but like Peter you need to be washed daily, even all the day long.

In the Gospel there are plenty of basins of water. Seek to wash others, lovingly and quietly. Beware of saying anything to hurt people unnecessarily, but to help them, so that they could say: ‘I like even to be corrected by that man, that woman, for they have a love to my soul, and desire my eternal well-being. They seem to see more faults in themselves than ever they find in others.’

“If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another’s feet.”

## *Thoughts on the Sovereignty of God*

[For over half a century Charles Hodge (1797-1878) was a professor at Princeton when the blessing of the Lord made it a beacon of Biblical light to the western world. The following brief extract from *Princeton Sermons*, compiled by his son Archibald Alexander Hodge, indicates the profound reverence in which Hodge held this glorious attribute of God. It is our prayer that the same reverence may grace our ministry as we toil on in age that seems determined to exclude God from all its affairs. Ed.]

“When we speak of the sovereignty of God we mean His right to work all things after the counsel of His own will; to do what He wills with His own; that He has in reference to the whole universe the most absolute dominion and right to deal with His creatures just as seems good in His sight; to allow them to sin or to prevent their sinning; and when they have sinned, to allow them to perish or to provide salvation; and if salvation be provided, to reveal it to one nation and not to another; to apply it to one person and not to another. Of course He has an equal right to determine their destiny on earth, whether it shall be civilized or savage, rich or poor, learned or ignorant, healthy or infirm, happy or miserable.

The sovereignty of God supposes that the whole plan of creation, providence and redemption was adopted on the ground of God’s good pleasure; that the carrying out of that plan in all its infinitude of details is determined by His absolute will. So that if it be asked why Adam fell; why salvation was provided for man and not angels; why that salvation was revealed at first to Jews and not to the Gentiles; why now it is made known to us and not to the Chinese [i.e. in 1859]; why you and not others are partakers of this redemption; why one man is a noble and another a peasant; one sick and another well; one happy and another miserable; we have nothing to say but: “Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight.”

[Frances Ridley Havergal (1836-79) is best noted for her beautiful Christian poems, deeply imbued with the spirit of what Victorians termed ‘total surrender,’ especially ‘*Take my life, and let it be Consecrated, Lord, to Thee.*’ The following poem is entitled *The Sovereignty of God*.

*‘Be still, and know that I am God.’ (Psalm 46.10)*

‘GOD Almighty! King of nations!  
Earth Thy footstool, heaven Thy throne!  
Thine the greatness, power and glory,  
Thine the kingdom, Lord, alone!

Life and death are in Thy keeping,  
And Thy will ordaineth all  
From the armies of Thy heavens  
To an unseen insect’s fall.

Reigning, guiding, all-commanding,  
Ruling myriad worlds of light;  
Now exalting, now abasing,  
None can stay Thy hand of might!

Working all things by Thy power,  
By the counsel of Thy will,  
Thou art God! Enough to know it,  
And to hear Thy word: ‘Be still!’

In Thy sovereignty rejoicing  
We Thy children bow and praise,  
For we know that kind and loving,  
Just and true are all Thy ways.

While Thy heart of sovereign mercy,  
And Thine arm of sovereign might  
For our great and strong salvation  
In Thy sovereign grace unite.’

## *Marriage*

‘The marriage relation lies at the very root of the social system of nations. The public morality of a people, and the private happiness of the families which compose a people, are deeply involved in the whole question of the law of marriage. The experience of all nations confirms the wisdom of our Lord’s decision in this passage [Mark 10.1-12] in the most striking manner. It is a fact clearly ascertained that polygamy and permission to obtain divorce on slight grounds have a direct tendency to promote immorality. In short, the nearer a nation’s laws about marriage approach to the law of Christ, the higher has the moral tone of that nation always proved to be.

It becomes all those who are married, or purpose marriage, to ponder well the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ in this passage. Of all relations of life, none ought to be regarded with such reverence, and none taken in hand so cautiously, as the relation of husband and wife. In no relation is such earthly happiness to be found, if it be entered upon discreetly, advisedly and in the fear of God. In none is so much misery seen to follow, if it be taken in hand unadvisedly, lightly, wantonly and without thought. From no step in life does so much benefit come to the soul if people marry ‘in the Lord.’ From none does the soul take so much harm if fancy, passion or any mere worldly motive is the only cause which produces the union. Solomon was the wisest of men. ‘Nevertheless even him did outlandish women cause to sin.’ (Nehemiah 13.26)

There is, unhappily, only too much necessity for impressing these truths upon people. It is a mournful fact that few steps in life are generally taken with so much levity, self-will and forgetfulness of God as marriage. Few are the young couples who think of inviting Christ to their wedding! It is a mournful fact that unhappy marriages are one great cause of the misery and sorrow of which there is so much in the world. People find out too late that they have made a mistake, and go in bitterness all their days.

Happy are they who, in the matter of marriage, observe three rules. The *first* is to marry only in the Lord, and after prayer for God's approval and blessing.

The *second* is not to expect too much from their partners, and to remember that marriage is, after all, the union of two sinners, and not of two angels.

The *third* rule is to strive first and foremost for one another's sanctification. The more holy married people are, the happier they are.'

John Charles Ryle

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Marriage is a covenant consecrated by God.

John Calvin

God made the human pair in such a manner that it is natural for the husband to lead, for the wife to follow.

William Hendriksen

The woman was made of a rib out of the side of Adam; not made out of his head to rule over him, nor out of his feet to be trampled on by him; but out of his side to be equal to him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be loved.

Matthew Henry

First man must choose his love, and then he must love his choice.

Henry Smith

Man and wife are partners, like two oars in a boat.

Henry Smith

God is the witness to every marriage ceremony, and will be the witness to every violation of its vows.

Thomas V. Moore

There is no estate to which Satan is more opposed than marriage.

Martin Luther

***The Annual General Meeting  
Of the  
Sovereign Grace Union  
Will be held  
(God willing)  
on  
Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> June 2012  
At  
Cowley Hill Free Church (Baptist)  
Stanborough Close  
(Off Stanborough Avenue)  
Borehamwood  
Herts. WD6 5LU***

***Preacher: Dr. David Allen  
(Trinitarian Bible Society)***

***Business Meeting: 2.00 p.m.  
Preaching Services: 2.30 and 5.30 p.m.***

***Tea During the Interval***

***All are Welcome***

## *Psalms of Sorrow for Sin*

### **Introduction**

When Augustine lay dying, he caused the seven penitential psalms (6,32,38,51,102,130,143) to be written on the walls of his bedroom. The believing, prayerful repetition of them brought him great comfort as he prepared to vacate his body and face his Judge. This indicates to us that, after all his faithful and strenuous contentions for truth in controversy against the Manichees, Platonists, Donatists, Pagans and Pelagians, he carried with him to the grave a profound sense of personal sin.

Today, this sense of sin appears to be largely absent from the prayers, preaching and personal testimony of professing Christians.

Where, for example, may we find services of worship that include such sentiments as the following: “I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me” (Psalm 51.3), “Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities” (Psalm 51.9), “Enter not into judgment with thy servant; for in thy sight shall no man living be justified” (Psalm 143.2)? (*1662 Prayer Book*)

When, too, did we last hear preaching like the following, calculated to make us see the depravity of our hearts and create in us a true sense of our vileness: “Your wickedness makes you as . . . heavy as lead, and to tend downwards . . . towards hell; and if God should let you go, you would immediately . . . plunge into the bottomless gulf . . . and all your righteousness would have no more influence to uphold you and keep you out of hell than a spider’s web would have to stop a falling rock”? (*Jonathan Edwards*)

And when did we ever hear or make personal confessions such as these: “I have never been a day but I have been sinning,” “You don’t know how I have sinned,” “To me belongeth shame and confusion of face, and so I will take it”? (*John Duncan*) “O Lord, thou knowest how much we love sin”? (*Donald Macfarlane, Dingwall, at the age of eighty-nine*)

The truth is, we have largely lost the sense of sin that characterized the Bible saints and our spiritual forefathers, and have substituted for it a cavalier confidence that all is well with our souls. Yet if we will read through each penitential psalm till the Holy Spirit pierces our hearts to the very depths with conviction of sin, we shall discover that all is far from well with our souls. Moreover, we shall also discover something of what John Owen experienced when he cried: “It is sweet to weep over forgiven sin, and to water a pardon with our tears.”

Take, for example, Psalm 6. It has been said of King David: “The greatest mourner in Israel was the sweet singer of Israel.” (Timothy Rogers) William S. Plumer also remarked: “His whole life was a conflict with corruption.” Here it is indwelling corruption that distresses him. He does not pray: “Lord, rebuke me not, chasten me not,” for he knows that the Lord rebukes and chastens all whom He loves. But he cries out: “How long?” under a protracted sense of the weight of his iniquity.

God’s children can expect to be chastened for their sin; we bring so much of it into the world with us, and are so reluctant to let it go. But we shall never kiss His chastening rod, as the Puritans used to say, till we consciously confess that it is for our sin in general, and our particular sins in particular, that He chastens us.

It is no good protesting that David was under the old covenant, and that New Testament believers are free from such a distressing conflict. The apostle Paul uttered a similarly anguished cry: “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” (Romans 7.24) Do we utter the same cry? Or are we strangers to such indwelling sin as brings us acute distress?

Psalm 32 teaches us the same lesson. Writes one commentator: “With a fervour which is unmistakably the fruit of experience the Psalmist describes the blessedness of forgiveness, and teaches that penitence is the indispensable condition for receiving it.” This psalm was a favourite with Augustine, who often read it “with weeping heart and eyes.” His words: “The beginning of knowledge

is to know thyself to be a sinner,” constitute a motto never to be forgotten. It is evident that the psalmist felt such pressure from his unconfessed sin that he was likely to burst. When his agony eventually found vent, and he uncovered his sin to God, he found sweet relief: “and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.”

King David penned Psalm 38 ‘to bring to remembrance.’ Here he reminds himself (and the whole church) of God’s fatherly chastisement, lest we forget that every instance of His displeasure is occasioned by our sin (verse 3).

God’s arrows enter deep into us only when we have offended Him. And only when we confess our offensive conduct does He heal us with Gospel balm.

Psalm 51 was drawn from the depths of David’s heart when he was finally convicted of the double sin of adultery and murder (see 2 Samuel 11-12). He was so unable to forgive himself that his only hope lay in the unmerited mercy of his God. His longing to have his sin blotted out and to be washed again and again is full of pathos. He confesses his sin against man, but his sense of sin against God bears down upon him like a mountain of iron. Not only so, he traces his actual transgressions to their native source, a depraved heart: “I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.”

As we are all by nature in the same condition, may we confess our native depravity as well as our actual transgressions, for even one unpardoned sin will leave us short of salvation.

In Psalm 102 – ‘a prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed, and poureth out his complaint before the Lord’ – the psalmist’s strength is so wasted that he is on the very edge of the grave. Mocked by enemies, he mourns alone. Though his distress is largely on account of the exile of his people and the desolation of the church, he freely confesses that God’s indignation and wrath are inflicted because of sin. All his and their suffering is the just punishment of sin. Yet the only relief he can find is in turning his thoughts away from all human frailty and transitoriness to the

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eternal sovereignty of his covenant God, with the hope that He will once more have compassion on Zion.

I fear our spiritual experience is so superficial that we rarely if ever feel afflicted and overwhelmed by our sin, much less do we pour out our complaint before the Lord. O, when shall we learn to apply these precious truths to our own hearts?

Psalm 130, so experimentally expounded by John Owen, seems to have been ejected from David's heart (like lava from a volcano) when he was "conflicting with horrors of his conscience for the guilt of his sins, and imploring God's mercy and pardon." (Matthew Poole) Patrick Symson adds the two points that he also cries "for deliverance," and exhorts all to hope in God as the "continual Redeemer of His people."

How comforting it is to know that the Lord is with His people even in the depths, for they would never call upon Him if He were not with them! And how re-assuring to know that "there is forgiveness with Him, that He may be feared!"

Psalm 143 is a further appeal for mercy in view of King David's keen sense of divine judgment against his sins. Instructively, he appeals to the Lord's righteousness, or unvarying conformity to His own character. Similarly he waits for God to answer him "in faithfulness," that glorious attribute that renders Him incapable of proving false to His covenant. And as He has already revealed Himself as a God of mercy and forgiveness (Exodus 34.5-7), the psalmist can boldly plead for an answer on the ground of both His faithfulness and His righteousness.

Dear friends, when we discover our own righteousness to be nothing but filthy rags, to whom can we go but to Him who graciously promises to hear us when we cry to Him for pardon, cleansing, acceptance and deliverance?

Let us then frequently pray through these penitential psalms, looking unto Jesus to wash us thoroughly from our sins in His most precious blood, till one day He presents us faultless before the throne of His glory.

## *Book Reviews*

**Westminster Conference. 8 Back Knowle Road, Mirfield. W. Yorks. WF14 9SA.**

*Standing Firm. Still Protestant?* Papers read at the 2010 Westminster Conference. 137pp. £5.95. Pbk.

The title of the 2010 Westminster Conference reflects the concerns of the six papers presented. In an age of Ecumenism, when even some Evangelicals are asking whether or not the Reformation is over, are we still Protestant? The authors of the papers deal with such matters as the continuing relevance of the English Reformation and the place of the 1910 Edinburgh Conference on missions – an event widely seen as the beginning of the modern Ecumenical movement.

The first two papers deal directly with the Reformation and Rome. The third is a welcome paper on the ‘1611 English Bible,’ to use the author’s terminology. For many, however, the most rewarding paper will be the last, a biographical paper on Andrew Bonar.

As is usually the case with the Westminster Conference, we have robust Reformed thinking much in evidence. Those who think that history is largely irrelevant will be challenged by the papers in this little volume, although there are one or two persistent mis-prints that may irritate the reader.

Gervase N. Charmley

### **Banner of Truth Trust**

*Setting our Sights on Heaven* – Paul D. Wolfe. 194pp. £7.50. Pbk. ISBN 978-1-84871-143-3.

The author is Associate Pastor of New Hope Presbyterian Church in Fairfax, Virginia, and he clearly has a wide-ranging knowledge both of Scripture and of the human condition.

The book contains chapters that survey the whole of Biblical teaching on heaven (and hell!) but he does not leave it there: he shows how a proper view of the Christian’s eternal inheritance transforms his present life on earth. So, for example, there is a chapter dealing with Marriage; Money and Moving House; Miseries and Mistreatment. Another shows how every part of

public worship has a heavenly dimension, yet another explores the way our attitude to ‘guidance’ affects our view of heaven. The book’s complete title provides an accurate guide to its contents: ‘Setting our Sights on Heaven – why it’s hard and why it’s worth it.’

We all tend to live as if this earthly life were ‘all there is’; this book will help us to ‘lift our eyes’ to that glorious realm where we shall be ‘with Christ, which is far better.’ John Manton

*Josiah’s Reformation* and *The Love of Christ* – Richard Sibbes. 192pp and 376pp. £5.00 and £6.50. Puritan Paperbacks. ISBN 978-1-84871-116-7 and 978-1-84871-144-0.

That all true reformation begins in the heart, and does not consist in mere outward adjustments, is the prime message conveyed by Sibbes’ study of the godly young King Josiah. Sibbes himself shows the same tenderness of spirit that characterized Josiah as he unfolds the work of God’s Spirit in creating and nurturing love for Christ in the believer. This is truly a heart-warming study.

Sibbes’ sermons on the *Song of Songs 4.16-6.3* are similarly calculated to stir the heart’s affections in appreciation of Christ’s love to His people and in finding Him a precious Saviour. Is this not what we all need? The late Mr. Macfarlane, Dingwall, put the matter in a nutshell when he prayed: “Lord, give us a nostril, that we may have a sweet savour of Christ.” With the voluminous information *about* Christ available to us, we have nothing if we lack this. Under God’s blessing, Sibbes is just the man to convey it to us out of the Saviour’s fullness. J.M.B.

*The Heart of Christ* – Thomas Goodwin. 176pp. £5.00. Puritan Paperback. ISBN 978-1-84871-146-4.

Your reviewer derived great encouragement from this gem forty years ago. To be assured that He who went about saving, sanctifying and comforting sinners here on earth has not changed now that He is in heaven gives the believer a considerable lift as he trudges wearily towards his heavenly home. Christ’s washing of the disciples’ feet and continued tenderness towards His own should incite us to apply to Him daily for all the help we need. As

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Goodwin was no stranger to the grace of Christ, he is well qualified to lead us to that fountain today. J.M.B.

*Princeton Sermons* – Charles Hodge. 400pp. £15.50. Hdbk. ISBN 978-0-85151-285-3.

The publishers kindly sent this volume on request. It is, as one reviewer says, a veritable gold mine of truth. Handling the great themes of Holy Scripture with his customary depth, precision and fullness, Hodge is solid but trustworthy fare. However, the collection resembles a systematic theology more suited to ministers and theology students than to others. This meaty volume could prove useful if thoughtfully and prayerfully ‘chewed over’ by those with the mental ability to digest it. Perhaps its greatest usefulness is to provide suggestive skeleton outlines for preachers and to check difficult points of theology. Those who sat under Hodge’s tutelage must have been stretched to their limits to assimilate this hefty theological material. Still, it helps us to understand how Hodge came to be regarded by several as America’s greatest 19<sup>th</sup> century theologian. J.M.B.

“God’s law is perfect, and converts  
The soul in sin that lies;  
God’s testimony is most sure,  
And makes the simple wise.

The statutes of the Lord are right,  
And do rejoice the heart:  
The Lord’s command is pure, and doth  
Light to the eyes impart.

The words which from my mouth proceed,  
The thoughts sent from my heart,  
Accept, O Lord, for thou my strength  
And my Redeemer art.”

Psalm 19.7,8,14. Metrical Version.

## Tapes and CD's of SGU addresses

may be obtained from Mr T. Field, 34 Pembury Road, Tonbridge, Kent, TN9 2HX  
£2.50 + 50p each cheques payable to "Sovereign Grace Union"

Christ Alone - Charles Sleeman. Haslemere

Particular Redemption - Malcolm Watts

\*The Imputation of Adam's sin to us - Geoffrey Thomas, Aberystwyth

\*The Imputation of our sin to Christ - Geoffrey Thomas

The Imputation of Christ's righteousness to us - Geoffrey Thomas

\*The Person, Priesthood and Protection of Jesus Christ (John 18)  
- Abraham Thomas

The Blessed Consequences of Justification by Faith  
- Malcolm Jones., Maescymmer

Adoption – Robert Oliver (Bradford on Avon)

Romans 9 by Clifford Parsons of Portsmouth

\*The Life and Work of John Calvin by Gervase Charmley

\*The Meaning of "All Israel" by Don Underwood of London

\*Such A Great Salvation by Winston Saunders of Selhurst

\*What Christ will do - and how by Neil Pfeiffer

'A Chosen People' – Chosen in love, Chosen with Purpose & Chosen in Christ, -3 tapes  
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God our Hope: Jeremiah 14: 1-9 – Malcolm Watts, Salisbury

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\*God's Sovereignty and Human Responsibility - Gary Brady of London

\*God's Full Sovereignty, our Full Salvation - Timothy Burden of Eastbourne

\*The Unchanging Gospel - Jeremy Walker of Crawley

\*John 1:17 - John Saunders of Chichester (AGM 2009 Evening Sermon)

\*Our Reasonable Service, Romans 12:1 by Alun Higham of Cardiff

\*Romans 16 by John Saunders of Chichester

\*The Flood: The creation of a New world by Stephen Lloyd of Gravesend

Tapes previously advertised are still available. Addresses marked\* are also available on CD