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MARRIAGE

This is a continuation of the article under this heading which appeared in the April/June issue of The Link.

So far it has been established from the Scriptures that marriage is a Creation institution and as in the case of the Sabbath it is an ordinance binding upon all men for all time. There is also order within the marriage bond: the husband is the head, and the wife is to be in submission: added to this is the standard and pattern of the husband's love to his wife: "EVEN AS CHRIST LOVED THE CHURCH (Eph. 5:25). In addition to matters already dealt with there are further important considerations.

From the marriage relationship there issues seed. There are, of course, couples who never have offspring, and this must be seen as the providential will of God and part of the "all things" which work together for good, (Cf. Rom. 8:28) therefore, must be accepted gratefully, and with resignation. However, the norm is for children to be born, and it is in the permanence and stability of the marriage ordinance that we have the foundation upon which the home and family is built.

Children are to be born WITHIN THE MARRIAGE BOND and brought up within a home where there is mutual love between husband and wife which will be observed and registered by their offspring from the very moment that they have understanding. This devotion of the parents will instinctively impress itself upon the child» the headship of father, the submission, yet untiring care of mother, ALL CONJOINING IN LOVE, engenders WARMTH, SECURITY and DIRECTION. These are the essential ingredients or qualities of a home, and cannot be manufactured» neither will wealthier possessions supply them» they spring, only, from the God ordained institute of marriage.

If the marriage bond is destroyed, the home is destroyed: if the home is destroyed, so is the family, and if the family is destroyed the result is a breakdown in society.

The absolute necessity of a right understanding of the teaching of early Genesis cannot be over-emphasized. We must start at the beginning and get the foundations

correctly laid in our thinking. It is to this that the Devil directs his attacks the most. His strategy is ever geared to the destruction of the foundations. "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" (Psalm 11:3). Foundations must always be guarded: in our individual lives, our homes, and our church.

The first attack made by the Devil was upon the supreme authority of God. To God's "THOU SHALT NOT" (Gen. 2:17) Satan said "YE SHALL" (Gen. 3:5). This lies at the root of all evil - FAILURE TO OBEY THE WORD OF THE AIMIGHTY. Today the adversary levels his heavy artillery at the fundamental ordinances of early Genesis. Creation is attacked by the theory of Evolution, the Sabbath is assailed to the end that man should ignore God, and Marriage is being undermined as never before, with all the devastating effects which this inevitably has upon society. The tragic results of this are now evident, and if the Divine mandate continues to be ignored the situation will become catastrophic.

The consequences of divorce, free love, and sexual relationships outside of the marriage bond can only be measured in terms of human misery. Children are brought into the world who know not who is their father or mother, let alone having a home where there is lasting love, warmth, security and example. The downward drift in our moral standards in recent years reveals an alarming situation and we have to ask ourselves how this has come about. Again, the Church must be charged with failure to guard the Truth and to enforce the Word of God. THE DEVIL HAS DYNAMITED THIS FOUNDATION OF THE PERMANENCY OF MARRIAGE RIGHT UNDER THE CHURCH'S NOSE.

If the Church does not uphold and guard the Truth, we must not expect the world to do it. Again, it is the age-old story, instead of the light shining out from the Church, the darkness of evil creeps into the midst of her. Gradually, at first, divorce intruded into Christendom, then it gained momentum. Soon Evangelicals were taking fright; they knew full well that sooner or later they would be faced with the problem within their fellowships. Ere long a line of interpretation was accepted by many, which provided a loophole. (It is not suggested that this is a new line, as one is aware that such views have been

held by some down through the course of history). The result of this interpretation is that instead of pulling up the drawbridge, evangelicals have let down their defences.

THE PEOPLE OF GOD HAVE COMPROMISED THE TRUTH. The sanctity and permanence of marriage, coupled with the sin of divorce is no longer fearlessly preached; WITH WHAT RESULT? Look into our society - the answer is patent. It is, therefore, necessary to examine the question of DIVORCE in the light of Holy Scripture. As this is done, it is in love, for the writer is well aware that many have embarked upon such proceedings, never having been instructed or counselled properly according to the Word of God. It is also true to say that many HAVE sought counsel from spiritual leaders but have been misguided. For such one feels extremely sorry. For shepherds who are unfaithful, or weak and fearful to set forth THE TRUTH as it is in Holy Writ, one is deeply disturbed.

It is no exaggeration to say that the whole history of man is determined by his attitude to the Word of God* man will add, and will subtract from it. This, again, finds its origin in Eden. God said: "Ye shall not eat": Eve said: "Neither shall ye touch": that was ADDITION. Again God said* "Thou shalt surely die": Eve said: "Lest ye die": that was SUBTRACTION. In both there was ALTERATION and this is something which MUST NOT BE DONE. The Word of God is final: it is unalterable, and in spite of what man does, that Word will STILL STAND. It will always be the yardstick by which all will be measured in a coming day.

The apostle Paul writing to Timothy in his second letter and in chapter three gives a long list of those who discard the 'true code', and become a law unto themselves, which will in turn bring about "PERILOUS TIMES". But such conduct does not alter God's law, that is forever "SETTLED IN HEAVEN", and can never pass away; neither will it ever be amended. THE CREATION INSTITUTES ARE IN FORCE AS LONG AS TIME REMAINS. It is against this background that we approach the question of divorce.

The following scriptures must now be read:

MATTHEW CHAPTER 5

31 It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement:

32 But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.

MATTHEW CHAPTER 19

3 The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?

4 And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female,

5 And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?

6 Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

7 They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?

8 He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.

9 And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.

MARK CHAPTER 10

10 And in the house his disciples asked him again of the same matter.

11 And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her.

LUKE CHAPTER 16

18 Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery.

ROMANS CHAPTER 7

2 For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband.

3 So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.

1 CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 7

10 And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband:

11 But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife.

EPHESIANS CHAPTER 5

31 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.

In all these references we see the New Testament speaking with ONE VOICE: that to interfere with the sacred ties of marriage is ADULTERY, (something prohibited by the Moral Law of God).

Marriage is a one-man one-woman relationship FOR LIFE. But, many will say, there is an "EXCEPTION CLAUSE" quoting Matthew 5:32 and Matthew 19:9, "Except it be for

fornication". First let it be said that although divorce for this reason (fornication) was allowed by MOSES, it does NOT find a place in the DIVINE CREATION INSTITUTION, and when the Pharisees questioned the Lord on this matter of divorce, He referred not to Moses, but BACK TO CREATION which is the yardstick. Fornication as a ground for divorce was part of the Mosaic JUDICIAL ORDER - NOT A PART OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS and so, in any case, it would have passed away with the Old Testament order. If people are going to base their divorce proceedings upon the judicial law of Moses, then, in the name of consistency alone, they must abide by ALL the judicial law which includes Sabbatical years (one year in seven the land must rest) observance of the law of diet (no pork, no unclean bird or fish may be eaten), the Sabbath breaker must be stoned and the adulterer put to death, etc. etc.

In the very early stages of this section it is obvious what a muddle such are in, if only they will stop and analyse their teaching. We are NOT subject to THAT law. Our Lord's attitude to the Pharisees on this issue was precisely the same as it was concerning the Sabbath: He referred them back beyond the judicial law of Moses, to Creation - THE FOUNDATION. His teaching on both the Sabbath and Marriage was to restore to their original purity and meaning.

We must, however, probe deeper. The statements found in Matthew's gospel must not be held in isolation. These must be understood and explained within the framework of the original setting of the Mosaic economy and this will be dealt with later.

In Matthew 5:32 and Matthew 19:9 the operative word is FORNICATION. This word is defined in the English dictionary as "Sexual relations between UNMARRIED persons." ADULTERY is defined as "Illicit sexual relations between MARRIED persons". It is at this point that a loophole has been created. The liberal evangelical scholars will jump in, blinding the child of God with science and Greek (in the same way in which they do in Textual matters), and say: "The Greek word is "PORNEIA" and it means either adultery or fornication; it is one and the same". THIS IS NOT SO. The Greek word for fornication is PORNEIA. The Greek word for adultery is MOICHEIA.

POHNEIA is ALWAYS translated fornication: MOICHEIA is ALWAYS translated adultery. They are different words with different meanings, yet, the people of God are taking these words, which are carefully chosen by the Holy Spirit to distinguish, and making them to be one and the same. Unless they do this they can secure no ground for divorce.

A careful study of Scripture will reveal that in many places the words fornication (porneia) and adultery (moicheia) will be found in the same verse, e.g.

Matt. 5:32, Matt. 19:9, 1 Cor. 6:9, Gal. 5:19. Whilst fornication does cover certain illicit relationships such as incest - Cf. 1 Cor. 5:1 - it is not an overall term. Fornication and adultery are words which are not interchangeable.

The idea that adultery is ground for divorce is a fallacy. No one has the right or authority to substitute the word adultery for the God chosen word, fornication. To alter the wording of Matt. 5:32 and Matt. 19:9 in order to establish authority for divorce, is a contention which creates confusion and makes void many other scriptures which are relative to the subject. The Scriptures must be searched, compared, and held together if we are to come to a correct understanding of this subject. Fornication is explained in Deut. 22:13-21:

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 22

13 If any man take a wife, and go in unto her, and hate her,

14 And give occasions of speech against her, and bring up an evil name upon her, and say, I took this woman, and when I came to her, I found her not a maid:

15 Then shall the father of the damsel, and her mother, take and bring forth the tokens of the damsel's virginity unto the elders of the city in the gate:

16 And the damsel's father shall say unto the elders, I gave my daughter unto this man to wife, and he hateth her;

17 And, lo, he hath given occasions of speech against her, saying, I found not thy daughter a maid; and yet these are the tokens of my daughter's virginity.

And they shall spread the cloth before the elders of the city.

18 And the elders of that city shall take that man and chastise him;

19 And they shall amerce him in an hundred shekels of silver, and give them unto the father of the damsel, because he hath brought up an evil name upon a virgin of Israel: and she shall be his wife; he may not put her away all his days.

20 But if this thing be true, and the tokens of virginity be not found for the damsel:

21 Then they shall bring out the damsel to the door of her father's house, and the men of her city shall stone her with stones that she die: because she hath wrought folly in Israel, to play the whore in her father's house: so shalt thou put evil away from among you

These verses give some of the more intimate detail as to the background of a Jewish marriage. The espousal or engagement was arranged by the parents (this is still common in some Eastern lands today). The marriage of Isaac and Rebekah is an example of the procedure (Genesis Chapter 24). Neither party had seen each other. At the end of the espousal the marriage took place - the leaving of the father and the mother and the coming together of the two.

But, if during that period of espousal, the girl had prostituted herself, this would be evidenced on their first coming together. Indeed, provision was made for this (as is explained in this Deuteronomy passage). If the girl's virginity had been previously forfeited, then the man could immediately put her away. You see, with such a custom he had no previous knowledge whatsoever of his wife-to-be, and if he had been deceived he had the option to refuse her.

In modern language the white wedding had become a mockery; it denoted nothing of virgin purity; it was but a camouflage. The girl had played the whore in her father's house in the day of her espousal PRIOR TO THE WEDDING. THAT WAS FORNICATION. This is what the Lord was referring to in Matt. 19:9. This was the exact situation as it appeared to Joseph initially, before he was enlightened by the angel.

MATTHEW CHAPTER 1

18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.

19 Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily.

Notice that in Matthew Chapter 1 and in Deuteronomy Chapter 22, they are styled as man and wife during the espousal period, although the wedding had not taken place officially.

So far, all that we have seen pertains to the woman: SHE is the one under scrutiny: SHE it is who has to maintain her purity and chastity, and it was the HIDDEN unfaithfulness of HER during the espousal period which gave ground for rendering the marriage arrangement null and void. We look now at Mark's gospel:

MARK CHAPTER 10

2 And the Pharisees came to him, and asked him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? tempting him.

3 And he answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you?

4 And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put her away.

5 And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept.

6 But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female.

7 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; 8 And they twain shall be one flesh; so then they are no more twain, but one flesh.

9 What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

10 And in the house his disciples asked him again of the same matter.

11 And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her.

12 And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.

This section, unlike Matthew, speaks of men AND women. Verse 11 states that if a man puts away his wife and marries another THAT IS ADULTERY: verse 12 says, that if a woman puts away her husband and marries another, THAT IS ADULTERY. It is adultery either way.

As yet we have not made reference to the Decalogue - the moral Law of God - that which IS operative for all time and binding upon all men and WAS NOT annulled as was the ceremonial and judicial law. The seventh commandment reads: "THOU SHALT NOT COMMIT ADULTERY". With this command ringing in our ears with all the authority of Deity, we again refer to Matthew 19:9 - the exception clause which so many talk about - and the words: "EXCEPT IT BE FOR FORNICATION". If fornication be the same as adultery, and the verse could read, "EXCEPT IT BE FOR ADULTERY". then what has happened to the authoritative Law of God? Thus, it would appear that Christ allows it to be broken; making the seventh commandment invalid.

Again let us turn to Mark 10:11-12. A husband puts away his wife because of adultery and remarries: by so doing he too commits adultery. If his wife remarries she also commits adultery. So, the man in his second marriage is seen to commit the very thing which was the cause of his first marriage being dissolved: thus it is a continuation of adultery.

ALL that we are seeing is CONTRARY to the Law of God, therefore, no exception clause could be sanctioned by Christ, only on the grounds of FORNICATION as mentioned by Matthew, which was something that could arise within Jewish matrimonial procedure. This, however, pertained only to the Mosaic economy. In Mark's gospel Christ deals with the matter, NOT from within a Jewish standpoint, rather does He set marriage within its Creation framework (Mark 10:6-9). In this section FORNICATION is not mentioned, but ADULTERY is; and there is NO DIVORCE.

Coming to Luke's gospel, chapter 16 verse 18:

LUKE CHAPTER 16

18 Whosoever putteth away his wife,
and marrieth another, committeth
adultery: and whosoever marrieth her
that is put away from her husband
committeth adultery.

a third person is included: "Whosoever marrieth her that is put away" - PUT AWAY. Referring to Matthew 19:9 again: "I say unto you, whosoever shall PUT AWAY his wife, except it be for fornication and shall marry another committeth adultery". "PUT AWAY except it be for fornication" - by this we are to understand that some were PUT AWAY for other reasons and remarried: that constituted ADULTERY. But, according to Luke, the wife who had been PUT AWAY, who herself would be deemed "the innocent party" - for she had committed neither fornication nor adultery - nevertheless, she is, in the sight of God, a married woman. If, therefore, another man marries such an one, it is still an adulterous relationship. Is not the sanctity of this Divine institution of marriage apparent to us? It is an ordinance which must be guarded by fortresses and protected by bulwarks. Marriage is an INDISSOLUBLE UNION. Desertion, incompatibility, not even adultery are grounds for divorce. Upon careful thought, how could it be?

Suppose, for example, a Christian couple decide, for reasons of incompatibility they can no longer live together, Consequently, they seek divorce and consult their Minister who happens to be of 'THE ONE EXCEPTION' school. He duly counsels: "No divorce EXCEPT FOR ADULTERY. The couple go away; they discuss it; they have no intention of staying together and ultimately other

relationships are formed., which lead, to adultery. By this, are we to imagine that they have now obtained scriptural warrant and authority for divorce? In other words, is one to believe that by breaking the seventh commandment conditions have been fulfilled which make DIVORCE BIBLICAL. What utter nonsense!

To refer to that 'ONE EXCEPTION', it must be stressed again, it was peculiar to the Jewish custom and Judicial law. It pertains to the immorality of the WOMAN ONLY. The husband-to-be could refuse her upon proof of her impurity and this was done immediately at the consummation of the marriage. It was not a loophole for divorce some years later, neither was there any hint or provision for a wife to divorce her husband.

How, then, can present day divorce, which allows either party to take proceedings be based, even upon the Mosaic judicial law? It is a wresting of Scripture.

Fornication and adultery must never be said to mean one and the same thing. Our Lord was always careful in the use of words and His terminology never incorrect. For example, in Matthew 15:19 we read* "For out of the heart proceedeth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies". Would it be correct to read "ADULTERIES, ADULTERIES"? NO! The Lord is referring to two entirely different things, FORNICATIONS - ADULTERIES. (Ministers, Elders, consult your Greek dictionaries).

The conclusion MUST BE, if we handle the Word of God aright, that there is NO WARRANT in Holy Scripture for divorce.

The writer freely admits that the Church is faced with great problems, and many difficult situations arise within society such as it is today. But, in no way must this give occasion to relax in our adherence to the Law of God, or cause us to compromise TRUTH.

One's heart goes out in deep sympathy and feeling, to any who through no fault of their own find themselves cast off and deserted by an unfaithful partner, and an impossible situation arises, maybe through brutality or literally being turned out. What can such do? "...let not the wife

depart from her husband; but and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband; and let not the husband put away his wife" (1 Cor.7:10-11).

The final step in an intolerable situation, when all attempts at reconciliation have failed, can be, DEPART, not DIVORCE and no REMARRIAGE. To God's "THOU SHALT NOT" no Christian dare say, "YE SHALL". Marriage must be entered into in the fear of God. The foundation teaching of early Genesis (in which there is NO DIVORCE) should be heard often from our pulpits. This in turn would have its instruction and caution as well as its encouragements for those in the pew, and would cause young people to approach this most sacred union with much prayer and great prudence.

W.H.Molland

O God who didst from Adam's side
Fashion an help meet for his bride,
Flesh of his flesh, bone of his bone,
That both might feel and love as one!
Make these thy servants one in heart;
Whom thou hast joined let no man part.

Lord of the Church, whose bleeding side
Gave life to Thy redeemed bride;
Whose grace through every member spread
Joins the whole body to its Head:
O let Thy love their model be,
As they together live for Thee.

Josiah Conder.

Let my heart be sound in thy
statutes; that I be not ashamed.

Psalms 119:80

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

S. Leigh Hunt

Mr. S. Leigh Hunt was born in County Cork and was originally destined for the priesthood but in the providence of God was brought to saving faith in Christ. He was a gracious and gifted servant of God.

The doctrine of divine sovereignty lies at the very centre of Christian theology and therefore at the heart of all true religion and piety. At every stage in the Christian life it has its practical application. First and foremost:

1. Divine Sovereignty glorifies God and humbles man, which is the essence of real religion. In the final analysis it will be found that the character of a man's religion is determined by the object of his worship. Is that object a god of paste, brought to earth at the bidding of a sinner, placed by him in a box, under lock and key, and called the "Prisoner of the Tabernacle"? Or the forlorn figure, standing at the door of a sinner's heart vainly seeking admission, represented in Holman Hunt's "Light of the World"? Or the Lord Jehovah Who "doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him: What doest thou"?

The newspapers are full of the achievements of men, hence their popularity. "They are of the world, therefore speak they of the world." From time to time the Creator lifts the veil and discloses "parts of his ways, but how little a portion is heard of him?" Radio-television is a great invention, but God prepared the wireless waves long ages before men discovered their purpose. Those who realise his sovereignty will cry: "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory."

Belshazzar was guilty of gluttony, drunkenness, impurity, and sacrilege, but when Daniel charged him with these things, he made it clear that his crowning sin was refusal to confess the sovereignty of Jehovah: "The God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified."

2. Divine Sovereignty produces godly fear in the hearts of those who are exercised thereby. At one time a Christian was commonly referred to as "a God-fearing man," but this description is rarely heard nowadays. Modern preachers have much to say about "the Fatherhood of God," but it is significant that the Holy Ghost links divine paternity with filial fear. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." When Jesus prayed to his holy Father, we are expressly told that he "was heard in that he feared."

The confession of divine sovereignty apart from a sense of relationship can only produce servile fear. Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged to Daniels "Of a truth it is that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings," but soon afterwards he set up the golden image in the plain of Dura. The proud monarch was subsequently constrained to pay homage to "the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego." Darius realised the majesty of "the God of Daniel," and "cried with a lamentable voice: "O Daniel, the living God is thy God," but we never read that he was able to say with Ruth: "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God, my God."

Luther said: "Religion is a matter of personal pronouns." It depends, however, on which personal pronouns one is able to use. Nebuchadnezzar said "your"; Darius "thy"; Ruth, David, and even poor, doubting Thomas were enabled by grace to say, "my": "Thou art my God, and I will praise thee; thou art my God, I will exalt thee." "This is our God for ever and ever."

"This awful God is ours, our Father and our love;
He shall send down his heavenly powers to carry us above."

3. Divine Sovereignty furnishes a solid foundation for Christian Confidence. The Gospel of the grace of God is as immutable as the throne on which he sits. It is called "the everlasting Gospel" because it is based upon the pillars of his eternal purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began. It is called "the Gospel of Jesus Christ" because it brings good tidings of salvation to guilty sinners, not for their doings or deservings, but by his doing and dying, by his redeeming love and blood. "It is finished.'" hear him cry.

It is the Gospel of a finished salvation, so complete that not even the creature's consent is needed to complete it. Such a Gospel is good news indeed to the sinner who, like the "woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years," feels himself to be "bowed together," so that he can "in no wise lift up" himself. "The humble hear thereof and are glad," as the Holy Ghost leads them away from creature confidence to repose all their trust in One who "is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him"; whose ability covers all their inability; whose blood can cleanse from every stain; whose love is everlasting. "From everlasting through predestination, to everlasting through glorifications the one knows no beginning, the other no end," says Bernard (ad Thomam Praepos. Bernerlae, Ep. cvii). In another place he writes: "The purpose of God stands, the sentence of peace upon them that fear him also stands, so that not only their graces but even their sins, work together for good. Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is completely for my justification to have him propitious against whom only I have sinned. Everything which he has decreed not to impute to me is as if it has never been." (super Cantic., Serm. xiv). How firm a foundation is here for the sinner who has learned something of "the plague of his own heart," and who can now rejoice that his soul's salvation depends not on his doings and deservings, not on his fickle frames and feelings, but upon Jehovah's unchanging purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.

The fact that God's purpose is sovereign and immutable affords the Christian a solid ground for confidence at the throne of grace. "What comfort would it be to pray to a god that, like the chameleon, changed colour every moment?" asks Charnock. "Who would put up a petition to an earthly prince that was so mutable as to grant a petition one day and deny it another?" Who, indeed! But we pray to the Sovereign of the universe, "the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning", "and this is the confidence which we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us."

4. Divine sovereignty enables a Christian to rejoice in tribulations. A practical recognition of this great truth will exclude all murmuring and cause us to cry: "He hath

not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities."

When Nadab and Abihu were suddenly slain before the Lord, we read that "Aaron held his peace." What sublime resignation! When Eli heard from Samuel that his two sons were to be cut off by divine judgement, he exclaimed: "It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good." What marvellous submission! When Job heard that the Sabceans had carried off his cattle, and that the winds had slain his children, he not only recognised, but rejoiced in God's sovereignty, for he exclaimed: "The Lord gave, the Lord hath taken away," and forthwith added: "Blessed be the name of the Lord."

"Faith can sing through days of sorrow: All, all is well." Bernard Gilpin was being brought to London, in the days of Queen Mary, to be burned at the stake, "for the witness of Jesus, and for the Word of God." On the way he fell and broke his leg. During the delay caused by this "accident," the news came that bloody Mary had been called to her account, and thus he was free. Instead of going to the stake, Gilpin lived for many years to proclaim the Gospel, and became known as "The Lion of the North."

The Christian is not only resigned, but can sometimes even rejoice in times of trouble. He knows that his trials are ordered and ordained by sovereign love and mercy, and in the midst of them would cry:

"Since all that I meet shall work for my good,
The bitter is sweet, the medicine is food,
Though painful at present, 'twill cease before long,
And then, O how pleasant the conqueror's song!"

This article recently appeared in the 'Gospel Magazine' and we are grateful to the Editor for permission to reprint it.

GOD'S COUNSEL FORGOTTEN

A. W. Pink

It was false prophets who wrought such havoc in Israel, who had corrupted the throne and called down upon the land the sore judgment of God. And throughout the past century the false prophets have corrupted Christendom. As far back as fifty years ago Spurgeon lifted up his voice and used his pen in denouncing the "Downgrade movement" of the churches and withdrew his Tabernacle from the "Baptist Union". After his death things went rapidly from bad to worse and now "a whirlwind of the Lord" is sweeping away the flimsy structures the religious world erected. Everything is now in the melting pot and only the genuine gold will survive the fiery trial. And what can the true servants of God do? Lift up their voices, "Cry aloud and spare not" (Isa. 58:1). Do as Elijah did: fearlessly denounce sin in high places!

A message pleasant to deliver? No, far from it! A message likely to be popular with the hearers? No, the very reverse! But a message sorely needed and criminally neglected. Did the Lord Jesus preach a sermon in the temple on the love of God while its sacred precincts were being made a den of thieves? Yet this is what thousands of those who posed as his servants have been doing for the last two or three generations. With flaming eye and scourge in hand the Redeemer drove out from his Father's house the traffickers who defiled it. And those who were his true servants denounced the "entertainments", "socials", and other worldly devices employed by the churches to "hold the young people". Those who were the true servants of Christ refused to use carnal methods for adding numbers of nominal professors to their membership. Those who were the true servants of Christ proclaimed the unchanging demands of a holy God, insisted on the enforcing of a Scriptural discipline, and resigned their pastorates when their flocks rebelled. And the religious powers-that-be were glad to see the back of them, and their ministerial brethren, so far from seeking to strengthen their hands, did all they could to injure them and cared not if they starved to death.

But those servants of Christ were few in number, a negligible minority. The great bulk of the 'pastors' were

hirelings, time-servers, holders of an easy and lucrative job at any price. They carefully trimmed their sails and deliberately omitted from their preaching anything which would be distasteful unto their ungodly hearers. Anything which savoured of 'Calvinism' was rigidly eschewed, eternal punishment was not mentioned, the word 'repentance' was never heard, the crying sins of the day were never denounced. The people of God in their congregations were famished, though few of them dared to take their pastors to task, following the line of least resistance. And the very passage from which we have quoted above declares, "But if they had stood in my counsel and had caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings" (Jer. 23:22). But they did not, and therefore "a whirlwind of the Lord is gone forth in fury, even a grievous whirlwind".

July 1942.

"Many things combine to make the present inroad of false doctrine peculiarly dangerous. There is an undeniable zeal in some teachers of errors their 'earnestness' makes many think they must be right. There is a great appearance of learning and theological knowledge; many fancy that such clever and intellectual men must surely be safe guides. There is a general tendency to free thought and free enquiry in these latter days; many like to prove their independence of judgment, by believing novelties.

There is a widespread desire to appear charitable and liberal minded; many seem half ashamed of saying that anybody can be wrong. There is a quantity of half-truth taught by the modern false teachers: they are incessantly using Scriptural terms and phrases in an unscriptural sense ... There is a silly readiness in every direction to believe everybody who talks cleverly and lovingly ... a widespread 'gullibility' among professing Christians ... All these things are peculiar symptoms of our times. I defy any observing man to deny them. They tend to make the assaults of false doctrine in our day peculiarly dangerous. They make it more than ever needful to cry aloud, 'BE NOT CARRIED ABOUT'.

J. C. Ryle

**Bideford &
North Devon**

Tel. Bideford 2615

Gazette

and DEVON & CORNWALL ADVERTISER

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FRIDAY, JULY 27, 1984

PRICE 12p



Visit Bideford's drive-in church

Every summer Bideford's North Road Chapel organise what is possibly the only drive-in church in the country.

The chapel have been operating their drive-in

church every summer since 1971.

They have a specially built unit and on Sunday evenings they take it down on the Pill.

Their unit has a pulpit, and electronic organ and an amplifier.

The minister, Mr William Molland, and other church helpers hold a short service from about 6.30 pm until 7.30 pm.

They play hymns and distribute hymn books to people parked on the Pill so they can join in as well if they want to.

Mr Molland said: "The general idea is not to

conduct an open air meeting, or create a soap-box image, but to carry the atmosphere and reverence of a church service out of doors."

He says the services are very popular and some members of the congregation travel from as far as North Cornwall and Okehampton.

While the drive-in church is being run during the eight or nine weeks in the summer there is not an evening service at the North Road Chapel.

Mr Molland believes it is not only people on the Pill who appreciate the hymns and service but

others nearby.

This summer's services began three weeks ago and already quite a few people are turning up.

Mr Molland said: "People can come and sit in the seclusion of their cars. Some people sit on the seats down the river bank.

"We invite the public to join with us in hymn singing and if they want a hymn book they can indicate to the stewards. But we make a point of having hymns that are fairly familiar.

"It is not a Hyde Park Corner sort of thing at all. Just a church service held out of doors."

A member of the Gazette Staff, being present at one of our "Drive-in" church services thought it worthy of reporting. Two weeks later the above appeared on the front page of The Bideford and North Devon Gazette.

EDITORIAL

The sin sick society of our day continues its downgrade spiral. Little, if any, effort appears to be made to arrest the evils of this age. Perilous times are certainly upon us. 2 Timothy 3:1-4 is an apt summary of the 1980's. Nor is the situation within the Church more encouraging} in fact it is worse - FAR WORSE - for she is seen to be "fiddling as Rome burns", Much more concerned at how to get around TRUTH than to stand upon it; and far more adept in entertainment than in proclaiming the whole counsel of God. The Church's state of the present day is epitomized in 2 Timothy 4:3-4

What is the answer? As in the day of Moses, men are required to stand in the breach (Cf. Psalm 106:23). Men like unto the children of Issachar, who have an understanding of the times to know what Israel ought to do, and of Zebulun: "...expert in war...which could keep rank...not of double heart." (Cf. 1 Chron.12:32-33)

To the faithful remnant, RISE TO THE CHALLENGE OF THIS EVIL DAY: "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong" (1 Cor. 11:13).

Book Reviews.

THE ENDURING WORD OF GOD by Stephen J. Scott-Pearson (Pastor of Maulden Baptist Church). Price 50p (Postage paid)

This booklet is an assertion of the historic orthodox doctrine of the providential preservation of the Word of God.

MOUNTAINS OF MYTHS MOVED BY FAITH IN THE WORD OF GOD by E.S.Turnbull. Price £2.95 (Postage paid).

In this excellent book, published in Australia, the Author has endeavoured to supply, what appears to be an increasing need for answers to the destructive claims of textual critics. It does not pretend to be exhaustive or to answer every question that can be asked. It is written for the sheep of the pasture, the elect children of God, the ordinary true believer.

God's elect people have always believed that the Word is Faithful and True, and that it is accessible to them, having been preserved pure through all ages despite the malice of Satan and the world. Yet many today are troubled by the general acceptance given by their ministers and elders to modern versions of the Scriptures. They are troubled, because they recognize that these new versions differ markedly from the Authorised Version which was the means of their conversion, and which has been revered as the Word of God by them and their forefathers for many generations. They are alarmed when they hear it said that their Bible contains mistakes and errors, or that textual experts are still looking for the pure Word among a multitude of manuscripts. They are grieved, when from their own pulpits, they hear their Bible subjected to criticism from self-appointed doctors of texts, who ought to be teaching them that the Scriptures are the unchanging Word of God.

ANNOUNCEMENTS.

Annual Church Meeting.

This will be held in the Chapel on THURSDAY 1st NOVEMBER 1984, commencing at 6 pm.

There will be no public meeting on this date.

The trumpet of Protestantism sounded loud and clear at our annual Bible Convention as God's servant, Mr. Stephen Scott-Pearson, powerfully spelt out true Bible Christianity as compared to Romanism and Ecumenism. It was a most encouraging and God honouring occasion.

Cassettes of these addresses are available, on loan, or may be purchased at £1.25 plus postage.

It has been a great joy to have visitors worshipping with us again throughout the holiday season, and we trust that they found warmth and spiritual refreshment in our midst.