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**North Road Chapel (Evangelical)
BIDEFORD**

THE LAW OF GOD

The Sixth Commandment

"Thou shalt not kill" (Exodus 20:13).

"Human life is the most precious thing and God has set this commandment as a force about it to preserve it" (Thomas Watson).

Illicit killing and capital punishment are inseparable in Holy Scripture, therefore they must be considered jointly. God Himself commanded the death penalty for murder eight to nine hundred years before the commandments were given at Sinai. Immediately after the flood, the Almighty said to Noah, *"Surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made He man"* (Genesis 9:5,6). That statute given to Noah has never been rescinded; it was later incorporated in the judicial law of Moses where it categorically states that the death penalty is the **only** punishment for murder. There is no other form of just restitution. *"Moreover ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer, which is guilty of death: but he shall be surely put to death. So ye shall not pollute the land wherein ye are: for blood it defileth the land: and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it"* (Numbers 35:31 & 33).

In the sight of Almighty God, to intentionally shed human blood defiles and pollutes the land; the reason being that man was made in the image of God, therefore there is a sanctity attached to human life. Man is not advanced animal as is propounded by the Devil-invented theory of

evolution. The God of heaven, **man's Creator**, has explicitly said that the defilement of the land caused by the deliberate shedding of human blood, can only be removed by the person guilty of the murder being put to death. The murderer's blood alone can remove the pollution.

The first man ever to be born, Cain, murdered his brother in Eden. Immediately the Lord appeared and said, *"What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground"* (Genesis 4:10). The very earth was defiled and it **cried** unto God because the blood of one who had been made in the image of God had been deliberately shed. There had been a violation of God's Law and instantly did He say to Cain, *"Thou art cursed"* (Genesis 4:11). There was no answer and no mercy.

It may well be asked, Why was Cain not put to death? Eden was a unique situation, it was the cradle of the human race. From the loins of these first sons and daughters of Adam and Eve, early civilization would issue. Cain was allowed to live, but as a murderer he was cursed of God; henceforth he would exist, but only as a fugitive. His own words were, *"Behold, Thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from Thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me"* (Genesis 4:14).

The men and women of early civilization lived to very great ages and Cain was to live among them, yet having to flee from place to place as a vagabond, as anyone who found him would kill him, because he was a murderer. Every man and woman living at that time **knew** that he should not be alive, but where did this knowledge come from? The sixth commandment had not been written upon the tablets of stone at this point in history, neither had this statute been communicated to Noah, for he was not yet born.

These commandments as contained in the Moral Law of God are **creation institutions**. The monogamy of marriage, the sacredness of the sabbath and the sanctity of human life were **known** from the beginning; this is why Cain knew that every one who found him, would slay him. He was aware that as a murderer, he had no right to live. Nevertheless, God in His sovereignty permitted this man to continue to live, but his life was a terrible existence. *"The Lord said unto him, Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the Lord set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him"* (Genesis 4:15). Cain was a man cursed of God and branded as a murderer; a fugitive carrying a lifelong sentence, never executed, with the ground around him crying out for vengeance. This was a unique situation which God, being sovereign and supreme, ruled in the infancy of the human race, but it most certainly is not His ruling for all time, as can be traced throughout Scripture. Where there has been the deliberate killing of another, the murderer is to be put to death.

It may be argued that this statute pertained to the Jewish judicial system and that it is no longer applicable; this is a fallacy. This Divine legislation was laid down before the Jewish nation was brought into existence. It was established in Eden, clearly spelt out to Noah and then much later incorporated into the Jewish law. More importantly we must note that murder forms part of the Decalogue, the Moral Law of God; precepts which God made known to Adam in the beginning. These creation institutions are for the whole of the human race, nor were they of temporary duration, but they are for all generations. It is not correct to say that the Decalogue relates only to the Old Covenant; it spans both Old and New Testaments, and is a binding mandate to the end of time.

The New Testament is consistent with the Old Testament. *"Rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the*

same; for he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil" (Romans 13:3,4). The sword is the emblem of death and the authorities by divine ordination have that sword placed in their hand and they are not to bear that sword in vain. The responsibility of putting to death those who are guilty of murder must not be overlooked. God does not raise up governmental powers, giving them such a solemn charge, then for His mandate to be ignored.

In his defence before Festus, the apostle Paul stated, *"If I be an offender, or have committed anything worthy of death, I refuse not to die"* (Acts 25:11). Paul readily conceded that if he had done anything demanding capital punishment, then the just punishment should take effect. In no way did the apostle object to the God-ordained judgment of the death penalty.

The sixth commandment is foolishly quoted by some in support of the abolition of capital punishment.; such do err, not knowing the Scriptures. The section of the Decalogue which states *"Thou shalt not kill"* does **not** apply to judicial killing, required of God for those who commit murder. (To what degree Christians are to be involved in this is questionable because this is a charge to human authorities, **not** to the Church). Exodus 20:13 refers to individual murder which comes under the Divine curse and must be put to death judicially by **the authorities**. This sentence when carried out is not murder, it is the justice required by God. To fail in this means the land over which they rule is defiled and the favour of God forfeited, with the consequent breakdown of law and order, resulting in the destruction of society. Are we not witnessing the effects of man's refusal to obey God's commands in Britain today?

W.H.Molland

ALCOHOL AND THE CHRISTIAN

Because of the increasing scourge of alcohol, there is an urgent need for Christians to face the situation squarely, issuing warnings and giving Biblical guidelines. This article is an abridged version of two articles on the subject of alcohol which appeared in 'The Link' several years ago. Acknowledgement is given to the Salvation Army and 'Alcohol Concern' for kindly providing valuable information and statistics at that time. It will be appreciated that the facts stated then are now outdated, but it would be no exaggeration to say that the situation from that period to now has seen further deterioration.

During the last century and into the early part of the twentieth, temperance was a very important subject with many non-Conformist bodies, particularly the Methodists and Salvation Army. One has only to read such works as "In Darkest England and the Way Out" by William Booth and "Down in Water Street" by Samuel Hadley, to discover the awful sin and frightful misery caused by drink. Evangeline Booth, the daughter of the founder of the Salvation Army said, "Intoxicating liquor: it drained more blood, hung more crepe, sold more homes, snapped more wedding rings, defiled more innocents, blinded more eyes, twisted more limbs, dethroned more reasons, wrecked more manhood, dishonoured more womanhood, broke more hearts, drove more to suicide than any other scourge that ever swept across this world".

Would any Christian say that these and many other men and women were wrong or ill advised in their stand for total abstinence? Many will accept that a century or more ago, when the Salvation Army was established, alcohol was a serious problem in Britain, but say that today things are different and a rigid position with regard to intoxicating liquor is

irrelevant. Those who think this way are either ignorant of the facts or not prepared to face them.

The problem of alcohol was described in a report by the Royal College of Psychiatrists in Britain as "An endemic disorder of frightening magnitude". In the United Kingdom, in the past twenty years, the consumption of beer has increased by 50%, spirits 300% and wine nearly 400%. It is estimated that 90% of the population in the United Kingdom take alcohol in varying degrees. Figures produced in 1977 revealed that Britain spent £450,000,000 more on alcoholic drink, tobacco and gambling than the total expenditure on bread, cereals, meat, bacon, sugar, preserves, confectionery and dairy products. There is nothing to indicate that this trend has changed in the last ten years.

The Helping Hand Organization, in a report on Alcoholism and Crime, states "About half the population of Britain's prisons is there because of drink".

"In 1983 approximately 45% of offences of wounding or assault were committed by people, thought by their victims to have been drinking" (Hansard 13 January 1986, Col 457).

"Drinking plays a part in up to 50% of murders" (Journal of Psychiatry Vol 128 - 1976).

"In 1984, 75% of car passengers killed or injured in drink-drive accidents, travelled in a car driven by a drunken driver" (Road Accidents in Great Britain 1984, Dept of Transport 1985).

"A survey showed that 92% of women have a drink from time to time, with the vast majority drinking moderately" (Women and Drinking - An enquiry carried out on behalf of the DHSS - 1985). Attitudes to women

drinking have changed over the years. It is no longer socially unacceptable for a woman to be seen drinking in a bar or public house; buying alcohol in an off-licence or supermarket is for many a part of daily life; drink in the home is now looked upon as essential to the 'good life'. The result of home drinking by both parents, plus the glamorizing of intoxicating liquor on television, has had the tragic effect of children being contaminated with this sore evil from birth; in fact, many before birth as a result of women drinking while they are pregnant; statistics for this are sad in the extreme.

Children become familiar with intoxicating liquor at an early age, indeed most are brought up with it, and by the time they are in their teens, drinking is a regular part of life for them. Whilst warnings have been given to young people concerning the evil and dangers of drugs (and parents are terrified lest their children should become ensnared by these), yet this most potent and potentially addictive drug of alcohol they encourage in the very home into which their children are born. No parent would be so foolish as to encourage an intake of heroin, provided it was in **moderation**, yet this is the very attitude to intoxicating liquor. Almost all children say that their parents or relatives gave them their first drink.

"Over 60% of 15-16 year olds say their parents or relatives gave them their first taste of alcohol" (Teenagers and Alcohol HMSO 1972).

"Only 2% of 15-16 year olds in a Scottish survey reported never having tasted alcohol" (Alcohol Drugs and School Leavers - Tavistock Publications 1985).

According to a 1986 survey, New Society report, "Only 16% of teenagers rate alcohol as a dangerous drug" ('The Thatcher Generation' in New Society, 21 February 1986).

An eminent psychiatrist who is a world authority on alcohol and drug addiction has said that "if alcohol were a newly developed substance today, the Committee on Safety of Medicines would almost certainly not allow it to be administered to human beings!" Whilst statistics can be boring and leave people cold, surely Christians called upon by God to witness by word and life, dare not shut their eyes to this appalling state of affairs which is blighting the society in which we live.

The word 'wine' in the Scriptures is used in a general way; it is an overall term for a beverage, intoxicating or otherwise. In the original language of the Old and New Testaments there are at least eleven different words used, ranging from the pure juice of the grape, 'Enab', to fermented, intoxicating wine, 'Yayin'. In the New Testament the most common word used is 'Oinos' which is a general or overall term. In many instances in the Word of God where 'Yayin' (fermented wine) is drunk, sore evils are attributed to it; inflamed passions (Isaiah 5:11); perverted judgment (Proverbs 31:5, Isaiah 28:7); indecent exposure (Habakkuk 2:15,16); drunkenness with accompanying lewdness (Genesis 9:21).

There are Christians who say that total abstinence from intoxicating liquor can never be substantiated from the Scriptures, but is this so? Not always is there a clear-cut 'do' or 'don't' in the Word of God; nevertheless definite **principles** are set out. One of the most important to a believer is that of **example**, "*For none of us liveth to himself*" (Romans 14:7). Although we may not be aware of it, our lives do influence others, be it for good or ill.

Whilst many may take alcohol in moderation claiming that they can control themselves, many cannot. None when they first started to take strong drink ever thought they would end up an alcoholic, but it has been so for countless thousands. Britain today has an untold number of young people living in squalor and crime; many are in prisons, hostels and

psychiatric institutions, and not one of them ever intended to be there, but why? How did it come about? **Drink!** Woe unto that man or woman who gave that young person their first drink. The Word of God says it were better that a millstone were hanged around his neck and he be drowned in the depth of the sea than cause a little one to offend (cf Matthew 18:6). Causing another to offend is a most serious matter. On these verses in Matthew 18:1-10, John Calvin said, "If any man through our fault stumbles, or is drawn aside from the right course, or retarded in it, we are said to offend him". The comments of Albert Barnes in his notes on the New Testament are most pertinent. "Whoso shall offend, that is cause to fall or to sin, or who should place any thing in their way to hinder their piety or happiness to injure or cause to sin the feeblest Christian, will be regarded as a most serious offence, which will be punished accordingly. Woe to that man by whom the offence cometh. He who draws others into sin is awfully guilty. No man can be more guilty and yet, in all ages there have been multitudes, who by arts, allurements and persuasion, have endeavoured to seduce Christians and to lead them into sin". John Gill on 'offences' speaks of them as "things which cause others to stumble, tempting them to that which is often attended with bad consequences". Could any words be more apposite to the subject of alcohol? What a challenge to the **example** we set!

Let none feel confident in their ability to control alcohol, for it is '**a demon**'. The strongest of men have been overpowered by it. Could a more faithful man be found than Noah? What a testimony he bore over a tremendous span of time! What faith! What exploits for God! Yet alcohol got the better of him and the latter part of his life was ruined. It is a fact of today's society that it is not only weak-willed or inadequate people who are overcome by drink; with top-ranking business executives there is also a high incidence of alcoholism.

To partake of liquor is to play with fire, a thing which Christians **should not do**. Countless numbers of believers have besmirched their testimony, many making absolute shipwreck of their lives through alcohol, and by so doing have been stumbling blocks to many. *"It is good neither to eat flesh nor drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak"* (Romans 14:21). *"Take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours becomes a stumbling block in them that are weak"* (1 Corinthians 8:9). Should not Christians have in mind the tremendous pressures upon the young today? Also of those alcoholics who have in mercy been delivered from their craving, yet for them, just one drink could throw them back again into the abyss of misery. If the people of God are not to be ensamples, then who are? *"We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak and not to please ourselves"* (Romans 15:1).

There are those who will readily quote the apostle Paul who suggested that Timothy take a little wine for his stomach's sake, but let such remember that in all probability other remedies for such a disorder were not known. The Bible speaks of *"the fruit of the vine"* as well as *"strong drink"*, the latter is usually associated with warning and judgment. Of John the Baptist it is said, *"He shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink"* (Luke 1:15). And of this man who was a **total abstainer**, Christ said, *"Among those that are born of woman there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist"* (Luke 7:28).

Alcohol is **not** a stimulant which many think it to be, rather does it upset the whole metabolism of the body and act upon the brain by depressing and slowing down the brain cells. The cells first affected are those dealing with judgment, thought inhibition and controlling behaviour. It can give false courage, yet reducing the ability to protect from danger, removing restraints which can cause people to act in a way in which they would normally be ashamed, even to anti-social or criminal behaviour.

Was not this the case with Noah? (cf Genesis 9:20-23) and Lot (cf Genesis 19:33-36). Dare a Christian run such a risk? Further still, why does a Christian need alcohol? What is the point? He hasn't got to take the wretched stuff; the notion that it will cheer a person up is false, for as has already been stated, alcohol is a depressant; the so-called cheer which it brings is short lived. Surely a man or woman of true faith, who has a vital relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, and is an heir of heaven, doesn't need any artificial stimulant to joy and cheer.

In the journey through life we all have burdens and sorrows, pressures and anxieties, but even so no Christian is justified in doping his brain with alcohol for an hour or two in order to forget them; rather is he to bring his troubles to his wise, loving and all powerful heavenly Father, for only in Him will he find true solace and comfort.

There are those who will insist that a drink is absolutely essential in the business world - it is convivial and sets the right atmosphere for goodwill - it is a convention which must be adhered to. No business or professional man worth his salt needs convention of this nature in order to be successful. If his ability and personality is so inadequate that he must have a drink to prop him up and give confidence, then he might as well quit his calling. During the course of his business life, the writer has had to attend many business functions, meeting with high business executives from this and other countries, and on such occasions drink has flowed freely, but never has he been embarrassed, or his business inhibited; neither has one's abstention been viewed other than with respect.

In the history of true Holy Spirit revivals, when God has moved in mighty power amongst His people, and souls in their hundreds have been born from above to the extent that whole areas have been completely changed, why is it that public houses and liquor shops have been the first to close down? What has moved publicans who, having been so wrought upon

by the Spirit of God that, having cried to Him for mercy and been assured of the forgiveness of their sins, have rolled their barrels out into the streets and publicly poured the liquor down the drains? Why have drunkards, rescued from the gutters of sin through the grace and mercy of God, never again touched a drop of drink? Let tippling Christians explain this?

It will be seen that the word 'wine' in the Bible is certainly not to be taken in an absolute sense as meaning alcoholic drink, for this is not so; we refer to the Scripture so often cited by the Christian to justify his position of non-abstinence by the marriage at Cana of Galilee. On this occasion, wine had been liberally consumed until supplies ran out. At this point Christ works His first miracle which was the turning into wine **oinos**, (the general term) of six waterpots filled to the brim with water. These were not the earthenware containers used to draw water by the water carriers; rather were they the vessels kept by the door, together with a sizeable basin, and they held large quantities of water for the washing of feet. Each of these water pots held two to three firkins (cf John 2:6); a firkin was approximately nine gallons. Assuming the average capacity of these vessels to be two and a half firkins, then the content of each one was twenty-two and a half gallons; there were six of them, totalling one hundred and thirty-five gallons of wine; a supply liberally served to the guests.

To suggest that the holy Son of God brought into being a supply of intoxicating liquor of such proportions, to be freely available to all who were at the wedding, **after** existing supplies had been exhausted, is beyond the bounds of sanctified reason, for it would have turned the celebrations which form part of the Divine institution of marriage into a drunken orgy. To bring this incident forward in support of intoxicating liquor is to besmirch the name of the Mediator. It is impossible to think of Him deliberately creating anything which would harm, or would in any way encourage drunkenness. Does not John 2:11 state that this first

miracle of Jesus was performed in order to "*manifest His glory*". Let it be asked, What glory would have accrued to Christ in producing well over one hundred gallons of alcohol for men and women to partake of it at will? The thought borders on blasphemy. That intoxicating liquor finds a place at Christian weddings and family celebrations cannot be substantiated by reference to John 2.

Christians who shut their eyes to the evils of drink, who provide it in their homes and who drink socially, are playing with fire as well as setting a deplorable **example** to the family and others.

W.H.Molland

A Cry from the Heart

by Mr J Seaton, Minister, Reformed Baptist Church, Inverness

A letter in the November edition of the Monthly Record of the Free Church of Scotland should not go unheard or unnoticed. It asks that an article might be written in the Record "asking that at the Saturday evening prayer meeting throughout the Church, the families cursed with alcoholism should be specially prayed for, that the drunkards themselves will seek the Lord and be saved from this plague". The curse of drink is one which we have mentioned often enough on the pages of 'The Wicket Gate' and at this time would lend our hearty support and sympathy to the lady who wrote the above words. It is high time that the churches in Scotland, and in the Highlands especially, stopped their pussy-footing around with regards to the poison of drink. The above letter concludes: "An entire generation is in danger, and the Church does not seem to care". May we suggest that there is only one real way in which the Church can show that it **does** care, and that is the advocating and practising of total

abstinence; beginning with the pulpit, through the church officers, and by every professed Christian who has Christ in their heart. We know that the old cry goes up, "But you can't really **prove** that position from the Bible!" One thing that can be proved is that professing Christians are to "*abstain from every appearance of evil*", and if there is one evil that is rampant in our day, it is the evil of drunkenness. We are under the injunction not to cause those who are weaker to stumble; if any one boasts that they themselves can be 'moderate' in drink, let them be moderate to the point of doing without it, rather than providing a lead for those who cannot be moderate. The drink industry has proved the power of advertising; that's why it spends millions on television commercials and such like. There is no better 'commercial' for the drink industry than when those who ought to be "*examples to the flock*", raise their glasses high and potentially invite the young and the weak to follow suit. May we all take up the call for prayer concerning the plague that grows all around us.

"Tobacco, heroin, glue-sniffing; you don't hear people say 'We want to promote the idea of moderate addiction'. Of course not; we all know that you cannot play around with heroin or solvents. The only answer is to stay away from them and most people do. However the drug, **alcohol**, is responsible for more heartache and horror than all the other drugs put together. The road to alcoholism and chronic drink problems is strewn with the carnage of broken human beings. Each father or mother or son or daughter all followed the signpost '**Moderation**'.

(The Band of Hope News, Spring 1986)

Recollections of Spiritual Work in the County of Devon in Generations Past (cont'd)

"We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what work thou didst in their days, in the times of old" (Psalm 44:1).

For some years my father continued to go to church at Doddiscombeleigh, where he had sung so often in the choir. He was now greatly helped by the Clergyman who knew what it was to be born again, and rejoiced that father had definitely been converted. The custom of this godly minister, the Rev. James Buckingham, was to take his Bible, after going through the formal church service, and preach the gospel to the people, and one of his favourite subjects was the 'Second Coming' of our Lord. Thus my father was greatly helped, and would often search the Scriptures and discuss doctrines with the minister.

Infant Baptism Disputed

During this period, the Lord graciously gave my parents other children, a son, a daughter and I myself were in due time added to the family. My eldest brother was christened, but my father began to see the fallacy and error of infant regeneration and refused to have my sister or myself christened. The clergyman used to have constant arguments with my father over the subject, lent him books, and tried his hardest to persuade him to allow it. He said the Jews circumcised their children to show that they were Jews, so the church christened their children to show that they were Christians. Father asked, "Could a Jew circumcise his child before it was born?" "Certainly not" said the minister. "Then we have no right to baptize people until they are born again spiritually". "Again, did a Jewish child become a Jew by being circumcised, or was circumcision only a token that he already was a Jew?" The minister had to acknowledge that a Jew was such because of his birth, so in like manner my father answered that a person only becomes a Christian by the new

birth of the Holy Spirit. Baptism is only an outward token and confession of the fact. So the dispute died down for some time.

The Parting of the Ways

When I was about ten months old I was taken with a serious illness, so severe that the doctor gave no hopes of my recovery. This dear clergyman became very concerned about me, because I had not been christened. He begged father to allow him to christen me, offering to go and get the consent of the parson of our parish of Bridford to be allowed to do so. After long persistence my father said quite definitely, "I refuse to allow it; if you do it, it will be entirely against my wish". And so against my father's wish, and without his permission he persisted in his course. He came into my bedroom, christened me without godfather or godmother, and seeing my little sister also in the room, he caught her up and christened her too.

When father found out what had happened, he called upon him and told him that since he had acted as he had, and his conscience would allow him to do what he knew to be contrary to God's Word, that their friendship which they had enjoyed so long would have to be restricted, and from that time he would withdraw from the church altogether.

A Change of Wagoner

Just at this time another link was added to the chain of events that shows very clearly that *"He leads the blind by a way they know not"* and that it is not *"in man to direct his steps"*. The old wagoner who had been with father ever since he commenced, gave notice to leave. He said he did not have any reason for leaving, he only thought he would like a change. When the furniture was on the wagon for removal however, he did confess, "Upon my word, if the furniture was back in the cottage, I would not leave it after all". Another man living at Cheriton Bishop, hearing that father wanted a wagoner, applied for the situation, but father did not

take to him at all. He had been used to a fine-looking, six-foot champion wrestler; this one was a short, rather morose kind of man. So father told him he did not think he would suit, and did all he could to put him off. But the man was obstinate, and left saying, "I shall come along on Monday morning and you can give me a trial".

On the Sunday evening father told his nephew, who lived with him at the time, to get up early next morning and ride over to tell the man not to come as he was sure he would be of no use to him. At 6 a.m. he was off, but had hardly gone half way before the determined new wagoner met him on the road, with his furniture and family, and together they proceeded to the mill to report for duty. So in spite of father's disappointment at losing his old wagoner, and his judgment as to the unsuitability of this one, an unseen power seemed quietly to take away the one and put the other in his place.

But who does this new wagoner prove to be? His wife turns out to be the daughter of William Puddicombe, who gave the preachers a cup of tea "in the name of a disciple", and it was the offspring of this branch of the family from which hundreds have been brought to the Lord. The wagoner not only proved to be most capable in his work, but was used much in the Lord's service. He lived with father until he retired, and for ten years afterwards with the person to whom he let the mill. When he got past work, father built him a cottage, where he ended his days in peace.

Education - a Modern Idea

When father first came into these parts, he found there was very little education for the children this side of Exeter. Now education was a strong point with him. In the year 1864, he built a small School House here at Bridford Mills, and engaged the daughter of the headmaster of the Tiverton Factory School to come and live with us as governess, and to

teach us in the School House, together with any other children who liked to come. She was allowed to charge 2d. per week each , extra to her salary as governess to us. In a few weeks she had nearly eighty children, and very soon the school outgrew itself.

Father began to look around for something better, and knowing that the old parish pound in Bridford Village, with its four square walls to enfold stray cattle, had been lying derelict for years, he persuaded the Parish Council to hand it over to him. On this site he built a large school building. He engaged a very capable master, and again this new school was very soon crowded. Farmer's sons, riding on donkeys and ponies and many others walking three or four miles each way, were solid proof of the use and value set upon this school. This continued until the Education Act of 1870, and the gradual building of Board Schools, and when they began planning here, my father tried very hard to get them to do what the Government is doing today, namely, leave the small village schools for the little ones, and build a large school in the centre of the three parishes, draft the older children into it, and then a first-class master could be installed and higher education be achieved. One of the members of the Board once truly remarked concerning father, "He is living fifty years ahead of our time".

Gospel Meetings Commenced

At the time when my father had opened the first little school house, having severed himself from the church, and having nowhere near home to go on Sunday evenings, he used to gather the family and the wagoner's family together, and read one of Dr Hawker's Bible Portions and a prayer to them. One day my mother said "William, I think that if you were to have these readings in the School House, there are others around who would like to come". He at once consented to do this and told the school children to tell their parents that there would be a little Gospel service on

the following Sunday evening at 6.30 p.m. and it would be held in the school room.

At the time appointed he took his Dr Hawker's portion with him, expecting to meet a dozen or perhaps twenty people. Imagine his surprise to find the school room full and a crowd outside unable to get in. This gave him one of the shocks of his life, but also showed him how hungry the people were for the 'Bread of Life'. He managed to get through some sort of a service, and as the crowd continued to come week after week, he soon put aside his printed portions and took his Bible and began to preach the gospel. The Holy Spirit blessed the work of grace and souls were saved. He was further led to seek fellowship and help from his Baptist friends who met at Christow, and where he had first heard the gospel. In this chapel there had been a steady revival of blessing. Many of the prominent people of Bridford had been converted, including the farmer at the barton, my father at the mill, the blacksmith, the tailor, the baker and several others, so that the parson was stripped of the cream of his congregation, and was greatly concerned because they were causing a great stir in the neighbourhood by their being publicly baptized.

Believer's Baptism

It was not long before my father saw the necessity, as a Christian and especially as a preacher of the gospel, for public testimony in believer's baptism. His desire was for one to be arranged here in the midst of his work and the mill leat was selected as suitable for the baptizing. At this first baptism when father, the school mistress and others were to be baptized, the officiating brother arrived on the Sunday morning and found my father in bed very poorly. He decided that for him to be baptized was out of the question, but father made it a matter of prayer. When the time came, he managed to get down and arranged for an armchair to be put by the side door leading to the orchard and the stream, so that he might see the proceedings. When the last one was leaving the

water, my father said to the brother that was standing by his side, "Give me your arm", and with his help and to the surprise and joy of all, he walked over and into the water and was baptized. He received no harm, but was filled with the spirit and joy of the Lord. There were scores of people lining the sides of the mill stream to see this novel sight, especially of a man like Surridge being baptized. Among them was a man who owned the Edge tool factory at Dunsford who said afterwards, "I came to laugh, but went home to cry and the next time I was baptized myself".

Thus the power of the Lord was present and from that day on, although we have baptized hundreds here, we have always had both the presence of the Lord and the crowds who watch and wonder, as one by one the Lord added such as were being saved.

Immersion or Sprinkling

Of course the clergyman was becoming very concerned at this remarkable movement in the parish, and tried every means in his power to persuade the people that this 'baptizing' was quite unnecessary as they had been baptized in their infancy. One day he took his great illustrated Bible and called on the tailor to show him from the Bible, that even if they did wish to be baptized as adults, they need not be immersed. "Look", he said, and showed him a picture of John baptizing the Lord by pouring water on his head. After a lot of talk and much arguing, the tailor's wife said, "Well, Sir, have you been baptized like that?" "Well, no" said he. "Then, Sir, you go and try it first and then come and let us know how it acts". The poor parson, seeing that his persuasion was of no more avail, got still more distressed. One Sunday morning, a little later, as he was preaching on the subject, he was moved to tears and cried out, "Whatever shall we do? Our children are not being christened or confirmed, but I have carefully studied the Scriptures and the more I do, so the more I feel convinced that these people are right in refusing".

To be continued.

Editorial

The day in which we live sees the world sinking into a morass of sin and iniquity such as have never been since the days of Noah; immorality, debauchery, violence, crime of every conceivable nature, marital infidelity, family break-ups, drugs and alcohol with their attendant evils. When we see these things coming to pass we are to know that the end is near. *"As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man the flood came, and destroyed them all"* (Luke 17:26,27). The storm clouds now gather fast, judgment looms on the horizon. The perilous times spoken of in Holy Writ are now so apparent that surely it must be the 'count down' of time, as the last great day approaches. Is the Church really aware of the gravity of the times? Are the true people of God eagerly awaiting His advent? Because of such evil days are they redeeming the time (cf Ephesians 5:16)? Alas, generally speaking, it is to be feared that they are like the ten virgins of whom it is written, *"They all slumbered and slept"* (Matthew 25:5) - the wise as well as the foolish. Have we not been called to the kingdom for such a time as **this** (cf Esther 4:14). Then what manner of persons ought we to be (cf 2 Peter 3:11).

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Annual Bible Convention

Saturday 3 August 1996 D.V.

Afternoon 3.30 p.m. Tea 5.00 p.m. Evening 6.00 p.m.

Speaker: Mr F.J.Harris (Cheltenham)

Lord's Day 4 August Mr F.J.Harris (Cheltenham)

Lord's Day 22 September Dr S.S.Short (Weston-Super-Mare)