

July – Sept 1994

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**North Road Chapel (Evangelical)
BIDEFORD**

RIGHTEOUSNESS CONT'D

A much quoted Scripture in connection with the gospel is Romans 1:16,17; *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed"*. This latter phrase from verse seventeen is rarely connected with what has gone before in verse sixteen, yet herein is truth of vital importance. It must be fully understood that the believer has eternal life on account of Christ's obedience to, and perfect fulfilment of the Law as well as being made void of guilt. *"The righteousness of God"* or *"The righteousness of the Law"* are statements which frequently occur in both Old and New Testaments, particularly prominent in the Epistles. As the apostle Paul commences his New Testament writings we find such words as *"Therein is the righteousness of God revealed"* (Romans 1:17). *"Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe"* (Romans 3:22).

The gospel as it has been preached for many years has, in the main, centred around the death of the Saviour and the penal aspect only of Christ's work of Atonement; whilst in no way is this to be minimised, of itself it constitutes only half of the truth.

What are we to understand by this important expression, *"The righteousness of God"*? It is perfect conformity to the Divine Law in heart and in life; all that a holy God demands. This and this alone constitutes *"The righteousness of God"*. The first Adam failed to keep that Law even in his unfallen state and all his descendants, who are now

fallen men, are unable to do so; it is totally beyond them. In the fulness of time came the last Adam, the God-man (Christ Jesus). He came in a substitutionary capacity, that is, as a legal representative, in order to keep and fulfil that Law in all its detail for His people, voluntarily placing Himself under it, that He might vicariously work out a perfect righteousness for all the elect.

This unremitting and perfect conformity of Christ to the Divine Law proceeded primarily from His supreme delight and love to God, His Father. As He came forth manifest in flesh, He declared "*Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of Me, I delight to do Thy will, O my God: yea, Thy Law is within my heart*" (Psalm 40:7,8). The fact that the Law of God was His delight was evidenced throughout His life, even as a boy of twelve years of age (cf Luke 2:41-49). Later when He entered His public ministry, whole nights were not too long for His devotions. He would withdraw from the company of men into lonely desert places in order to have a time of undisturbed communion with His Father. Never did He seek pleasure for Himself; it was always the Father and the Father's will which occupied Him; this was His meat and drink. Why was He so intent? Because God's Law was within His heart.

The summary of the first section of that Law is, "*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind*" (Matthew 22:37). This first and great commandment permeated the whole being of our Lord. He was consumed by a jealous concern for the honour of God. Seeing the temple being desecrated by merchantmen, He was moved to drastic action (cf John 2:14-17). He drove out those profane, mercenary wretches. Christ's zeal and ardour for the honour of God's name was so complete and so perfect that the Holy Spirit says, He was eaten up by it (cf Psalm 69:9). This Scripture conveys the thought of a consuming desire for absolute purity; this Christ possessed. God requires truth in the inward parts; only the Mediator measured up to such a standard. The Old Testament prophet

wrote concerning Him, *"He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till He have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for His Law"* (Isaiah 42:4). For many centuries the isles waited for one to fulfil God's Law, and in the fulness of time, One came, and He *"set judgment in the earth"* (meaning discrimination between good and evil). Christ perfectly pursued the good and in it He did not fail. He was *"holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners"* (Hebrews 7:26). **He loved God with all His heart, soul and mind.**

His approach to the second part of the Law was no less important to Him, *"thy neighbour as thyself"* (Matthew 22:39). The heart of the Lord Jesus ever went out in warm, ardent, abounding love to those round and about Him. The very law of goodness dwelt in His soul. Nothing could embitter His spirit; the rude, annoying behaviour of some and the deep seated enmity of others did not inhibit His acts of compassion. The wicked and the unthankful were all partakers of His benevolence. He never dismissed a needy soul; the heavy laden found relief, the afflicted received cure and release. *"When the even was come, they brought unto Him many that were possessed with devils; and He cast out the spirits with His word, and healed all that were sick: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses"* (Matthew 8:16). *"In all their affliction, He was afflicted"* (Isaiah 63:9). He *"went about doing good"* (Acts 10:38). The Saviour moved in the cities, He travelled to isolated villages, He journeyed to desert places, often in great weariness and fatigue in order that all might know of His presence and hear His heavenly instruction. He gave sight to the blind, health to the diseased and deliverance from the dominion of Satan. He made His followers partakers of the Divine nature and prepared them for everlasting bliss; His righteous acts were unsullied goodness. Well might we bow in adoration before the Holy Spirit's description of the Mediator's life, for in it we see His perfect fulfilment of that second section of the Law to love *"thy neighbour as thyself"*.

The obedience of Christ and His fulfilling of the Law as summarized in these two commandments was a vicarious act on His part; it was on behalf of those whom God had elected unto salvation. If they were ever to enter through the gates of the eternal city at the last, then God's Law as epitomized in Matthew 22:37-40 must be kept in thought, word and deed; a flawless love to God, and to our neighbour, of heart, soul and mind. This is "*the righteousness of the Law*", which fallen man could never attain unto, but which Christ has wrought for the sinner and it is a vital part of the gospel. The life of Christ is as essential as His death.

Some one hundred to one hundred and fifty years ago, modernists began to belittle the death of Christ and to lay great emphasis upon His life, setting it forth as an example. Sadly many evangelicals over reacted to this by minimising the life and over-stressing the death. Both are grievous errors. We are to hold the two aspects in perfect balance, but in setting forth the life of Christ, it is not as an example, rather is it to declare Christ as the legal surety, keeping the Law on our behalf. This is the preceptive aspect of His atonement and secures our justification. It would be no gospel to present the flawless life of the Holy One as a pattern for our imitation; that would not be glad tidings for none could ever attain unto it, but to declare One, who has lived a life of righteousness which is reckoned to our account is indeed tidings of the greatest joy.

From Bethlehem to Calvary, Christ was acting on **our** behalf, as our Surety and Representative, that by His every thought and action as well as by His death, He wrought for us **perfect righteousness**, which by virtue of the terms of the Everlasting Covenant is ours legally by imputation; when faith can lay hold of this blissful fact then shall we understand the meaning of Romans 3:22 referred to earlier concerning "*the righteousness of God*". It is by faith of Jesus Christ and it is "*unto all and upon all them that believe*". In the measure in which we grasp this, shall we comprehend the gospel in its true glory and wondrous

fulness, for it is the combined aspects of the Mediator's work (preceptive and penal) which constitute *"The unsearchable riches of Christ"* (Ephesians 3:8).

If Christ had only delivered us from punishment, then such a work would never have given us a title to life. The sinner needs not only to be made negatively guiltless, he needs also to be made positively righteous. The work of the Mediator not only cancels the sin (by His death - penal), it also gives perfect righteousness (by His spotless life - preceptive). The death of Christ removes our sin and guilt and saves us from hell. His flawless life and holy perfections clothe us, so that *"we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ"* (2 Corinthians 2:15).

In the book of Zechariah we read of a man named Joshua, of whom it is stated: *"Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel. And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him He said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment. And I said, Let them set a fair mitre upon his head. So they set a fair mitre upon his head, and clothed him with garments"* (Zechariah 3:2-5). This was far more than a rescue operation from the pit and the fires of hell. First, take away the filthy garments - the removal of sins. Second, clothe him and set a fair mitre on his head - the imputation of righteousness, being made kings and priests unto God (cf Revelation 5:10).

This matter of imputed righteousness is not some cold theological term; it is an integral part of the work of Christ, therefore a vital part of the gospel. It is that perfect satisfaction which the Mediator made to every preceptive demand of the Law. This is the 'Robe of Righteousness' which God places upon every true believer, it is the wedding garment. In this way Christ's righteousness is *"upon all them that believe"*

(Romans 3:22) and it is this which fits us for heaven. This is a major part of our salvation, in this way we are "*made the righteousness of God in Him*" (2 Corinthians 5:21). It is all "*In Him*". This is not that Christ is a kind and gracious benefactor, it is very much more than that. The believer has all this in Christ **legally**; He is our Representative, our Proxy. Every thing is in His name and He has carried out the whole transaction to the absolute satisfaction of a holy God and to the total vindication of the Divine Law.

The imputation of **righteousness** is not just the forgiveness of sins. It is not simply a naked pronouncement of a person to be righteous without just and judicial foundation for such a pronouncement. God declares none righteous who are not so. The righteousness of God is a legal act whereby a perfect righteousness has been vicariously wrought by Christ the Surety on our behalf and transferred to us who believe, it is accounted as ours. It is real, it is true, it is effectual, even to the degree that in Holy Scripture believers are called "*THE RIGHTEOUS*" (1 Peter 3:12).

W. H. Molland.

Christ, as a Surety, in the room and stead of His people, must both obey the precepts of the Law and bear its penalty; His submitting to the one, without conforming to the other, is not sufficient; His paying off the debt of punishment did not exempt from obedience, as the paying off the debt of obedience did not exempt from punishment: Christ did not satisfy the whole Law by either of them separately, but by both conjunctly; by His sufferings and death He satisfied the threatenings, the sanction of the Law, but not the precepts of it thereby; and by His active obedience He satisfied the preceptive part of the Law, but not the penal part; but by **both** He satisfied the whole Law and made it honourable".

John Gill D.D. 1697-1771

TERMINOLOGY OFTEN CONFUSED OR MISUSED

Many theological terms commonly used by Christians, can often be used inaccurately and therefore need to be carefully examined. It is possible that some terminology is at variance with the Word of God and is not precise in identifying the beliefs of an individual or local church. Because some people are confused when using these terms, or wilfully misuse them, it may be helpful to give some brief definitions.

PROTESTANTISM

The historical origin of this word is from the second Diet of Spiers (1529), against the first Diet of Spiers (1526). There a protest was made by certain Reformers concerning a decree of submission to the Romanist church, hence the term 'Protestants'. From this point supporters of the Reformation gradually became known as Protestants, both by themselves and their opponents. In Christendom today there are many who suppose that if a person is not a Romanist then he is a Protestant, but in the correct usage of the term this is not so. True Protestantism is the adherence to the teaching and practices of the Reformers; this is the significance of the designation 'Protestant Reformation'. It was never a true reformation in that it returned to "all the counsel of God". Whilst there was much glorious truth brought to light through the Holy Spirit's gracious enablement and mighty power, yet there was much which the Reformers would not accept, and many errors of Romanism which they did not protest against; rather did they carry them over into their own system.

Great prominence is given by Protestants and rightly so, to the blasphemous fable of the mass, yet the Reformers fully embraced a state

church and infant baptism; this is nothing short of straining at one camel yet swallowing two! There can be little doubt that the greatest tragedy of the Protestant Reformation was the continuing link of the state and civil powers, just as with the Romanists. As infant baptism had ever been the pillar of popery, so did the Protestant Reformers continue this same practice. A parochial system developed whereby all infants in every parish were compelled to be baptized and brought into a state church, thus supposedly christianizing or protestantizing the whole nation. By this means the church became a very part of the civil and political power. In Britain evidence of this was given in 1689 by the coronation service containing an oath to defend the "Protestant Reformed Religion **by law**".

Correctly defined, Protestantism is a political Christianity, which the facts of history will substantiate.

REFORMED

This is a term closely allied to, indeed a very part of the former, for in its correct usage it refers to the teaching and practices of the Protestant Reformers. Added to their state church and infant baptism dogma, was their complete refusal to acknowledge independent autonomous bodies of Christians; they also totally rejected believers baptism by immersion, using their political and civil power in putting to death many who dared to stand by these undeniable Biblical precepts.

Notwithstanding these facts, the term 'Reformed' has come very much into vogue over recent years, used in the main by those who wish to show their opposition to Arminianism and hold to the doctrine of sovereign grace. Those who declare the glorious truth of God's salvation in all its fulness, and upon its belief by the sinner, baptize that person in a Scriptural manner, certainly do not need such an appellation as Reformed. What is more, the use of this term is not only a misnomer,

it is a grave dishonour to the countless thousands of men and women who were put to death by the Reformers through their political state church system, for no other reason than their faithful adherence to those certain Biblical teachings which they themselves (the Reformers) would not accept.

ANTINOMIANISM

This is the rejection of the Moral Law of God, the Ten Commandments, as having a place as a rule of life for the believer. Antinomians regard any notion of obedience to the Law as being legalistic and usually make no distinction between the Ceremonial and Judicial laws of Israel and the Ten Commandments, saying that **all** the Law passed away with Christ. In their desire to honour the unlimited pardoning grace of God in justification, many of this persuasion have scruples in praying for forgiveness of present sins in the life, because they claim these sins are forever put away by Christ; and that any demands which the Law might make have been fulfilled in and by the Mediator. Great emphasis is put on the words "*The letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life*" (2 Corinthians 3:6). This is not a true Scriptural position, for it is only the Moral Law as a means of salvation which was abolished by the work of Christ. The Law as the standard of life is a transcript of the holiness of God and is therefore of permanent validity for the Christian. "*Be ye holy, for I am holy*" (1 Peter 1:16). At regeneration the believer not only obtains the forgiveness of sins, he also receives the Spirit of God which is the Spirit of **obedience**. Antinomianism is fertile soil for the seeds of licence and lawlessness. It was obviously foremost to some degree in apostolic times, which prompted Paul to write, "*Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?*" (Romans 6:1). Antinomianism has never died out through history; it was in certain sections of Reformed Protestantism, also some Anabaptists were affected by it. There are today a number who would be in the Calvinistic wing of the church, who in varying

degrees would hold to this belief, as also do very many Dispensationalists.

CALVINISM

Another term sadly misused, usually spoken in a derogatory way by those of Arminian persuasion; by doing so they often display their ignorance. When a man preaches all the counsel of God and he brings in the aspects of doctrine such as election and predestination as the occasion demands, he is labelled a Calvinist. Invariably such a designation is incorrect for John Calvin was a Protestant Reformer. True, he would preach election and predestination, but he would also teach and practise other things which many who are **not** Arminian would repudiate. Those who preach the full-orbed gospel, which includes God's sovereignty, are far removed from the stance of Calvin; to call them Calvinists is incorrect.

HYPER CALVINISM

This is a total imbalance in the presentation of Biblical truths by stressing Divine sovereignty to the exclusion of human responsibility. It infers that men and women are either elected to salvation or perdition and there is nothing they can do about it. It is a fatalistic approach to Divine truth and a failure to see that there is the general call of the gospel and the effectual call of the Holy Spirit. *"Many are called but few are chosen"* (Matthew 22:14). Hyper Calvinism destroys much of the content of the gospel and sadly inhibits a man in his presentation of God's wondrous salvation; in all fairness this certainly was not the teaching of John Calvin.

ARMINIANISM

The Arminian theory is that Christ made a full atonement for all; His was a propitiatory work by which He endured and placated the wrath of

God due to every man, woman and child of all human history, (from creation to the end of the world); it is up to man to decide what he is going to do about it. Arminians present a God who has done all He can, now He must wait upon the decision of a fallen, depraved sinner for the result of His Son's atonement. This is a sad and erroneous presentation of the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which is committed to the Church's trust (cf 1 Timothy 1:11). It is also a blasphemous denial of His total supremacy and absolute sovereignty in all things.

This is a line of teaching originating with Pelagius, a British monk, in the 4-5th century A.D. whose theories were effectively countered by Augustine of Hippo. Later they were revived in a modified form by John Cassian, an abbot in Marseilles; but was largely put down at the Reformation, and then reappeared through the instrumentality of James Arminius, a Dutch theologian born in 1560. It is from the name of Arminius that the current theological tag of 'Arminianism' is derived. In broad terms it denies the absolute sovereignty of God in salvation, that He has chosen to Himself a remnant from out of all nations of Adam's race to be redeemed by Christ and effectually called of the Holy Spirit.

SACRAMENTALISM

Sacramentalism in its strictest sense is the teaching that there is spiritual efficacy in sacraments. In a broader sense it is sacraments taking precedence over the preaching of the Word. The word 'sacrament', like all these other theological terms, is not found in Scripture; nevertheless it is a word which should be understood. It is defined in the dictionary as 'an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace'. The Eastern and Romanist sections of Christendom are the sources of Sacramentalism; they have seven sacraments, Baptism, The Eucharist, Confirmation, Matrimony, Penance, Holy Orders and Anointing of the sick. Most Protestant and Nonconformist bodies would recognize only the two ordinances which were set out by Christ for the New Testament

age - Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Both of these, if carried out in a Biblical manner, give visible expression to deep spiritual truths, yet of themselves are of no value apart from the Word. However there are denominations and groups who would not identify with the sacraments of Rome, yet in varying degrees are sacramental in that an undue emphasis is put on the ordinances, particularly the Lord's Supper. Faithful believers in past generations took grave exception to the pulpit being placed at the side of a building for worship, whilst an altar or communion table remained central. In this they rightly discerned a wrong emphasis. Any denomination or group which gives priority to an ordinance or sacrament rather than to the expounding of the Holy Scriptures, evidence a spirit of Sacramentalism.

PAEDO-BAPTISM

Paedo-baptism is the sprinkling or immersion of infants and is primarily a dogma of Rome. In that which can be termed Protestantism, paedo-baptism takes two forms, or is conducted under two different guises; the Anglican and the Presbyterian. The former is based on 'The Book of Common Prayer' and the latter on 'The Westminster Confession of Faith'.

The form of words used by the Anglicans in this act of so-called baptism is "This child is regenerate and grafted into Christ's Church We yield hearty thanks most merciful Father that it hath pleased Thee to regenerate this infant with Thy Holy Spirit, to receive him for Thine own child by adoption and to incorporate him into Thy holy Church". By such a statement, baptismal regeneration could not be more clearly expressed.

The Presbyterian would vehemently deny 'baptismal regeneration'. They believe and teach 'covenant theology'. In this there are a number of variations, but the gist of the teaching is that a child, if born of but one parent who is a believer, then that child is in the Covenant of Grace

and as such is to be sprinkled, this being the sign of the covenant in the New Testament age just as circumcision was in the Old Testament age, baptism now having replaced circumcision. The words of the Westminster Confession are, "Not only those that do actually profess faith in, and obedience unto Christ, but also the infants of one or both believing parents are to be baptized" (Ch 28:4).

This is a clear denial of the total depravity of man and of the plain truth as expressed by the Lord. "*That which is born of the flesh is flesh*" (John 3:6); "*Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God*" (John 3:3).

In broad terms the Anglicans practice paedobaptism in order to **make** the infant a child of God, whilst the Presbyterians sprinkle the infant of a believer because that infant **is** a child of God; both are equally erroneous.

NONCONFORMISTS / DISSENTERS

The word Nonconformist was first used following the Restoration in 1660 and the Act of Uniformity (1662), being used to describe Dissenters places of worship. Nonconformists and Dissenters are basically the same; they are those who would not conform to the teaching and practice of the state church and who dissented from it. Nonconformity is a very lovely and meaningful word which sadly, has almost dropped out of the professing church's vocabulary, but could well be reinstated, for in this day of ecumenism it so rightly describes a number of God's faithful people.

EVANGELICAL

'Evangelical' means the fundamental teaching and practice of Holy Scripture. It is a word which tragically has lost its true meaning, but because of this, it should never be dropped on account of its present

distortion, and certainly not replaced by such a term as 'Reformed'. There are many who could be classed as evangelistic in as much as they are enthusiastic evangelists, but their sole concern is to present an oversimplified gospel, which lacks much essential doctrinal content. Such cannot be rightly termed evangelical, for they have not obeyed the charge given by the Great Head of the Church to preach **all** the gospel, baptizing everyone who professed faith.

A true evangelical will rigidly adhere to the teaching of Holy Scripture and could never stand before an altar or go to a font with an infant, neither be seen in any form of distinguishing garb. Such is a contradiction of the fundamental teaching and practice of the Scriptures, which the term correctly understood, implies. Used in its right sense, Evangelical is the purest designation in Christendom.

CATHOLIC

Today this term is loosely used of Romanists and whilst they might like the term, it certainly does not correctly identify them. The word simply means 'universal' or 'pertaining to the whole of Church of Christ on earth'. By this is meant, not professing Christendom at large, but rather all those truly redeemed by Christ and born again of His Holy Spirit. This company alone form the Catholic Church and such are called of God from every nation (cf Revelation 7:9), thus indicating universality - **catholicity**.

PRIEST

A term in common use today denoting one who officiates in religious rites and used particularly of a clergyman; that is, one who is of a lower order than a bishop in certain sections of Christendom.

In Old Testament times there was a distinction made between the priesthood and the common people, but in the age of the New Covenant,

that order is forever abolished. All true believers are priests unto God (cf 1 Peter 2:5,9; Revelation 1:6). The New Testament clearly sets out that there are roles in the church for this age, Elders, Deacons, Pastors and Teachers, but certainly not a special order of priests set over a body of believers or a parish.

REVEREND

'Reverend' means 'worthy of reverence'. It is a word found once only in the Word of God and it pertains to Deity alone, "*Holy and reverend is His name*" (Psalm 111:9). It is an appellation never to be assumed by mortal man.

This is a title carried over from Romanism by the state church, accepted by the Presbyterians and later by many Nonconformists. Today the title is used without embarrassment by those who are known as Reformed and Evangelical. Knowing what the term 'Reformed' really means, perhaps we should not be too surprised, but for a true evangelical, one who claims to stand for all the teaching and practice of Holy Scripture, to take to himself such a title is to be deplored.

CHURCH

The word 'church' in its Greek form is Ecclesia; it appears some eighty times in the New Testament, and its definition is a gathered community, an assembly, or a congregation of believers. Never is it used of a building in Scripture for to do so destroys its sacred and God given meaning.

Invariably today this word is applied to a building which is used for religious worship, particularly with the Anglican community, but more recently the term 'church' has been used increasingly to denote the buildings of once dissenting denominations.

CHAPEL

The word 'Chapel' denotes a place of worship; it can be a building where false worship is conducted, or the true worship of God, but it certainly denotes a building and **not** the people who meet in it. It is mentioned only once in Scripture (cf Amos 7:13). Its Hebrew meaning is 'a sanctuary', 'a consecrated place', 'a place sanctified or set apart'. In general terms in Britain, a chapel is as defined in the English Dictionary, 'a Nonconformist place of worship'. What could be a more fitting term for a building used by a company of evangelical believers?

To expand upon and to fully define these many terms and designations would take a very large volume. However in considering these definitions, let us "*Hold fast the form of sound words*" (2 Timothy 1:13).

W. H. Molland.

"Men are born of God in regeneration and not of the Church. They have no ancestry in regeneration, much less are they the offspring of an organic ancestry. Only God can make a new creature; and the effort to trace Christian history from regenerate man to regenerate man implies that man can impart some power to keep up a succession of individual Christians. The men who composed the true Churches at Antioch and Rome were born from above, making the gospel and not the Church the agency by which men are begotten of God. Those organic bodies of men who were drawn together into Reformed Churches, were moved by mixed motives, and in attempting a new order of things, few of them came up to the New Testament standard. The life of all gospel Churches must centre in the truth which has come down unscathed from Jesus Christ; we must find it here or nowhere, and there can be no course which applies the true test of Church life but this".

Thomas Armitage.

CREATION

THE MANNER AND ORDER OF CREATION

"It was done at once by the mighty power of God, by His all-commanding will and word, *"He spake and it was done, He commanded and it stood fast"* (Psalm 33:9). He gave the word and every creature started into being in a moment; for though God took six days for the creation of the world and all things in it, to make His works the more observable, and that they might be distinctly considered, and gradually become the object of contemplation and wonder; yet the work of every day, and every particular work in each day were done in a moment, without any motion and change, without any labour and fatigue, only by a word speaking, by an almighty fiat; let it be done and immediately it was done".

John Gill D.D.

MIRACULOUS WORKING

"Taking the narrative of Genesis as it stands, I do not see what difficulty it presents to those who remember that it avowedly treats of almighty power working miraculously. *"My thoughts are not your thoughts,*

neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8,9). What madness then, if we believe this, to measure the ways of God by any standard supplied by our own most imperfect, as well as limited knowledge. How can things which are beyond the scope of human experience be tested by human experience The Scripture teaches us that we are to receive its statements, not on the ground of their probability, not on the ground of their seeming wise or reasonable to our natural thoughts, not on the ground of their being sustained by inferences drawn from real or apparent facts; we receive the Scripture because we confide in the faithfulness and truth of Him from whom it cometh. If experience or facts ascertainable by human power were the criterion, who would not say that it was impossible that a fish could swallow a man, or that a man could continue to exist when thus doubly entombed in the mighty deep? But when I know that God has revealed it as an act of His power **working miraculously**, what difficulty can I have in believing? Are not all things possible with God? And has He not told me that at present I am to walk, not by sight, but by faith?"

B. W. Newton M.A.(Oxon)

INSIDIOUS SUPPOSITIONS

The overthrowing of the account of creation as given by God Himself in His Word, has long been a major attack of the Devil. In as far as the world in general is concerned it has been done through "*science falsely so called*" (1 Timothy 6:20), the main contributory factors being the brain washing in education by the theory of evolution, and geological research. Whilst many in the church would not accept full-blooded evolutionism, they have sought to accommodate this devil-inspired hypothesis by the invention of two theories and large numbers who

would claim to be evangelical adhere to one or other of these suppositions.

One is known as '**The Gap Theory**'. By this it is claimed that Genesis 1:1 was an initial creation, which for some reason underwent a cataclysmic change as the result of a Divine judgment, this catastrophe being explained by Genesis 1:2. Then after an undefined period of time, God commenced to reform the earth as we see it now and as is set out in Genesis 1:3 onward. The initial creation accounts for fossil remains and the 'Gap' accommodates the millions of years claimed by the geologists. This is a line of teaching set out by George H. Pember in 1876 (Earth's Earliest Ages), Arthur C. Custance, a Canadian scientist (Without Form and Void) 1970, and of course forcefully put over by C. I. Scofield in the footnotes of the Scofield Bible.

The second view is that of creation being '**Revealed**' in six days. The claim here is that when God revealed His creation to Moses for its inclusion in the Holy Scriptures, it was done by six instalments over a period of six literal days, but that creation itself was a **process** which took place over an indefinite period of time and not to be taken as six **acts** which were accomplished in six 24-hour days. This theory came into greater prominence through the writings of P. J. Wiseman (Creation Revealed in Six Days) 1948. As in '**The Gap**' theory so in this, the door is open wide to evolutionists and all the other errors which attend such teaching. Both of these viewpoints must be regarded as the pernicious invention of men.

In view of these insidious and dangerous teachings which completely undermine the clear wording of the Holy Spirit in inspiration, attention is drawn to a booklet by Dr J. W. Milner, entitled '**Creation in Six Days**' listed among our free publications and obtainable from the Bookroom Secretary.

W. H. Molland

EDITORIAL

Those who strictly follow a denomination or the teaching of some great theologian, seldom get beyond that which is taught and practised by them. Alas, there are many who are so entangled in their particular denomination, that anything outside of that circle is at best second rate Christianity and in many respects regarded as suspect.

History bears testimony to the fact that when men of great spiritual ability have arisen from the ranks of God's people, invariably a denomination has been formed and a pattern laid down to be adhered to by all those who have been influenced. Tragically however as the generations pass, deterioration is evident, for all denominations and spiritual movements appear at their peak at the time of their formation. As the years pass, so is there decline, and the adherents tend to become traditionalists to a recognised system, rather than being persuaded by the truth of Scripture.

There can be a number of contributory factors for this, but in the main denominationalism centres around men; the founders of that particular section of the professing church. Future generations go back to their founder or founders and to their belief and practice, which may or may not have been set out in a Creed or Confession of Faith. In this there is a great danger, for it can breed traditionalism. No man, however godly or thoroughly versed in the Word of God, is infallible and that same Word of God says "*Cease ye from man*" (Isaiah 2:22).

Those who are tied in denominational tradition rarely come to the Scriptures with an open mind and would find it almost impossible to quit a pre-conceived sectarian notion even if they were given further light from the Scriptures. This causes stagnation and retards spiritual progress.

Independent and autonomous churches is the pattern set out in the New Testament; such companies of believers may broadly set out their belief and practice as a basis of membership, and this is necessary, but if in a healthy spiritual state, they will under the Holy Spirit's guidance be diligent in the study of God's Word and constantly reforming as they are led into further truth.

If a local independent church follows a traditional line and disregards the teaching of Scripture, then they go down alone; but when a denomination declines, all associated churches are affected; consequently the breakdown is nationwide and the damage to the cause of Christ increased a thousand fold.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Annual Bible Convention

Saturday 6 August 1994 D.V.
Afternoon 3.30 p.m. Tea 5.00 p.m. Evening 6.00 p.m.

Speaker: Mr A. T. McNabb (Dudley)

Visiting Preachers D.V.

Lord's Day	7 August 1994	Mr A.T.McNabb	Dudley
	18 September 1994	Dr S.S.Short	Weston-Super-
Mare	2 October 1994	Mr J.R.Hooper	Saltash
	16 October 1994	Mr G.Thrussell	Truro
Thursday	14 July 1994	Mr F.Stanbury	Bow
	11 August 1994	Mr F.Stanbury	Bow
	8 September 1994	Mr F. Stanbury	Bow