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HUMAN DEPRAVITY.

The subject of this article is of the utmost importance. If we have a shallow or deficient view of this matter then it is almost inevitable that we shall have defective, and may be, erroneous views upon other vital tenets of the Faith.

To understand the relationship between Adam and his posterity is essential to a right understanding of Holy Scripture.

The depravity of the human heart stems from the original offence committed in Eden's garden. Here the whole race of mankind was placed on probation, or on trial. Adam acted, not for himself as a private individual, but he transacted for all who would issue from him. Adam stood as federal head, and as such, legally represented the whole human race, so that in the sight of the Divine law, what he did they all did.

The first sin committed by Adam was a 'TYPICAL SIN', that is, a sin in which the REAL ESSENCE of sin is clearly made manifest. The essence of Adam's sin lay in the fact that he placed himself in opposition to God; he refused to subject his will to the will of God; he declined to allow God to determine the course of his life, actively taking the matter out of the hands of his Creator, to determine the future for himself. By so doing Adam fell from his original state of holy perfection. Immediately there was an aversion against God in his heart - they "hid themselves" (Cf. Gen. 3:8). The sentence of death spoken of by God in Genesis chapter 2 verse 17, took effect. Spiritual death was immediate, physical death would ensue in due course, and eternal death was the ultimate, apart from Divine Grace. In this condition Adam, the legal head of the human race was driven out from God and cut off - Cf. Gen. 3:24. But the vital point is, that all the children of Adam are equally affected, and ALL come under the same sentence. "In Adam ALL die" (1 Cor. 15:22). "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon ALL men, for that ALL have sinned" (Rom. 5:12).

This is designated THE FALL OF MAN: it is the entrance of sin into the world.

This sinful state and condition in which men are born is theologically termed ORIGINAL SIN. Original, because it is derived from Adam, the prime root of mankind, (not in his primal state as created, for that would imply that God created man a sinner, but in his fallen state). The Scriptures abound with evidence that no person is born clean and pure. Whatever is born of the flesh or comes into the world by natural generation, is flesh - carnal and corrupt. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one." (Job 14:4); "...They are all under sin;" (Rom.3:9).

The question now arises; when is sin actually transmitted? and the answer is ORIGINAL SIN IS FROM THE WOMB. "The wicked are estranged from the womb" (Ps.58:3) - "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. (Ps.51:5) -"Transgressors from the womb" (Isaiah 48:8).

All are born sinners. Not as many erroneously teach, that babes are innocent until they reach an age of responsibility, for this is a denial of ORIGINAL SIN. Furthermore, not only are all born sinners, but all are born CONDEMNED SINNERS. The sentence passed upon Adam is upon all the race. If this was not the case, no infant would ever die, for they have neither capacity nor opportunity to commit actual sin. Yet, death reigns, even over them that have not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression (THAT IS ACTUAL), Cf. Rom.5:14). Infants may be free from the act of sin, but they certainly are not free from the taint and corruption of sin, and their death is evidence to the fact of the GUILT of original sin.

The question of the salvation of infants is another matter, which is, as with adults, according to the sovereign election of God. "For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth" (Rom.9:11).

In such delicate areas as infant mortality, let all take comfort in that word; "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right" (Gen.18:25). But let none be so shallow in their conception of truth as to look upon infants as innocent.

This is the belief of Semi-Pelagians, and Remonstrants, and it is contrary to Holy Scripture. All are born with Adam's GUILT and Adam's SENTENCE upon them.

ORIGINAL SIN is described in the Word of God in various ways. Some of the terms used appear to be contradictory, but they are not, for each metaphor used is expressive terminology of a differing aspect, and is for the purpose of graphically conveying to us the comprehensiveness of man's depravity.

1. ORIGINAL SIN IS SAID TO BE INDWELLING. "Sin dwelleth in me" (Rom.7:17). Not something which comes and goes, not a visitor which pays an occasional call, but an inhabitant, and a very troublesome one. It is set upon hindering all the good and producing all the evil it can.

2. ORIGINAL SIN IS A LAW. "The law of sin" (Rom.7:25). It has force and power: authority which binds its subjects to allegiance. It reigns not as a king, but as a tyrant, for it reigns "UNTO DEATH" unless Grace prevents it.

3. ORIGINAL SIN IS POSITIVE. It is not something passive, it not only cuts a man off from God and renders him spiritually dead, but it is active hostility to God. Because of original sin man becomes a transgressor of settled purpose from his own heart, making him an enemy of God. There is a deep seated enmity in the will which is against God, and with this ALL are born. A will which will cross God's will, to fulfil his own: "Enemies in your mind by wicked works" (Col.1:21).

4. ORIGINAL SIN BINDS MEN. Through original sin they are bound as captives: "Taken captive by the Devil at his will" (2 Tim.2:26) - "all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb.2:15).

5. ORIGINAL SIN MAKES MAN UNINSTRUCTABLE. Void and incapable of spiritual instruction: "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned (1 Cor.2:14).

6. ORIGINAL SIN RENDERS A MAN DEAD. What could be more expressive of human depravity? Is it possible for the Almighty to convey to us in greater clarity the fact that

our depravity is TOTAL? We are just like Lazarus in the tomb, bound hand and foot, corruption upon us and not a spark of life in us, - "DEAD in trespasses and sins" (Eph.2:1).

This is the description of fallen man, the depths into which he has sunk, and his utter ruin, as given by God himself. ALL are born in this sad and hopeless condition. This is ORIGINAL SIN: it is a vigorous and active principle within us and it is the cause of all ACTUAL SIN.

Original sin is worse than actual sin. Whilst actual sin may be the more scandalous, original sin is the more heinous; for the cause is ever more important than the effect. Original sin renders us dead unto God and to spiritual matters, and alive unto Satan and to evil: "a corrupt tree bringeth forth corrupt fruit" (Matt.7:17). Man in his fallen state "Fulfils the desires of the flesh and the mind" - Cf. Eph.2:3. This is his natural bent and inclination; he can rise no higher, neither does he want to. The thought of a Holy God and any claim which HE might have upon him is not countenanced; man deliberately CHOOSES the evil and not the good: sinners LOVE darkness rather than light: they do not retain the knowledge of God in their minds - He is dismissed. This is not an involuntary ignorance; it is not passive; it is active. When confronted with the truth about themselves, and inescapable judgment to come, men do not repent, rather do they view God as their enemy, as one bent upon their eternal punishment. There is in the mind of every unregenerate person an aversion to the Almighty. The Scriptures give us an apt summary: "The carnal mind is enmity against God" (Rom.8:7).

There is a common belief that sinners are those who have wandered from God, but still have some lingering regard to return, and would do so if they knew how, and that by powerful persuasion they can be influenced to come back. This is NOT so. Whilst the Bible likens sinners unto sheep that have gone astray, this is but one metaphor which is used, and we must hold such in conjunction with others. Unregenerate man is an alien, he is an enemy, he has no hope, he is without God, and is dead in trespasses and sins. TOTAL DEPRAVITY is the teaching of Holy Scripture.

Man of himself is totally unable to change his character or act in any way other than that which his fallen nature dictates, and is in bondage to sin and Satan: "For I know that in me (that is in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me but how to perform that which is good I find not... I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom.7:18 & 23). "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom.8:7). "Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart" (Eph.4:18). "Unto the pure all things are pure; but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled" (Titus 1:15).

Inseparably linked with HUMAN DEPRAVITY is HUMAN INABILITY, and just as depravity is TOTAL, so is inability. Original sin treats of our depravity: Inability has reference to the fact that our depravity is humanly irremediable. With respect to this it is necessary to qualify or to distinguish. By ascribing total inability to the natural man it is not to be inferred that it is impossible for him to do good in any sense of the word. This would be patently untrue. In all men there is an ability to display moral virtues. There are men and women in society who actively manifest such qualities and this demands our sincere approval: for such we should be grateful and thank God.

TOTAL INABILITY is a theological term which means two things:

1. The unrenewed sinner cannot do any act, however insignificant, which fundamentally meets God's approval and answers to the demands of His holy law.
2. He cannot change his fundamental preference for self, to God, nor has he any desire to make an approach for such a change. In a word he is unable to work any SPIRITUAL GOOD: "Verily verily I say unto you, whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin" (John 8:34). "Without faith it is impossible to please God" (Heb.11:6).

The doctrine of the TOTAL INABILITY OF MAN naturally raises the question: Does man through ORIGINAL SIN lose his free will? This is a matter over which there has been great controversy down through history, and is still with us today.

Man still has liberty to choose as he pleases, and in this he acts in accord with the prevailing disposition of his soul. Man has not lost the faculties necessary to constitute him a responsible moral agent. He still has reason, conscience, and freedom of choice. He has ability so as to acquire knowledge, to recognise moral obligations and to choose or refuse as he sees fit. He also has ability to appreciate many things that are good, benevolent and just, relative to his fellow beings; but man has lost the power to determine his course for his highest good. To spiritual things he is blind; they are foolishness to him. To real truth he is dead; completely insensitive; his foolish mind is darkened. He has the law of sin in his heart; it dwells there permanently and that law is authoritative to him; he is in bondage to it and it reigns within his personality. So, by his very nature he has an irresistible bias for evil. He still has a will but it is TOTALLY DEPRAVED SPIRITUALLY. He still has the ability of choice, but of himself he will ALWAYS choose wrong. This is inevitable, for he is 'IN ADAM'. Pertaining to spiritual matters, Adam's choice is his; he has PRECISELY ADAM'S NATURE and he is TOTALLY UNABLE to alter that nature. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil" (Jer.13:23).

If Adam, created in holy perfection, with the powers of an unblemished mind and heart, chose the wrong, it is the height of foolishness to believe that FALLEN man in all his depravity is going to choose the right. What is more, as soon as Adam fell, immediately he hid from God; he lost all desire to meet or commune with his Maker, and of himself never returned. It was God who sought him. As with Adam, so with ALL men (for his case is ours) NONE of themselves ever return to God or seek spiritual things.

As was stated earlier, these truths have been flatly contradicted throughout history. Pelagianism, Socinianism. Semi-Pelagianism, Arminianism, although having different slants and emphasis, yet, are one in essence.

Pelagius, a British monk, first sought to erode the Biblical teaching of original sin, in the 5th Century A.D. This was effectively dealt with by Augustine of Hippo.

Later a man named John Cassian, an abbot in a Marseilles monastery, revived the Pelagian heresy, making some adjustments to it. It came to be known as Semi-Pelagianism. It defines such matters as are before us, thus: "The HUMAN WILL takes the initiative in regeneration, but needs divine assistance".

The order of the Jesuits founded in A.D.1541 has always been identified with Semi-Pelagianism. Arminianism is but Semi-Pelagianism modified by James Arminius, a Dutch theologian, born 1560. His view was that the Holy Spirit operated on all when the gospel was preached, and that in every case it was resistible, and that there was no invincible efficacy put forth on any: the assent of the will was the deciding factor. Whilst the Holy Spirit was present, yet, it was the human will which was the immediate cause of conversion. In other words, salvation is entirely dependent on man's free will in the final analysis.

These teachings have always been regarded by the faithful as NOT TRUE TO SCRIPTURE; yet, such teaching has held large sway for many generations, and it permeates the church today. Very many have been brought up on the errors of Arminianism, and have genuinely received it as truth (not knowing its source) and have preached it as the Gospel.

Theological thinking for years has been saturated to an alarming degree with these erroneous beliefs. It is the main content of today's revival literature. Full blooded Arminianism is the main thrust of evangelistic meetings, the whole emphasis being on man's choice, and he is led to believe that he has of himself ability to choose and exercise faith, whereas the plain teaching of Holy Scripture is that "Salvation is of the Lord" (Jonah 2:9).

From first to last, in EVERY DETAIL pertaining to man's salvation it is ALL OF GRACE; it is sovereignly and gratuitously bestowed upon the sinner; it is, "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:13).

The reaction of some who read, this article may well be that this teaching hinders evangelism. It must be said that one of the great hindrances to the spread of the gospel is the lack of this very teaching. Today's preaching is, to a large extent, producing decisions of THE WILL OF MAN: such are being treated as true cases of conversion and received into many of the churches, which in turn is riddling such companies with false professors. The only gospel of Scripture is that which rests upon the assumption of TOTAL INABILITY. This is the very truth which lays the foundation for the glory of the gospel of grace.

The Gospel of the Grace of God rests upon the despair of all human resources. It is only when man's TOTAL DEPRAVITY and complete human impotency is realized that the full glory and power of the gospel can be declared. Then it is, that the sinner will cast himself unreservedly upon God crying, "God be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke 18:13).

Warnings against the errors of Arminianism which once used to thunder from so many of the pulpits of our land, are scarcely, if ever, heard today. In fact, more often than not, it is the Doctrines of Grace (commonly called Calvinism) that are denounced in this age.

May God, even yet, raise up men who will preach the Word of God in its fulness.

"Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ear of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart and the tongue of the dumb sing, for in the wilderness shall waters break out and streams in the desert" (Isa. 35:5-6).

W.H.Molland.

The powers of hell agree
To hold our souls in vain;
He sets the sons of bondage free,
And breaks the accursed chain.
Lord, we adore Thy ways,
To bring us near to God,
Thy sovereign power, Thy healing grace,
And Thine atoning blood.

Isaac Watts.

KEEP YOURSELVES FROM IDOLS

This article is based on a message given at a meeting of the Sovereign Grace Union in Birmingham last year by Mr. John Brentnall (Wickliffe Preachers) and published in the magazine PEACE AND TRUTH. We are grateful to the Editor for his permission to re-print.

The beloved apostle John wrote his First Epistle to promote assurance (1 John 5:13). Believers may be assured of their salvation through loving God and each other. A constant threat, however, exists in their secret proneness to idolatry. Hence his concluding warning: "Little children keep yourselves from idols".

The chief reason for the Church's present ineffectualness is our forsaking of God, committing spiritual adultery, and embracing idol usurpers of His throne. Let us look at some of them, and see what Scripture says we should do with them.

I will enumerate six for your consideration.

The Froward Man.

The first of our idols is 'the froward man'. Whether elder, deacon, businessman or 'zealous worker for the Lord', he somehow manages by means of his gifts, or office, or pocket, or social standing, or 'push', to bring the spineless majority in the church to heel, and keep them lurking behind him, where they cannot impede his petty but towering ambitions. Of course, his relentless pursuit of pre-eminence marks him as a God-less, graceless man. But the church meekly follows him as though her very life rested on his leadership and money.

Little children, keep yourselves from this idol. Refuse to let him impose on you. Insist on him submitting his every plan and proposal to the analogy of faith in Scripture. Should he refuse, discipline must be invoked: first, a brotherly warning, then a rebuke, followed by suspension from office or membership, leading finally to deposition or excommunication. If he loves the cause of Christ, he will, through prayer and prudent handling, repent. But

if pride prevails, he will probably resign or leave, taking with him his lackeys and a pile of ready made prejudices. Do not be afraid of local gossip, for worldly men will already have assessed his character, while he will continue to use his lackeys elsewhere for his own selfish ends. Neither must you regard his exodus as a loss. Christ will keep His own, and the departure of a Demas or Diotrephes is no loss to Him.

The Church.

Another idol is what the blind multitudes falsely call 'the Church'. This is nothing more than a religious corpse whose founding fathers had little else besides God, whose descendants now look to man-made rules to supply the spiritual power their consciences tell them they lack. No sooner does a 'troublers of the Church' begin to raise problems, or appeal to Scripture for their solution, then they immediately apply these rules in a feverish attempt to prop up their tottering regime. Of course, they are merely 'defending the Church'.

O, how many so-called churches are nothing but personified regulations, petrified into tradition! To be saved from 'the world' is a miracle, but to be saved from 'the church' is a double miracle! Yet here again, the Word of God must regulate every Church meeting. 'The traditions of the fathers' and 'the view of the church' count for nothing without the warrant of Scripture. To the Law and to the Testimony. Should the majority reject its authority, only after patient and prayerful but vain attempts to win them over should we leave them to Christ's displeasure. But should they submit to Scripture, their former superstitious reverence for the Body instead of the Head should be confessed, their man-made rules renounced, and pledges given to serve the Lord Christ above all others. Only the diligent practice of obedience to Scripture can safeguard the future.

Intellectualism

A further idol in God's temple today is Intellectualism. Ostensibly orthodox, but riddled with proud scholars who seem to think a smattering of Greek, Textual Criticism,

and Calvinism makes them a cut above their fellows, this anti-Christian cult virtually refuses the offence of the cross. Its devotees move in highly respectable Reformed 'sets', circulate round certain annual Conferences, (which they have cunningly transformed into Scholars' clubs), and are masters of the open-ended suggestion rather than the dogmatic assertion. They constantly submit their anaemic religion to scholarly scrutiny through the learned journals and Reformed magazines, always, however, leaving their Romish and Ecumenical counterparts with the impression that they are in no way bigoted Calvinists, but only seekers after Truth. As for Christ, they tell Him, in effects 'We will eat our own bread and wear our own apparel: only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach' (Isa. 4:1). Yet many follow this coterie of Reformed dilettantes as if God spoke only through their mouths.'

How pale these intellectuals appear beside the bold sanctified scholarship of Calvin, Knox, Tyndale, Latimer, Luther and Rutherford.' One wonders whether they have ever laid to heart Paul's dictum that if any man think that he knoweth anything he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know' (1 Cor. 8:2). Man cannot be an intellectual in the presence of God.' He is nothing but a dwarf, a pigmy, an ignoramus.' How ignorant are we all - of God, of our own guilt and appalling depravity of the attractive glories of the Redeemer, of the sanctifying operations of the Spirit, of the preciousness of immortal souls, of the sacred beauties of heaven and the awful horrors of hell.' Nothing but deep, daily personal dealings with the Holy One of Israel will drive the devil of intellectualism from us, and turn our Scholar's Clubs into Churches. What we need today is not Reformed Scholasticism, not even sanctified scholarship, but men and women of spiritual distinction, adorned with spiritual-mindedness, leading spiritual lives cherishing spiritual hopes and travelling to a spiritual and an everlasting home. Only then shall men of the world 'take note that we have been with Jesus', and seek the way to Zion with us.

Popular Evangelism.

A fourth idol usurper of God's throne is Popular Evangelism, drawing its clichés from the Bible but its methods and life-style from Show Business, courting the

favour of politicians, playboys and pop-stars; offering 'Jesus' as a sop for broken hearts and lonely lives without a hint of His Saviourhood from sin and Lordship over every thought, the devotees of Popular Evangelism seem to know no god but their own glamorous evangelists, and no service but their own feverish campaign activities. Have they ever paused, even once, to compare their idols, top-class travel-tickets, hotels, and suites, their slick entourages, their Finney-esque manipulating methods, their modernistic platform-companions and their indiscriminating counselling techniques, with the poverty of Christ, the heavenliness of His apostles, the purity of their doctrine, the holiness of their fellow-labourers and the faithfulness of their counsels? What an incredible lack of discernment they show! With them, almost anyone passes for a Christian; almost anything is called a church; almost any Tom, Dick or Harry is set up as a preacher, as long as he can say 'nice' patronising things about Christ.'

My dear friends, keep yourselves from this idol, this religious glamour-show. It is subversive of true godliness and Scriptural church-order. What we need is not crusades, but churches - churches gathered by God through heaven-sent messengers to whom the Word of the Lord is both a burden and a fire in their bones - churches composed not of unchanged men whose life-style is little better after their 'decision for Christ' than before it, but of poor, broken-hearted self-condemned sinners hanging on the free grace and mercy of God in Christ Jesus, actuated by humble love for His Name, noted for their stem opposition to sin, and abounding in liberality to others. Pray, then, that the Holy Spirit of the living God will be richly poured out from the throne of Christ in glory, until church office-bearers and members alike reject both these glamorous purveyors of Arminian error and the spurious, self-opinionated men they have converted, and embrace in the bonds of the true Gospel those whose sincerity is attested by their orthodoxy, humility, self-denial, and willingness to join only Scriptural, evangelical churches.

Pentecostalism.

A fifth idol from which we need to keep ourselves is the Tongue-speaking cult, or "Charismatic" Movement. Its leading assumptions are (i) that 'tongue-speaking' is a

standing part of public worship, lost to the Church for 19 centuries through unbelief; (ii) that its leading aim is self-edification; and (iii) that it is the fruit of immediate operations of the Holy Spirit. It is characterised by 'ecstatic speech', partial loss of consciousness, bodily swaying and even convulsions, while many of its adherents insist on its possession as a necessary mark of the New Birth. All who lack the gift are seen as unbelievers or, at best, second-rate Christians. At present, it threatens to sweep all before it, and is splitting churches, families and even personalities.

Christians should keep themselves from it for several reasons. Firstly, its leading assumptions are false; for (i) even in Corinth, tongue-speaking was not a standing exercise, but was a gift to be used only when foreigners were present; (ii) its leading aim was not self-edification, but to convey the Gospel to others (see Acts 2); and (iii) the gift was permanently inherent in its possessors, like such other gifts as teaching, ruling and praying. In fact, the tongue-speaking claimed by 'Charismatics' is not the Biblical tongue-speaking at all. The apostles spoke the Divine truths of the Gospel in languages they never learned, but it was the Gospel they spoke, not new revelations or directions and instructions from heaven. The languages in which they spoke were intelligible, known languages. Their use of them was designed to convey Gospel truths to outsiders and convince them of the way of salvation. Native worshippers, such as the Corinthians when North Africans were present in their meetings, being ignorant of the language thus spoken, required an interpreter, so that they too could understand and be edified. Apart from those exegetical reasons for rejecting this cult, others should carry great weight with us: (i) the apostolic authority claimed by leaders of the movement is groundless, for they lack at least two essential marks of an apostle, namely, to have seen the risen Lord, and to be the foundation-stones of the New Testament church; (ii) the unsubstantiated claims, amounting to lies, made by the movement's members, to be able to heal the sick, raise the dead, drink poison, and handle serpents. I have challenged individuals on these matters, and have found them not only lacking, but also ashamed of their claims; once exposed; (iii) the ease with which professedly Protestant 'Charismatics' can overstep all doctrinal differences in order to share experiences

with 'Charismatic' Romanists; (iv) the easily-detected pride of those who scorn believers who reject their claims; and (v) the acknowledged lack of satisfaction with the Lord Jesus Christ as 'all in all'.

Ecumenism.

A sixth idol we must avoid is Ecumenism, the movement avowedly in favour of the unification of all professing Christians. Originating in the World Missionary Conference of 1910 held in Edinburgh, the city of John Knox, its alleged basis is John 17:21 - "That they all may be one", and its persistent claim is that the movement is motivated by the Holy Spirit. Its British advocates are the influential majority in the Churches of England and Scotland and Rome, led by Dr. Runcie, Dr. MacIntyre and Cardinals Hume and Gray, while many Nonconformists support it also. The movement is embodied in the World Council of Churches, the national branch being the British Council of Churches. Observe the methods of its constituent members; they lay great stress on 'our unhappy divisions', exchange pulpits and engage in joint ventures, services and campaigns, glory in having crossed barriers that have kept 'Christians' apart since the Reformation, stigmatise the theology of the Reformers as both narrow and antiquated, and seek to change the balance of power between nations. The fruits of the methods have so far been very pernicious; they have created an atmosphere of utter indifference to doctrinal issues, caused great spiritual confusion by embracing those who hold opposite views on such points Justification, and have substituted for true missionary zeal a social and economic Gospel acceptable even to many Communists.

Our criticism of it is brief but radical. The only Biblical foundation for the movement seems to be in the building of the tower of Babel, which in its day was an ecumenism of humanity. In other words, the Ecumenical Movement, springing from the old liberal theology of the Brotherhood of Man, aims at world harmony under the name of Christ. Its radical defect, however, lies in the fact that there is no salvation in the Brotherhood of Man. The Brotherhood of Man is a Brotherhood of fallen, sinful men; all nations are condemned in Adam. Should the whole world unite, the result would still be a confederation of nations in rebellion against God. To trust in a

Brotherhood of condemned men is to die with them at last under God's wrath and curse, for 'cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm'. There is no hope whatever for lost humanity in cultivating a world-wide Adamic fellowship. Christ calls man out of that fellowship to Himself, into fellowship with the redeemed, regenerate and sanctified people of God. The true Church is not a man-engineered, world-wide institution stamped with the empty label 'Jesus Christ is Lord', but all the elect of God effectually called by the Gospel and the Spirit, justified freely by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, walking holily and humbly with their God, in expectation of a glorious eternity together in His Presence. Tested by these criteria, the Ecumenical Movement is a hollow, external counterfeit by the devil, and should be wholly rejected.

Who then is God?

Ultimately, this question of idolatry resolves itself into the old controversy as to who is really God. Is it the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy, or is it man? Let us be candid. The only real idol is man's self, that is, man as estranged from, and living in opposition to God. Tragically, the 20th century has seen man's idolising of himself in so many forms. But ideologically, the most widespread and influential of these are Atheistic Humanism which embraces the Communistic nations, and Romanism, which is diabolically able to embrace all idols in the name of Jesus Christ. Of these, the latter is the more evil and dangerous, for it can even assimilate Communism to itself. Let us therefore seek grace to keep ourselves from it as well as from those powerful ethnic religions that still hold their ancient sway over much of our poor, benighted world. And let us resign ourselves into the hands of the true Saviour of the world, to live from Him, through Him, and to Him.

THE GOSPEL OF GRACE

The Bible has been named the book of salvation. In distinction from the book of general revelation, it is precisely that. Nature and history, valuable revelations of God though they are, say nothing about salvation from sin and spiritual death. The Bible, on the other hand, tells men all they need to know on that momentous subject.

What Scripture has to say concerning salvation is fully summed up in the term salvation by grace. And salvation by grace is nothing else than salvation by God. To the question how the sinner is to be saved, whether by his own efforts or by the grace of God, the gospel gives an unequivocal answer. It is no exaggeration to assert that the evangel teaches that salvation is a hundred per cent of the Triune God.

This is not to say that the sinner has no responsibility in the matter of his salvation. He must believe in Christ, and God holds him accountable for unbelief. Yet, saving faith is a gift of God. Nor may it be denied that in the process of his salvation the believer is in duty bound to become active. He is enjoined to work out his own salvation with fear and trembling. But when he obeys that command, he does so because it is God who not only once worked in him, but also keeps working in him, both to will and to do of his good pleasure (Phil.2:12-13).

God the Father saves.

From the foundation of the world He chose in Christ all those who will eventually inherit eternal life (Eph. 1:4). He chose them, not because of any foreseen good in them, but in His sovereign love (Eph. 1:5; Rom. 8:29). He gave them to the Son (John 17:6). Their salvation is assured, for no man can pluck them out of the Son's hand, and the Father, who gave them to Him, is greater than all, and no man is able to pluck them out of the Father's hand (John 10:28-29). Those whom He loved from eternity God predestinated unto salvation. "Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified" (Rom. 8:30).

God the Son saves.

He merited salvation, the whole of it, both its negative and its positive aspects. He paid the debt of sinners to the last farthing. On the cross He was crushed by the curse of God which was due to them. In the stead of hell deserving criminals He was forsaken of God. But also by His perfect obedience to the Father He merited for sinners righteousness, everlasting life and glory. In consequence, nothing remains for them to merit. It behoves each of them to say: 'Nothing in my hand I bring.'

Not only did the Son of God merit salvation; He also bestows salvation. That blessed truth is sometimes neglected. It is said that Christ by His saving work did no more than make salvation possible for all and that whether a given individual will actually be saved depends on the exercise by him of his free will. That is a most serious error. It amounts to saying that Christ's saving work does not save. It denies the power of the atonement. It robs Christ of His honour as Saviour. By making man his own saviour it spurns salvation by grace. The truth of the matter is that the atoning work of Christ saves all whom it was designed to save; namely, all whom the Father had given Him (John 17:9): His people (Matt. 1:21), His sheep (John 10:11), His church (Acts 20:28), God's elect (Rom. 8:32-33).

God the Holy Spirit saves.

He applies salvation to sinners. He gives them hearts of flesh for hearts of stone (Ezek. 11:19): They are born again, their second birth being of the Spirit (John 3:5-6). In consequence, they lay hold by faith on the Christ and all His saving benefits. Saving faith is a fruit of regeneration.

Faith is an act of man. That truth must be emphasized. To suppose that God does the believing for the sinner is an absurdity. What needs to be stressed no less is that faith is first of all a gift of God the Holy Spirit. Having identified coming to Him with believing on Him in the parallel statements: "He that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst" (John 6:35): Jesus went on to say: "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him (John 6:44).

He draws by His Spirit. Scripture accounts for the conversion of Lydia by saying, not that she opened her heart, but that the Lord opened her heart so that she attended to the things spoken by Paul (Acts 16:14). "By grace are ye saved, through faith", Paul told the believers at Ephesus; and he added: "and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8).

Whether the antecedent of 'it' is faith or salvation by grace through faith, in either case faith is said to be a divine bestowal. The same apostle wrote to the church at Philippi: "Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake" (Phil. 1:29). Both faith in Christ and suffering for Christ he regarded as gifts of God. And how emphatic is the Pauline dictum, "I give you to understand... that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost" (1 Cor. 12:3).'

Are the unsaved to be told that faith is a gift of God? Most assuredly! Wholly, of course, the truth of the matter must be told them. To hide this truth from them would be irresponsible. To permit them to entertain the thought that they can believe of their own volition apart from the regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit is worse than irresponsible. It amounts to encouraging them in the belief that they are masters of their own fate, captains of their own souls. However, that faith is a gift of God is not the only truth to be impressed upon the lost. This truth must be coupled with another. As so often in Christian theology, so here also there are complementary truths both of which deserve the strongest stress. The sinner needs to be told emphatically that he must believe and that, in case he does not believe, the wrath of God will abide on him.

A worse predicament than that in which the unsaved sinner finds himself cannot be imagined. He must believe in Christ. If he does not, he will be damned. Yet he cannot believe. Of that dire predicament he must become aware. If he is made aware by the Holy Spirit, he will look away from self for salvation and abandon himself unreservedly to the grace of God. That is precisely the act of saving faith.

A certain man had been paralytic ^or thirty-eight years. Together with a multitude of other impotent folk he lay at the pool Bethesda, He despaired of recovery. Jesus spoke: "Arise, take up thy bed, and walk". The paralytic was commanded to do that thing which of all things he could not do, and let no one think that he was not aware of his complete inability. But he also knew that his one hope of getting well lay in his doing that very thing. Fully conscious of his plight, he forgot himself and fixed his eye on Jesus. That was faith. By faith he was made whole (John 5:1-9).

As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so the Son of man had to be lifted up on Calvary's cross in order that whosoever has been fatally bitten by that venomous serpent, the devil, and, utterly helpless, looks to Him for grace, might not perish but have eternal life (John 3:14-15).

Such is the gospel of the saving grace of the Triune God. It must be the message of evangelism. He who responds to it in faith will sing (in the words of Josiah Conder):

'Tis not that I did choose Thee,
For, Lord, that could not be;
This heart would still refuse Thee,
Hadst Thou not chosen me.
Thou from the sin that stained me
Hast cleansed and set me free;
Of old Thou hast ordained me,
That I should live to Thee.

'Twas sovereign mercy called me
And taught my opening mind;
The world had else enthralled me,
To heavenly glories blind.
My heart owns none before Thee,
For Thy rich grace I thirst;
This knowing, if I love Thee,
Thou must have loved me first.

R. B. Kuiper.

EDITORIAL

This edition of THE LINK carries articles which deal with certain cardinal points of the Gospel.

Large sections of evangelicalism are saturated with teachings and practices which have no Biblical foundation. Satan sold to many of our forebears "another gospel: which is not another" rather was it a sad distortion of the true. A system of evangelistic preaching has been inherited which is quite unbiblical.

Sincere men have been engaged in this all their lives and appear to be oblivious to the perversion, simply because they do not analyse IN DEPTH, the doctrine of Holy Scripture: also, they are ignorant of the works and findings of great historic figures in the church who were faced with the initial inroads of these sarnie errors, and withstood them.

No doubt, many who read this magazine have entered into this heritage and have never doubted but what the message and the method was authentic.

The full orb'd glory of the gospel of the grace of God, bestowing salvation upon sinners, is hidden behind the fog of human inventions and unbiblical phraseology which has invaded so much of evangelical thinking. Salesmanship evangelism with its calls to the front, and raising of hands, together with such phrases as "decide for Christ" and "accept Jesus as your personal Saviour", are not to be found in the Word of God. They are the inventions of men, and are wholly inadequate in dealing with the sinner and instructing him in the way of eternal life.

Whilst some may say that we are complicating the Truth, this is not so, for it is THE TRUTH which must be stated, and it is the Holy Spirit alone which can illuminate and make it understandable to the sinner.

This is a matter of no mean importance. We have not far to look to find a number of individuals who made 'a decision': WHAT DID THEY DECIDE? There is no sign of a changed life, no interest in the cause of Christ, no study of God's Word, little, if any, attendance at a place of worship. Yet, these are the ones who have 'MADE A

DECISION' and have been given words of assurance of salvation. Such assurance should never have been given, for it does not belong to them. Many Christian workers are foolish enough to believe that despite any lack of evidence, such people are born again because of some ant of the will.

Let none be so naive; for by these means, preachers and Sunday School workers are swelling the ranks of the deluded with a perverted gospel.

ANNOUNCEMENTS and INFORMATION

THURSDAY 3rd January 1985.

A Prayer Meeting will be held in the main Chapel at 6.30 pm. in accordance with our usual practice at the commencement of a New Year.

Mr. and Mrs. G. Jackson, of Brackley, Northants. and their two children, Gillian and Michael, have just moved into Bideford to take up residence. We trust that they will be happy in their new home, and wish them every blessing in the Lord.

Book Review. TODAY'S EVANGELISM (its Message and Methods) by Ernest C. Reisinger. Obtainable from the Bookroom - Price £3.15 or £3.45 postage paid.

This book is about the biblical view and practice of evangelism with the emphasis on the areas that are weak or missing. The motive of the writer is to provoke serious thought about the message and methods. This book is not for those who are unwilling to have their thinking on this subject challenged or their message and methods examined.