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**North Road Chapel (Evangelical)
BIDEFORD**

THE LAW OF GOD

The Eighth Commandment

"Thou shalt not steal" (Exodus 20:15).

In examining this commandment it could be argued that these four words say it all and there is no need for further comment; the message is quite clear and straightforward, but is this really so? From a Biblical standpoint the subject is quite involved and let no Christians think that this section of God's Law has no application to them; it may well have and it is very searching.

There are many aspects to theft, but the instigator of them all is Satan. Scripture tells us that Judas Iscariot was "*a thief*" (John 12:6); behind his dishonesty lies the cause of all sin, "*Satan entered into him*" (John 13:27). We need ever to be aware of this Satanic influence in our consideration of the Law of God, for it is the Devil who is so frantically eager to see the Divine Mandate ignored and set at naught.

In this article we are to consider various types of theft, all of which constitute a breaking of the eighth commandment.

Theft

The degree of theft does not concern us in the exposition of this section of the Decalogue for a person may be a burglar, professional house-breaker, shop lifter or merely described as light fingered; whatever is involved, in the eyes of Almighty God it is **stealing**. The Law of God simply says "*Thou shalt not steal*"; the amount stolen is not relevant. There is no difference in principle between

petty pilfering or stealing the Crown jewels. To take anything from another, even for a child to take a pencil from a desk or a rubber from a class mate, is to steal.

Unjust Trading

The prophet Amos exposed those who made the ephah small (cf Amos 8:5). The ephah was a container used to measure out grain when it was sold, much like the old time 'peck'. Unscrupulous Jews manufactured under-sized measures and so in the sale of their corn, the purchaser got short measure. Hosea also speaks of these fraudulent Jewish merchants, stating, "*The balances of deceit are in his hand*" (Hosea 12:7). By false weights they were deceiving their customers and robbing them of that which was their due. This may not be common today, because the authorities check these practices, although such things do still happen. What is prevalent, and still comes under this heading of unjust trading, is exorbitant profiteering. The putting of excessive prices upon commodities, thus creating grossly inflated profit margins. Concerning this the Word of God says, "*If thou sell ought unto thy neighbour, or buyest ought of thy neighbour's hand, ye shall not oppress one another*" (Leviticus 25:14). To put an excessively high price upon an article, thus deceiving the customer into believing that it is worth more, is to defraud. "*Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour, neither rob him*" (Leviticus 19:13). How much of this goes on in the business world and in it some Christians are no better than worldlings. "*That no man go beyond and defraud his brother*" (1 Thessalonians 4:6). Trade fairly is the Divine Mandate given to business men.

Slick Financial Dealing

This can take many forms; what sharp practices are heard of today in money matters. Zaccheus was a man guilty of this; he was a chief among Roman financiers "*and he was rich*" (Luke 19:2), but from

confession which later came from his own lips, much of his wealth was ill gotten gains resulting from fraudulent practices. This is stealing as much as house breaking, which Zaccheus realized and when he was brought to salvation, he made restitution (cf Luke 19:8); he had an uneasy conscience regarding his practices for they had not been just and honest.

Deception by Incorrect Information

This can result in loans being granted which otherwise would have been withheld, or allowances given which were not lawfully due, resulting in a lower tax liability. Constantly we read of those who have made fraudulent claims upon the welfare state; all this is in breach of the eighth commandment.

Exploitation

The Bible has much teaching for employers; one aspect of this which is relevant to the eighth commandment is the fair and adequate remuneration of those in their employ. In the eyes of God it is a serious matter to underpay a person who is in their service. *"Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth"* (James 5:4). For employees to give of their time and skills and then not to receive due payment is exploiting them, which is fraudulent; it is registered by the Lord of sabaoth for it is a violation of His Law on the part of the employer.

Laxity

Just as the Word of God instructs employers, so does it exhort the employee to be obedient, diligent in his work, strict in applying himself to duty, never negligent or lax (cf Ephesians 6:5; Titus 2:9; 1 Peter 2:18). The worker is to realize that every minute he is at

work is his employer's time, for which he is being paid. Any waste of that time, lack of punctuality or low work output is defrauding and robbing his employer; yet another form of breaking this section of the Decalogue "*Thou shalt not steal*".

The Spiritual Aspect

Is there a spiritual aspect to the eighth commandment? "*Will a man rob God?*" (Malachi 3:8). Is this possible? Can **God** be robbed? Indeed He can, not only by unbelievers but also by His believing people. Let us recall the fourth commandment, "*Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy*". All the hours of the sabbath day belong to God, yet how many who profess His name give Him just a couple of hours in the morning and then use the remainder of that sanctified day as they please. That is stealing; robbing God!

In this spiritual aspect of the eighth section of the Decalogue, we must probe deeper by bringing in other Scriptures which have a direct bearing on the matter. "*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service*" (Romans 12:1); "*Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God*" (Romans 6:13). "*What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's*" (1 Corinthians 6:19,20). The child of God has been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ; he is not his own. It is therefore nothing other than reasonable that he now yields all his faculties to the One who bought him, whose property he now is. To give ourselves to anything other than unto righteousness (upright

Godly living) is sin. Why? because it is a breach of the eighth commandment. It is taking to ourselves that which belongs to God. It is stealing, robbing God of that which is His.

One further point upon this matter of spiritual stealing. This has particular reference to the minister. *"And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them. And they were scattered, because there is no shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered. My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them. Therefore, ye shepherds, hear the word of the Lord; As I live, saith the Lord God, surely because my flock became a prey, and my flock became meat to every beast of the field, because there was no shepherd, neither did my shepherds search for my flock, but the shepherds fed themselves, and fed not my flock; therefore, O ye shepherds, hear the word of the Lord; Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more; for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them"* (Ezekiel 34:1-10). A misuse of office; God entrusting **His** sheep to the care of a shepherd and that man, although provided for by God, is

negligent in his duties. Instead of labouring in the word and in doctrine (cf 1 Timothy 5:17), being diligent at his desk in study, treading out the corn of the word (cf 1 Timothy 5:18) to feed the flock, he is spending his time in other ways. In consequence God's sheep are not fed, the diseased have not been strengthened, many are now scattered, they are wandering through mountains, some have already become meat for the beasts of prey.

What a picture this is of the professing church today! Who is to blame? The ministers, the elders and those in leadership. "*I will require my flock at their hand*" saith the Almighty (Ezekiel 34:10). Men in a position of trust, to feed God's people, yet they have stinted and starved them; robbed them of spiritual food. Yes, but in so doing they have **robbed God**.

To ministers, church leaders, all Christians everywhere, yea, to all of Adam's race is this word spoken, "*Thou shalt not steal*" in any form or manner.

W.H.Molland

"We should be strict to enquire whether or no we have not hitherto allowed ourselves in some or other sinful way, through wrong principles and mistaken notions of our duty: whether we have not lived in the practice of some things offensive to God, through want of care and watchfulness and observation of ourselves. We should be concerned to know whether we live not in some way which doth not become the profession we make; and whether our practice in some things be not unbecoming Christians, contrary to Christian rules, not suitable for the disciples and followers of the Lord Jesus, the Lamb of God".

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)

The Christian's Citizenship

Is a Christian a citizen of earth or of heaven? To this question many would answer both, but is this logical? Is this an accurate conclusion? Can a person be a citizen of two countries, a member of two kingdoms? The answer is, No! Yet when it comes to spiritual citizenship, very few Christians appreciate what this implies. It is common to hear the people of God speaking of British Christians, Jewish Christians, African Christians and so on. Is this correct Biblical terminology? We read of the beloved of God that he be **in** Rome (not Roman Christians) (cf Romans 1:7); the sanctified **at** Corinth (cf 1 Corinthians 1:2); the saints which be **in** Achaia (cf 2 Corinthians 1:1); saints **at** Ephesus (cf Ephesians 1:1); saints **at** Philippi (cf Philippians 1:1). This pattern is uniform throughout the New Testament epistles including the letters to the Churches in the book of the Revelation, chapters 2 and 3. To prefix the name of Christians with national identification, completely undermines a fundamental New Testament principle. When this is appreciated it is as illogical to speak of a British or African Christian, as it is to speak of a Japanese German or a Norwegian Indian; the two are entirely distinct. There are Christians **in** Britain and Africa as in all countries of the world, but because they are Christians, national distinction and identification no longer exist.

The Bible is a universal book, its truth is to all nationalities and people; its teaching is that elect, redeemed sinners when regenerated by the Holy Spirit of God, are called out of the world of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son (cf Colossians 1:13). In this kingdom, although it comprises of people from all countries of the earth, there are no national distinctions. By one

Spirit all are baptized into one body, whether Jew or Gentile, bond or free (cf 1 Corinthians 12:13). Although these people are still in the world, they are not of it (cf John 17:16). They are a peculiar people (belonging exclusively to another), a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation (cf 1 Peter 2:9). Every born again person, regardless of nationality by natural birth, loses that identity by spiritual birth; they now form a part of this **holy nation**. Just as in the natural sense, no person can be a citizen of two countries, neither can one in the spiritual sense.

The Christian was once of the kingdom of this world, a citizen of earth, but by the saving and transforming grace of God is now a fellow citizen with the saints, and of the household of God (cf Ephesian 2:19). His citizenship is in heaven (cf Philippians 3:20). Paul, writing to the believers at Corinth said, we (that is Christians) are ambassadors (cf 2 Corinthians 5:20); this is a most explicit term. An ambassador is a man in a country to which he does not belong, representing a country to which he does belong. This perfectly portrays the position of the child of God in the world. We do not belong to it, but we are here to represent that "*holy nation*" of which by grace we now are a part.

Accepting the fact that we are this unique and peculiar people, yet still left in this world, to what extent are we to be involved in its affairs? This is a matter which has caused much controversy throughout history. Sadly again, on this point as on a number of others, the Reformers gave a most erroneous lead by their involvement in politics and the link of church and state. In varying degrees not only in the national church, but also in dissenting bodies, this has been followed. It stems from a belief that the Christian must get into politics and a position of worldly authority, in order to bring about a better order in society. To human reasoning

this is feasible, it appears a noble role, but when analysed in the light of Holy Writ, it is not valid, indeed it is at variance with the Divine Mandate.

The Word of God emphatically states that the whole world lieth in wickedness (cf 1 John 5:19); 'world' in its original Greek means 'inhabitants', the 'whole community'. 'Wickedness' - the wicked one or the Devil; he is "*the god of this world*" (2 Corinthians 4:4); he is "*the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience*" (Ephesians 2:2); he is the prince of this world (cf John 12:31; 14:30). This prince and god of this world, the spirit of darkness, together with all the inhabitants which lieth in his hands, are under the judgment of God, all are doomed, it is only because of the long-suffering of God for the purpose of the calling out of His elect, that the great and final judgment has not yet come about, but it most certainly will (cf 2 Peter 3:9,10).

The Christian who has political inclinations will argue that much good can be done and the cause of Christ furthered by getting into positions of authority and so wield influence. Those of strong Protestant persuasion would go further, even taking up arms and shedding blood in war. The world's history books are full of this. To argue over the apparent good which has come about by such action does not alter the clear teaching of Holy Scripture.

National patriotism should not characterize the child of God, for **all** nations are a part of this fallen world. The believer is to be patriotic in the truest sense of the word to that holy nation into which by grace he has been brought, loyal to his heavenly King, who by earth's nations is rejected and disowned; indeed this world is at **enmity** with our King. How then can a Christian become a part of its system?

Our Lord, in addition to His great work of atonement, also left an example that we should follow in His steps (cf 1 Peter 2:21). The Jews, who were intensely nationalistic even to the point of patriotic bigotry, had visions of a Messiah who would set up an earthly monarchy and restore the kingdom of Israel, but the Lord of glory, the true Messiah had no such design. Although the Jews at that time were under Roman domination, the Lord never hinted at interfering with that form of government. Well did He know that then, as always, the powers that be are ordained of God and every soul is to be subject unto them; they that resist the power, resist the ordinance of God (cf Romans 13:1,2). In the clearest of language our Lord said, "*My kingdom is not of this world*" (John 18:36). Never did He in any way become involved with the nation in which He lived other than to pay His tribute money (cf Matthew 17:27) and obey the authorities in as much as their demand did not conflict with God's holy Law. Here is the perfect example as to the believer's role with regard to the state; it is one of complete non-involvement; this the apostles followed. On the one occasion in which a sword was drawn in a supposed defence of truth it was immediately demanded by Christ to be sheathed (cf Matthew 26: 51,52). The New Testament teaching is uniform in this, "*The weapons of our warfare are not carnal*" (2 Corinthians 10:4); "*We wrestle not against flesh and blood*" (Ephesians 6:12). Obedience to the authorities, whoever they may be or however irksome or foolish their laws may appear, is Biblical. "*For there is no power but of God*" (Romans 13:1), Only if human laws are in direct conflict with the Law of God, is the Christian to resist, then he is to obey God rather than man (cf Acts 5:29).

Many Christians wonder why God allows certain men and women to come to power. The truth is He does not allow, He ordains. Before a single citizen enters the polling booth to cast his vote, God

has ordained who shall fill the seat. The lot may be cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord (cf Proverbs 16:33). When the judgments of God are evident or He wants to bring a nation down, He can ordain foolish, short sighted, even Godless corrupt men to office. In this way the governmental purposes and judgments of God are effected.

All this has to do with the world, not the Church. The Christian is a citizen of heaven, not earth. If the kingdom of Christ is not of this world, then how can we who are **of** Christ and **in** Christ be a part, or become involved with this world which lieth in the wicked one? How futile, yea how conflicting with the purposes of God for His children to be endeavouring to shore up and improve that which is under Divine judgment. Did not our Lord say, "*Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God*" (Luke 9:60). The great concern of the Christian is to preach the truth (all of it), concerning the kingdom of God; that is his role, that is the kingdom to which he belongs, it is the interest of this kingdom which he has to further, not the kingdom of death and corruption.

Is there no other responsibility which a Christian has to the state other than to be law-abiding and to duly pay his taxes? Yes, and a very important duty, that is prayer; "*I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority*" (1 Timothy 2:1,2). Whether such men are acceptable to us or not, we are to pray for them because they are ordained of God and He has a definite purpose in raising them to such office, so dare we resist or oppose such ordination.

In this matter of prayer for authorities it is to be noted that it is universal, not national; all men, kings (plural), all that are in

authority. In public prayer, nationalistic sentiments are to be deplored. Often the petitions do not go beyond British royalty and Westminster, and the phraseology used clearly indicates that the one praying has never yet grasped the truth that his citizenship is in heaven. 'Our country' is so often heard, but is not this a denial of the truth that we are not of the world? Here we are but strangers and sojourners. 'Our beloved land' is another favourite phrase; but is not the land in which we live a part of the whole world which lieth in wickedness? The Word of God distinctly says "*Love not the world*" (1 John 2:15). One would think to hear some pray that the Scripture said that the whole world lieth in the wicked one except Britain. How can a Christian who has been taken out of the world, speak of Britain, where there is the stench of the vilest of sins and corruption, as 'our beloved land'? What is even worse is those who, when praying, use such expressions as 'our national sins'. How can a man intercede after this manner? In the eyes of God he has been taken out of the nation, he is part of God's holy nation. He can confess the sins of the Church, he can also pray for the appalling state of the world, but never identify with the world in its filth, taking its sins and confessing them as his. To cite Daniel, Ezra and Nehemiah as doing this shows a serious misunderstanding, for they were identifying with Israel, the people of God in their confessions, not the sins of Babylon or Assyria. These great heroes of the faith knew by grace that they were not citizens of a heathen nation, hence they phrased their prayers accordingly.

The apostle Paul has frequently been quoted as laying claim to earthly citizenship by making reference to his words in Acts 22:27. As always, no single section of Holy Scripture must be taken to make void the overall teaching. In no way does the apostle undermine or nullify all the teaching which the Lord had given. Paul himself and all the other New Testament writers knew the unique

position of all believers who had been taken **out** of the world and baptized into the body of Christ, thus forming a unique people, a holy nation separated unto God. What the apostle was doing in Acts 22 is nothing other than that which every believer in any nation has the **right** and the **duty** to do, which is to live and act according to the laws and precepts of the community in which God has placed him; this includes privileges as well as penalties. In this way a child of God although a pilgrim on earth, remains a law abiding person in the land in which he sojourns.

The believer's heavenly citizenship and separation from the world are kindred truths which can never be divorced. There are many Christians who look upon separation from the world as not visiting theatres, dance halls, discotheques, gambling dens etc.; it **is** this, but it is very much more. It is the world as defined in Holy Scripture, the world as God sees it and from which He has called His people out. They are to be separated unto God and like the patriarchs, confess that they are pilgrims and strangers on the earth, having no continuing city here (cf Hebrews 13:14). This does not mean a monastic type of existence, rather a life of diligence in our particular calling (cf 1 Corinthians 7:20); "*not slothful in business*" (Romans 12:11); "*do all to the glory of God*" (1 Corinthians 10:31). Abraham, that great man of faith, conducted his business affairs in a most successful manner, but it did not entail his involvement in the affairs of the world and so mar his pilgrim character. "*By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God*" (Hebrews 11: 9,10). To such as take this stand of heavenly citizenship, "*God is not ashamed to be called their God*" (Hebrews 11:16).

W.H.Molland

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

The main figure in these reminiscences is a Mr William Surridge, born 1823, a miller in the village of Bridford, who was much used of God in that area in the last century. These details were written by his son, Mr Fred Surridge, in the middle of the present century.

"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).

Grandfather Puddicombe's funeral

The next funeral was that of old Grandfather Puddicombe, who as a young man years before had given a cup of tea to the two unknown gospel preachers. This funeral was conducted in the parish of Bridford, and it was over this that the battle commenced regarding the passing of the Burial Act. The funeral was arranged to take place on the Sunday afternoon. At the close of the Sunday morning meeting, the grandson, who had the arrangements in hand, came to father and told him that he was unable to get the burial certificate as the registrar had given it to the Bridford parson. Father told him to go at once to the registrar, and as a relative in charge of the funeral, to demand the certificate, and not leave until he got it. This he did, but the registrar in every way tried to baffle him. John's only answer was, "No, Mr H. I am not going to leave your house without the certificate". Eventually, knowing quite well that he had done wrong, he ordered his son to ride up to the parson's and get him to give it up, which he did. So father got it just in time to proceed with the funeral.

On arriving at the cross roads, on the outskirts of the village where a large crowd had gathered, a halt was made and a short service was

held, during which the parson and his daughter walked past to see what was being done. In an open space in the village, just outside the yard, a short committal service was conducted, during which the sexton, who had refused stools to rest the coffin upon, staggered out of the public house in a drunken state, to measure the coffin, to see if he had made the grave large enough. After more minor indignities, the cortege proceeded to the grave side. After a few moments silent prayer the body was lowered into the grave and the mourners departed. A few days later the parson called for his few shillings burial fee, which the family had refused to pay, but on hearing of this father saw him and arranged that he should not lose his fee over any funeral conducted by him, but would pay himself.

At the next Diocesan Conference held at Exeter, an exaggerated report of this funeral was given by the annoyed parson, which set the whole county aflame with all kinds of false reports; so much so that leading friends from various dissenting bodies, who were there and saw what happened, begged father to write a correct account in reply for the sake of other dissenters. This he did and Mr Latimer, the then editor of the *Western Times*, took the matter up very strongly, and a veritable battle of letters and leading articles raged for a long time in the newspapers. Leading brethren from the Baptists and Wesleyans sent messages to father, begging him to go forward, promising that they would stand by him, and scores of people wrote to him and were keenly interested to see what would happen next. Eventually the question was raised in the House of Commons and was fought out there, during which time father went on conducting funerals in his own simple and reverent way.

After a continuous agitation which lasted some years, father at last received a letter from the Bridford parson, asking him to call. Father found that he had been requested by the Government to ascertain

from him what it was that dissenters really wanted, and how they would conduct their services if the churchyards were thrown open to them. Father replied that all they asked for was the same liberty in the country places to bury their dead that they had in the city cemeteries. As to how they would conduct their services, all they would wish to do would be to read a portion of Scripture, have prayer and perhaps sing a hymn. "Well", said the parson, "if that is all you wish, I see nothing to object to". Then his wife, who was sitting by, made the following remark. "Mr Surridge, I must confess my heart has bled many times for you dear people, for you either have to bury your dead like dogs, or submit to something that you have not the slightest agreement with. It is quite time this kind of thing was stopped in England". Her sensible remarks were a deciding factor which turned the scale. The parson wrote a very favourable report to the authorities and a Burial Laws Amendment Act was drafted, which became law in 1880. In this Act it was allowed that any person might be buried in a grave or churchyard by any person authorized to carry out the ceremony by an orderly and religious service at the graveside.

Some little time after this the living was sold and bought by a wealthy gentleman for his son, who had just been ordained. Soon after his arrival Puddicombe's granddaughter died, and the Burial Act had not yet come into force. Father called on the young parson to say that he wished to use the churchyard for the burial as he had been accustomed to do. His reply was, "I have heard of your proceedings with my predecessor, but I will see that you do not carry on like that with me". However father obtained the necessary certificate and knew that he had the approval of the bishop and of most of the parishioners. In due course the funeral procession arrived in the village square, the service was held and they proceeded to the gates with the coffin. The gates were locked

against them, the parson and his two churchwardens stood just inside and a policeman stood without. Father politely asked permission to enter, but the parson refused to open the gates unless he was allowed to conduct the service. "So you definitely refuse to allow me to enter unless I hand over the certificate to you?" "Yes", he replied. My father then turned to the constable and said, "I call upon you, Mr Policeman, to take charge of this corpse and you mourners please return to your homes". The poor policeman stood aghast, not knowing what to do, and the whole company was transfixed in bewilderment. Then the two churchwardens turned to the parson and said, "What is all this nonsense about? We will not have such goings on as this with Surrige, open the gates at once and let him in". Then the parson opened the gates, and turning, went straight towards the church, reading the burial service, but father and his procession went straight to the grave, lowered the coffin and after silent prayer, departed. The parson, finding he was not being followed, hurried across to the grave, and was left with the sexton still religiously reading the burial service. So ended the last struggle of the clergy to keep nonconformists out of the rights of Christian burial in their churchyards.

A Tempting Proposition

I have already remarked that a great deal of mining sprang up in the Teign valley where we lived. In my schoolboy days a mine was being worked near here, searching for lead, and in the course of borings they struck a lode of barytes. This is a mineral of exactly the same texture as coal, only instead of being pure black, it is pure white, and the next heaviest mineral to lead. For some time no one knew any use for it. It was thrown out as waste. Eventually a fresh mining engineer came on the scene. He was very struck with the deposit, and thought some use could be made of it. One day he

called on father to know if he would allow the miller to put some of this barytes through a pair of mill stones to see what would happen. With his consent this was done, and to the surprise of all it came down a pure white powder, whiter even than flour. "Oh", said the engineer, "we can do something with this", and very soon afterwards he made father an offer to purchase the mill for its manufacture. As the price was a very tempting one father and mother were very exercised about it, and sought the Lord's guidance very earnestly on the matter. Eventually they came to the following decision; as the Lord had brought them here, put the mill into their hands in such a definite way and had saved them both, with the result that such a remarkable work of God was springing up all around them, they felt like Naboth of old, that the whole thing was an heritage from the Lord. Therefore they could not part with it, but had faith to believe that if they did not sell the mill, the Lord would honour them and do a work of grace in the lives of their boys, bring them home and put them into the business. The Lord began to work at once; by the following Christmas my brother and I were both home, and we were both converted, as I shall now record.

My Own Conversion

On leaving school I went to live with my uncle at Exeter, and for some time, although I had a knowledge of the gospel, I had not realized my personal need of Christ. One day a farmer's wagoner from Bridford came in for a load of manure and made quite a casual remark but which, in an instant, revealed to me my need. For a long time after at every service we attended, both Sunday morning and evening, I listened anxiously to hear the preacher tell us what to do to be saved but I never heard it.

One New Year's Eve as we were in chapel, seeing in the New Year, we were all bowed in silence. I prayed, "Lord, another year is gone

and I do not know what it is to be saved, but please do not let another year pass without my knowing it". Midsummer came, then September and I was still unsaved. One day I said to myself, "Would to God George Frost would come down from London to tell me what to do to be saved". I could easily have gone home to my father and talked it out with him but it was not to be that way. While sitting in the office a few days later, George Frost walked in. I said, "Hello George, whatever brought you here?" His reply was, "I don't know what I have come down for; I have no special reason or any particular business to call me, only for the past two or three days I have been strongly impressed to come down to Exeter". Then I said to myself, "If you do not know why you have come down, I do". We arranged to meet that evening, after the quarterly brethren's meeting, at the Old Market Hall, Exeter, and have a walk and talk together. As we were walking up Sidwell Street, the question of my being saved came up. I said that I believed all that the Scripture said about the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of sinners, but I still do not know that I am saved. He said quite simply in reply, "If you **believe** what the Scripture says about it, and that Christ suffered for you, **he that believeth is saved**". In an instant as if someone had switched on an electric light, my whole soul was flooded with the light of the knowledge of sins forgiven, and **I knew that I was saved**. Soon after this I heard from my father of his desire for us to come home and take up the business at Bridford Mills. You can imagine his joy when he heard of my conversion, and with what new-found joy and zest I came into the midst of the work of grace that was going on all around us.

New Year's Day 1881

It had been father's custom for several years on New Year's Day to give a free tea to all who received parish pay in the three adjoining parishes, followed by a gospel meeting. This had gradually resolved

itself into a homely assembly tea meeting, and now for many years our New Year's fellowship meeting has become a regular institution.

On this particular day, January 1st 1881, we had Mr G. Groves with us, who suggested that we should have a praise and testimony meeting. This we did and from the first the Holy Spirit took complete control, as one after another, without any pressure, were led to tell what the Lord had done for them. There were brethren there from several other denominations but all party spirit seemed to vanish completely. One dear old Baptist brother in giving his testimony said, "I do not belong to your community, but I feel I must tell what the Lord has done for me". Then without any planning, the meeting took the form of real heart pleading for the unsaved, and so manifest was the power of the Spirit, that the whole place was apparently simmering with His presence. As one dear brother in sobs and tears was pleading with the Lord to save his boy, the young man stood up at the back of the hall and said, "Father, I am saved **now**, the Lord has revealed Himself to me". At once the father went back and threw his arms around him and wept. The only way I can describe the meeting is, that it was a holy abandonment to the power of the Holy Spirit, for without any pressure or interference by man, quite a dozen were truly saved, and my brother was one of them.

Thus within three months of my father's decision not to sell the mill to the Barytes Mine, the Lord honoured their faith in that we were not only at home in the business, but that the last member of the family was saved.

To be continued

EDITORIAL

Who and what is the world? Many Christians appear to make a distinction between the nation and the world. The world is the vast organization of men upon earth in their different nations, including the social, political and religious aspects. The term 'world' does not mean the grosser forms of vice or pleasure, these come under the appellation of the 'flesh'. The designation 'world', in its true Biblical sense comprehends kingdoms, territories, principalities and empires, with all their many organizations, unions, syndicates and federations, political, commercial and financial, which are established for the organization of power and wealth. All this is common to every nation and it is these nations in their totality which comprise the **world**. It is this world as represented by **all** nations which rejects the Saviour, Christ the Son of God. *"For of a truth against Thy holy child Jesus, whom Thou hast anointed, both Herod, Pontius Pilate, with the nations and the people of Israel were gathered together"* (Acts 4:27).

Who and what is the Church? It is an Ecclesia, meaning a gathered out company; "an assembly selected and called out of the world by the doctrine of the gospel, to worship the true God in Christ according to His Word. All the elect of God of what nation soever from the beginning to the end of the world, who make but one body, whereof Jesus Christ is the Head" (Alexander Cruden). The Church is a chosen number separated unto God; they are therefore to separate themselves from the Christ rejecting nations.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

We thank God for the ever increasing demand for the ministry on tape. In order to relieve the minister of some of the pressure, as from 1 January 1997 would those requiring cassettes kindly direct all enquiries and orders to:

