

EXCERPTS FROM

APRIL/JUNE 1980

THE LINK

North Road Chapel (Evangelical)

BIDEFORD

Internet Edition

A TIE WHICH NAUGHT CAN SEVER

"For I am His -and He is mine, for ever and for ever": so wrote James Gridlay Small in his hymn, "I've found a friend".

We live in a day which is marked by a deplorable lack of reverence, a fearful cheapening of "Truth" and unbecoming language in our addressing of the Godhead, particularly to the Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Yet, in our revolt against this light and unholy familiarity with the Lord of Glory we need to be ever on our guard that we do not swing to the opposite extreme and view Him as being so high and far beyond us that He becomes remote.

We must always maintain that balance which owns the Lordship of Christ, thus combining reverence, awe and godly fear with the feeling of friendship and intimacy; that which melts the heart and produces conscious joyous fellowship. Never must we lose sight of the fact that Christ has not only given himself for us, but He has also given himself to us. Christ is ours, our very own.' Ours to enjoy to the utmost, to confide in, to lean upon, to consult, ever with us; under no conceivable circumstances will He leave or forsake us, ever the same, His love never varying, always having our best interests at heart, always willing to share every joy and sorrow with us.

How vastly different would be our experience if we more fully entered into the reality of these glorious truths. Is not this amazing fact revealed so wonderfully in type in Exodus Chap. 12. The self-same lamb whose blood sheltered the Israelites from the avenger, was theirs to feed upon, to enjoy, yes, and to draw strength from.

We have not only been called unto salvation, but "ye were called unto THE FELLOWSHIP of his Son Jesus Christ" (1 Cor.1:9) Fellowship means - companionship, close association, affinity of heart and purpose, and constant communion. Concerning our Saviour, the Word of God says, "There is a friend who sticketh closer than a brother" (Prov.18:24). The term friend conveys to us the thought of closeness and attachment, affection and sympathy. Is not this the relationship which Divine grace has established between the Redeemer and the redeemed? How it reveals the warmth of His heart toward us! Well might Newton write:- "One there is above all others, well deserves the name of Friend; His is love beyond a brother's - costly free and knows no end: They who once His kindness prove, find it everlasting love".

In all this, faith is a very important element. Probably the sum total of the truly spiritual life is expressed by Paul when he wrote, "I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal.2:20). Indeed, it is "BY FAITH" that Christ dwells in our hearts (Cf. Eph.3:17). Whilst faith is the vital element which savingly links and unites us to Christ enabling us to say of a truth "My Beloved is mine, and I am His" (S. of S. 2:16), yet it is love which forms the bond of this union. Husband and wife are not one merely by * the legal tie of their marriage vows, but also, and chiefly because of their love and affection for each other.

So betwixt our blessed Lord and we His children, a love stronger than death knits us together, and this not just in the doctrinal sense, but also in a personal and vital way; just as Mary basked in the sunshine of the Saviour's conscious presence, sitting at His feet, hearing His words (Luke 10:39), and of John it is recorded that he "was leaning on Jesus' bosom" (John 13:23).

These were no acts of irreverent or unholy familiarity, rather were they the spontaneous responses of close attachment and true communion, and nothing should hinder the believer from such holy exercises. There is no aloofness on His part and there should be no reserve on ours: it is our right and our glorious privilege to hold hallowed and unbroken communion with 3 our precious Lord and Saviour, to rejoice in His love, to dwell upon that perfect righteousness which He hath wrought in us, [ever to be giving thanks for the efficacy of His cleansing blood, trusting in Him for all things both for time and for eternity, knowing of a truth that He will never leave us nor forsake us. He is that friend who "loveth at all times" (Prov.17:17). 'Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, YET WILL I NOT FORGET THEE. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands: thy walls are continually before me.'" (Isaiah 49:15-16).

"Earthly friends may fail and leave us,
One day soothe the next day grieve us;
But there's ONE who'll ne'er deceive us,
O how He loves!"

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ... For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor

depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD. (Romans 8:35-39). Well might Small write:

"I've found a friend, O such a friend!
So kind so true and tender
So wise a counsellor and guide,
So mighty a defender:
From Him, who loves me now so well
What power my soul can sever?
Shall life, or death, or earth, or hell?
No: I am His for ever."

W.H.M.

CONVERSION

The following is an extract from the works of Bishop Ryle:

"Thousands have turned away in disgust from religion because of the wickedness of many who profess it. Hundreds have caused the name of conversion to stink, by the lives they have lived after declaring themselves converted. They have fancied that a few spasmodic sensations and convictions were the true grace of God. They have imagined themselves converted, because their animal feelings were excited. They have called themselves "converts" without the slightest right or title to that honoured name. All this has done immense harm, and it is doing peculiar harm in the present day. The times demand a very clear assertion of the great principle, that true conversion is a thing that can always be seen.."

Does any one ask me what we may expect to see in a true conversion? I reply, there will always be something seen in a converted man's character, and feelings, and conduct, and opinions, and daily life. You will not see in him perfection; but you will see in him something peculiar, distinct, and different from other people. You will see him hating sin, loving Christ, following after holiness, taking pleasure in his Bible, persevering in prayer. You will see him penitent, humble, believing, temperate, charitable, truthful, good-tendered, patient, upright, honourable, kind. These, at any rate, will be his aims: these are the things which he will follow after, however short he may come of perfection."

CALVIN'S DOCTRINE & PRACTICE OF PREACHING

Taken from an article by R. B. S. Eccles and published in the magazine 'Peace and Truth'.

The reputation of Calvin today and indeed ever since the 17th century is such as would make him turn in the grave. If he were to return today, he would not recognise himself. The present-day assessment of him is as a brilliant theologian and exegete, but he regarded himself as first and foremost a preacher. Indeed, this was the assessment of his value in the 16th century. His sermons were the first to be published and translated into other languages, and they were so popular that they were reprinted a number of times before the end of the century.

Calvin did not read his sermons, or even preach from notes. But quite early in his ministry the Compagne des Etrangers in Geneva appointed a secretary to take down his sermons in shorthand as they were being-preached and we are indebted to this man, Denis Raguénier, for our knowledge of this aspect of Calvin's ministry. By the time he had finished there were 44 bound folio volumes of manuscripts containing over 2000 of Calvin's sermons.

We do not really know Calvin until we have read his sermons. Emile Doumergue was the first modern theologian to make a serious study of Calvin and he published a study of him in 7 volumes at the turn of the century. He also published a work entitled "Calvin, the Preacher of Geneva" in 1909. All of these volumes are, of course, in French. Speaking at the celebrations of the 4th centenary of Calvin's birth, held at Geneva, he said, "Here is the Calvin who seems to me the real and authentic Calvin, the one who explains all the others: Calvin, the preacher of Geneva, moulding by his preaching the spirit of the Reformed of the 16th century".

Harold Dekker in his Introductory Essay to the Sermons from Job says, "we will not have learned well of Calvin until we have distinctly heard his pulpit accent as well as that of his systematic theology. Often they are not the same. May his sermons in the course of time receive the attention that his other writings have had. It should never be forgotten that in his own estimation he was first of all a preacher".

T.H.L.Parker wrote an extremely valuable study of Calvin's preaching entitled "The oracles of God". He says, "those who by the phrase "a great preacher" mean only "a great orator", will have no high opinion of Calvin's preaching. But, if we mean by it a man who (using Beza's phrase) "despising mere eloquence" subordinates his art to his aim of proclaiming Christ to the people, then we must acknowledge that Calvin is one of the few great preachers in the history of the Church".

Calvin's Doctrine of Preaching.

What is preaching? The crucial matter of definition is all too frequently forgotten. Most, if not all, of the general books on the subject do not stop to consider the question. Something needs to be said: much modern preaching is not preaching at all, because it fails to match up to the Biblical definition. Perhaps the fact that Calvin has something so clear and decisive to say is his greatest contribution to this subject

Calvin's view of the nature of preaching was based on the word which is translated "preach" and on the passage in 1 Cor.1:17 to 2:5.

First, then, the word "preach". It is the word Kerusse. The noun "preacher" is used to translate the Greek Kerux. It means "herald". The fact that this word is used and not some other such as "orator" is significant. The word "herald" indicates that the preacher's task is to announce, or proclaim, and in no sense to remonstrate, argue or prove. As a result, all extra appendages of oratory, the subtle turn of phrase, flowery or beautiful language are to be rejected. Anything that attracts attention to the preacher has no place in preaching. Paul in 1 Cor.1:17 says "Christ sent me not to baptize but to preach (herald), not with wisdom of words lest the cross of Christ be made of none effect". Calvin comments on this verse, (paraphrasing slightly), 'That eloquence is to be despised which leads Christians to be taken up with the outward glitter of words, or intoxicates them with empty delight, or tickles their ears with its tinkling sound or covers over the Cross of Christ with its empty show as with a curtain. But, preaching leads us back to the native simplicity of the Gospel, exalts the Cross by voluntarily abasing itself, and, in fine, acts the part of a herald".

Paul's point in 1 Cor. 1 is that he is nothing - not in the position of being esteemed by any party. He shuns the eminence any party might give him. He says Christ sent him to preach. Therefore, we have to conclude that preaching by definition involves a renunciation of all that will give the preacher eminence or will attract attention to him. To quote the commentary again: "Paul was not elevated by being a baptizer - but he was sent to preach. This does not mean he was elevated either. Paul was not formed to be an orator (a rhetorician or declaimer) to set himself off by elegance of speech, but a minister of the Spirit that he might by plain and homely speech bring to nothing the wisdom of the world". He goes on to point out that there were teachers at Corinth whose preaching was "ambitious ostentation ... delighting in high-sounding phrases. Then he puts words into Paul's mouth: "As for myself, I do not simply confess that my preaching has been conducted in a rude, coarse and unpolished style, but I even glory in it. For it is right that I should be so, for this was the method that was divinely prescribed for me". He closes the section by saying, "By the wisdom of words he does not mean ... mere empty talk, but true eloquence, which consists in skilful contrivance of subjects, ingenious arrangements and elegance of expression. He declares that he had nothing of this; nay more, that it is contrary to the nature of preaching and so is neither suitable nor advantageous.

To quote him again, this time from his sermons: "St. Paul does not want a man to make a parade of himself so that everyone applauds him and says: "Oh! what fine speaking! Oh! his great knowledge! Oh! what a subtle mind! When a man enters the pulpit is it that he may be seen from afar? That he may be preeminent? He preaches so that God may speak to us by the mouth of a man" - (Sermons on 1 Timothy).

Dekker makes the point "It is noteworthy that such a master of learning as Calvin undoubtedly was, should have deliberately preached without the rhetorical excellence which he could so easily have applied. His dogmatic writings show how close-knit and highly synthetic he can be in handling any subject and how sharply analytic can be his treatment of a concept. His correspondence shows him to be a master of the adroit and the subtle when the occasion warrants. In public appearances outside the pulpit he showed a broadness of erudition and a brilliance of style which are proper to oratory and foreign to preaching ... It was not by

default but by deliberate intent that he did this. There is only one explanation for it. It is his doctrine of preaching. He had the profound conviction that the task of the preacher is nothing more than to faithfully set forth the Word of God, to make it unmistakably plain to all who hear".

Parker summarises Calvin's position in this way: "Preaching is not concerned with proving by Logical, demonstration the truth of its statement, but only in declaring the Truth, i.e. Jesus Christ. In the legal sphere it is analogous to the witness rather than the pleading of the barrister. If attempts to prove the truth of faith are legitimate, they are, even so, still not the work of the preacher but of the apologist. Just as the Kerux brings forward no arguments to prove his proclamation, so the preacher must confine himself to the declaration of the News".

The preacher, then, is a herald, and there are three essential elements to his work. First, he is sent by the king and speaks for the king. Hence, Whitefield was able to say to some who went to sleep during one of his sermons, "If I were here on my own authority, I could have no objection to you - but I come in the name of the King of kings and I demand a hearing". Secondly, the king gives him a message. For the preacher, this message is the Gospel, or, to be more precise, the Scriptures, the Word of God. His responsibility is to pass on the message faithfully, not leaving anything out and not adding anything to it of his own ideas. Preachers, says Calvin, "must not put forward their own dreams and fancies, but what they have received they must faithfully pass on without any additions". Thirdly, he was charged to make the message known by simple proclamation.

To be continued.

Thou mayst, poor creature, hide God by thy ignorance and atheism, so that thou shalt not see him, but thou canst not so hide thyself as that he shall not see thee.

William Gurnall.

"All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do" Hebrews 4:13.

ANNOUNCEMENTS and INFORMATION

On Monday the 7th January we laid to rest the body of our beloved brother, Mr. Fred Squire, after many months in hospital. He had been a member of the fellowship at North Road for some 20 years. He was a cheerful believer and a loyal member of the local body and whose presence we sadly miss.

Then, on Tuesday 5th February it was with sad hearts that we assembled for the funeral of our dear sister Mrs. Elizabeth Bale. She too, had known much weariness during recent years, and of late suffered great pain. We rejoice to know that now, these former things have forever passed away. She had been a member for well over 40 years; a loyal and devoted Christian who truly laboured in so many ways and contributed much to the life of the church.

Our love and prayers continue to go out to the families thus bereaved.

We were much encouraged by the visits of Mr.M.J.Whyte (London City Mission) and Mr.J.M.Cudmore (Soldiers & Airmen Scripture Readers Association), and their illustrated addresses provided an interesting insight into the many and varied aspects of their work and witness. We feel that it is a great privilege to have fellowship with such who serve so faithfully in the front line of the battle for Truth.

Special meetings and visiting preachers:

Thursday	17 th April	Mr.F.Stanbury	Bow
		(This will be the first of 5 monthly addresses on the LIFE OF ABRAHAM)	
Thursday	24 th April	Mr.Alex Luther	Bognor Regis
Sunday	4 th May	Mr.T.Fitzgerald	Bradninch
Thursday	12 th June	Mr.Pollard	Messianic Testimony

Preliminary Announcements:

Sunday	20 th July	Commencement of the "Drive-In" Church. Speaker Mr.Neil Richards (Neath)
Saturday	26 th July	Annual Bible Convention Speaker Mr.K.Matrunola (Portsmouth)
Saturday	23 rd August	Annual Meeting - Trinitarian Bible Society - Speaker Mr.K.Dix (Bedford)