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**North Road Chapel (Evangelical)
BIDEFORD**

THE LAW OF GOD

The Ninth Commandment

"Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour" (Exodus 20:16).

In considering this section of the Decalogue, none must be so foolish as to restrict these words to giving evidence in a court of law. The ninth commandment, like all the others, is *"exceeding broad"* (Psalm 119:96), meaning 'far-ranging', 'covering the whole spectrum'. Exodus 20:16 embraces every aspect of false witness.

This commandment is concerned with that little member in our bodies - **the tongue**. One of the great Puritan theologians, Thomas Watson, said, "The tongue, which at the first was made to be an organ of God's praise, is now become an instrument of unrighteousness".

One of the most contemptible things in this world is slander or defamation; that is to report matters concerning others unjustly. The Psalmist experienced this when he wrote *"False witnesses did rise up; they laid to my charge things that I knew not"* (Psalm 35:11).

Men and women who make malicious, untrue statements are extremely dangerous people. The Spirit of God through the prophet, calls slander 'smiting with the tongue' (cf Jeremiah 18:18) and this is a most serious thing. Augustine said, "The wounds of the tongue, no physician can heal". Just as it is a grievous sin to **raise** a false report, so is it equally grievous to **accept** a false report until it has been thoroughly investigated. Quoting Thomas Watson again, "He that raises a false report hath the Devil on his tongue, and he that receives that report hath the Devil in his ear". The Christian should never be guilty of either.

In the Psalms this truth is borne out and expanded upon, "*Lord, who shall abide in Thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in Thy holy hill?*" (Psalm 15:1). This refers to the Christian, one brought to God's 'holy hill', 'Zion' (cf Hebrews 12:22). Such are to walk uprightly, work righteousness, speak the truth in the heart, not backbite with the tongue, nor do evil or take up a reproach against his neighbour (cf Psalm 15:2,3). To backbite with the tongue is to slander, to take up a reproach is to listen to slander; both are equally despicable and a grievous violation of the Decalogue.

Slander and false witness can be borne in a most subtle way, it need not be by a direct, bald statement. More often than not it is by insinuation, a mere hint or suggestion which leaves a false impression upon the mind of the hearer. This kind of thing in Scripture is called "*The scourge of the tongue*" (Job 5:21). People who do this are to be eschewed; in the church they can do much mischief; by innuendo or perhaps only by a remote allusion, a brother or a sister can be represented in a totally wrong light.

There is another aspect to the question of false witness which is equally sinful. When a person is slandered or misrepresented and we know that it is untrue and we remain silent, that makes us as guilty as the slanderer, bearing false witness by not speaking out and putting the record straight.

In the second chapter of the Book of the Acts of the Apostles, the people charged the apostles with drunkenness; Peter quickly jumped to their defence, "*These are not drunken*" (Acts 2:15). When King Saul so devastatingly slandered David, Jonathan immediately spoke out in vindication, "*And Jonathan spake good of David unto Saul his father, and said unto him, Let not the king sin against his servant, against David; because he hath not sinned against thee, and because his works have been to thee-ward very good: for he did put his life in his hand, and slew the Philistine, and the Lord wrought a*

great salvation for all Israel; thou sawest it, and didst rejoice: wherefore then wilt thou sin against innocent blood, to slay David without a cause?" (1 Samuel 19:4,5).

The ninth commandment is mandatory, both positively and negatively. Positively, to speak falsely by direct statement or by oblique speech. Negatively, to listen to such concerning a person and not to stand up and vindicate them when they are injured by evil lips. In either case, one is guilty before God of breaking His Holy Law; "*Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour*".

W.H.Molland.

THE TONGUE

This article is based upon James 3:1-10

This edition of 'The Link' brings us to the ninth commandment, a section of the Decalogue having particular reference to the tongue. It is appropriate that we examine this member of our body in greater detail.

The Bible has much to say about the tongue, speech and words. Of all the inspired writers, none has more to say on this subject than James in his epistle, which is forthright and oftentimes hard-hitting, being well illustrated and easy to understand. He writes, "*Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!*" (James 3:3-5).

A bit in the mouth of a spirited horse and a strong rein will keep that animal under control. Likewise also the rudder, although only a

small part of a ship by which the vessel is steered, yet it is of vital importance; if controlled, it keeps the vessel on course; if not, the vessel drifts. *"Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things"*. The tongue is small, but its influence is great. In this Scripture the emphasis is upon an uncontrolled tongue rather than a controlled one. It is sad to say that far too often our tongues are not bridled as they should be; they are not used for good to the extent which they are used for other purposes. The very word *"boasteth"* which the Holy Spirit uses in these verses is significant, for it suggests extravagance, a lacking in restraint, tending to vainglory. This is a human failing. The tongue extravagantly likes to promote a good self-image. It can lose all sense of restraint by gossiping if someone has annoyed or upset us. A little member maybe, but a member which needs a very tight rein!

"Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth". To just drop a match on a dry heathland in the height of summer, can be sufficient to set alight hundreds of acres of common and woodland. Large prairie fires have been started simply by the sun reflecting upon a piece of broken glass. *"Behold"*, 'Consider that', says the Spirit of God; the devastation caused by very small things. Such is the tongue, how great a matter that little member can kindle. How easy it is for it to start a blaze, and once started, how rapidly it can spread and how difficult to put out. How many Churches have been devastated! How many corporate testimonies have been almost ruined by the tongue! At the start it was probably just one person who failed to govern that little member, a few sparks flew off the tongue, others latched on, soon a little fire of dissension was flickering and in next to no time a disastrous blaze had broken out. Again and again has this happened amongst God's people throughout history, often doing damage which can never be repaired. *"Behold"* this, says the Spirit of God, do not shut your eyes to the facts, your tongue can ruin a character, it can destroy a Church, it can leave a once solid testimony a charred and blackened ruin.

Solemn in the extreme as this is, James inspired by the Holy Spirit, goes further. *"The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell"* (James 3:6). *"The tongue is a fire"*. From earliest years we train our children and warn them not to play with fire. Oh that the children of God could be so trained! Not to govern the tongue is to play with fire. Think of how fire can destroy, and what it does not destroy, it can seriously damage.

James then changes the analogy from *"fire"* to *"a world of iniquity"*, where the language becomes even stronger, the expressions more frightening. The tongue *"a world of iniquity"*? Yes, when it is not bridled. This is no light matter; in this epistle the Holy Spirit tells every one of us of what our tongues are capable; the power of that little member and the sins it can propagate. The word 'world' conveys the thought of vastness and scope.; there is an enormous mass of evil which can issue through the tongue, it is a **world** of iniquity. Dr. Adams in his commentary makes a list as follows:- "With the tongue the blasphemer defies God, the liar utters his falsehoods, the seducer pours out his destroying flatteries, the slanderer blasts his neighbour's good name, the traitor spreads his sedition". Adams continues, "The tongue diffuses error, kindles strife, inflames passions, stimulates vice, originates crime, breaks hearts, embitters families, divides communities and destroys Churches". Perhaps few of us have considered the subject of the tongue as deeply as we should, but when pondering these words *"the tongue is a **world** of iniquity"*, it becomes obvious that here is a matter of the utmost gravity. Then it is stated that, *"it defileth the whole body"*; the underlying Greek word rendered *"defileth"* means to 'soil' or to 'stain'. How many Christians have soiled their testimony and witness by injudicious use of the tongue; what stains have been made on the character by this little member not being controlled.

Reverting again to the analogy of fire which can scorch and blacken, causing pollution by its smoke; this is the effect of an uncontrolled tongue! Fiery rhetoric and heated arguments can lead to violence; impure talk can cause moral pollution in the mind, often resulting in immoral practices. It is in this way that the words, "*it defileth the whole body*" is to be understood. That little member, if not bridled, can set into operation other physical energies as instruments of sin. Where does the frightening potential of the tongue end?

God, by His Holy Spirit through James, continues "*It setteth on fire the course of nature*"; added to this must be, "*None of us liveth to himself*" (Romans 14:7). In life others are influenced by us either for good or for ill. Knowing the tremendous power and influence of the tongue, how careful we are to be, because it can set on fire the course of nature. This is further emphasized in other New Testament epistles. Titus is exhorted to "*sound speech, that cannot be condemned*" (Titus 2:8); "*Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt*" (Colossians 4:6); "*salt*" - that which is pure and wholesome. "*Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth*" (Ephesians 4:29); whilst obviously this would include all that is impure, it goes much further. We are not to communicate anything which is not good. Scandal is not pure, gossip is not wholesome; it may not be 'low' or 'suggestive', nevertheless it most certainly is not sound speech and is equally effective in setting the course and affecting the nature of those to whom we are communicating.

These matters are frighteningly amplified by the next phrase "*It is set on fire of hell*". Although this language is devastating, it cannot be brushed aside as pertaining to the unregenerate; it is written to "*brethren*" (James 1:2; 2:1; 3:1). Can a believer's tongue be set on fire of hell? Yes it can. An evil tongue, like all sin, comes from Satan. Speech which is not good, communication which is not wholesome, words which are not pure and helpful have been put

into our mouths by the Adversary, but **we** are responsible for uttering them. This is a most awesome thought that when heated, unkind and unwholesome words escape our lips, we are breathing out smoke which is literally fuelled from the pit.

The Word of God emphasizes the point further by stating that the tongue is untameable. *"For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: but the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison"* (James 3:7,8). This little member in our bodies has a wild streak in it, which can never be completely tamed. The animal creation is now introduced into this subject to make a contrast, setting forth that every nature, instinct or peculiar temperament in the animal creation can to some degree be subdued by man. This is due to man's reason and superiority over them, for dominion was given to Adam from the beginning (cf Genesis 1:28); after the flood the same authority and control was passed to Noah. God said unto him, *"The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered"* (Genesis 9:2). This God-given dominion continues, with man having power over all creatures.

Before the fall of man and the entrance of sin, all creatures willingly obeyed man, there was no fear between man and beast. Adam was not afraid of tigers, neither were timid creatures such as otters afraid of man. In addition to this, no animal lived in fear of another animal; dogs did not chase cats in the first paradise. There were no wild beasts in Eden, neither was there a wild tongue in the mouth of man; but when sin entered through Adam's disobedience, everything revolted against God and fear came upon all creation. Adam immediately admitted this, *"I was afraid"* (Genesis 3:10). Fear came upon all the lower creation also, animals became afraid of one another; the rabbit would run from the stoat and the blue tit would

keep well clear of the hawk. These creatures also became afraid of men; it was as God said to Noah that the fear and dread of man should be upon every beast, as all are delivered into man's hand. All living creatures instinctively know that man is superior to them and that they are at man's mercy; he has dominion. This is why some animals become vicious, fear lies within them so they act in defence. The overall picture in this is that man has dominion, he has control. It is in this sense that we are to understand the words of James, all the lower creation is "*tamed of mankind*".

Now comes the contrast. Vast as the dominion and the taming powers of man are over all the creatures, there is something which he has never been able to tame, that is his own tongue. No man can tame it (cf James 3:8), and every Christian should be mindful of what the tongue is capable, its wildness and propensity to sin. Our constant prayer should be, "*Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips*" (Psalm 141:3). James enforces the necessity of such a petition as the verse continues; our tongue is "*an unruly evil*", explained by one commentator as "a restless evil, it flits constantly from one subject to another, from one sphere of wrongdoing to another. From slander it glides into impurity, from impurity to arrogance, from arrogance to frivolity, from frivolity to anger; so that when a man is trying to tame it in one sphere, it suddenly escapes him and exerts its wild freedom in another". "*A world of iniquity*" indeed, for there is no area in life where it cannot be used.

It is "*full of deadly poison*". How much deeper is the Spirit of God going to penetrate? The picture now drawn is a serpent highly charged with venom whose fangs inject a deadly poison. David speaks of tongues which have been sharpened like a serpent, with adder's poison under their lips (cf Psalm 140:3). The mention of the serpent directs us to Eden again. Satan's words to Eve, "*Ye shall not surely die*". Deadly poison was in those words; poison injected from

the fangs of that old serpent, the Devil, which caused her and all the race to die in trespasses and in sins. None have escaped the effects of that poison. The New Testament confirms this; a fearful description is given of fallen man in Romans 3:13, "*The poison of asps is under their lips*". That poison is under the lips of us all. Not until we are glorified will our bodies be totally free from sin and sinning.

It is frightening when we fully realize how the tongue can be put to such a variety of uses, "*Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be*" (James 3:9,10). When a man is born again, he is given spiritual life, he becomes a child of God, as such he is rendered capable of blessing his heavenly Father; he can actually praise and bless the eternal God, he can pour out his heart in thanksgiving and love to Him. This is the highest and most noble use to which the tongue can be put, but how monstrous, to say nothing of the inconsistency, when that same tongue can almost immediately switch to defame his fellow man. How sadly possible it is for any one of us to be assembled with the Lord's people on the Sabbath day, joining in the singing of hymns of praise, blessing God as we give thanks and pray, say Amen at the end; yet on the morrow if someone steps on our toes, a neighbour or even a fellow Christian irritates us, almost immediately there can be sharp words, severe criticism even with real venom. What does the Word of God say of this? "*These things ought not so to be*".

It is as the inspired Word says, "*The tongue can no man tame*", but it is equally true to say that God can give grace and help to control it. Only in the measure that we seek this help and experience His grace, will our tongue be as intended at creation, an organ of praise to God's glory.

W.H.Molland

What Legacy shall we leave?

All of us would rightly acknowledge that all of the future lies in God's hands. He knows the end from the beginning and will surely bring to pass and accomplish all His perfect will, regardless of the actions or the activities of men. This is something the Word of God is most decided about. At the same time however, it is equally clear that each and everyone of us is responsible, not only with regards to the particular age in which we find ourselves, but also with regards to **that** future, and **how our present behaviour may have a bearing on that future for others**. In the light of that, there is a very vital question which each generation of Christians needs to ask (with an eye to those who may follow us in the future) and the question is this: Are my views and practices today in danger of eroding some of the essential elements of the Christian faith for those who are to follow on from these days? In other words, as I endeavour to hand on something of the "*faith which was once delivered unto the saints*", will there be a substantial enough degree of **content** in what I hand on to credit it as being that "*faith*" indeed? This is a vital question, for we are not only responsible in our own day and generation, but in relation to the next, as it may rise up in God's will and purpose.

There are three main areas especially that we should place under scrutiny in the light of such a consideration, viz - What concept of the **worship of God**, the **walk of godliness** and the **work of the gospel** are we liable to leave as an heritage to the next generation of God's people? Will they be such things as we have endeavoured to establish from God's Word, regardless of cost, and with the example of many who have gone before us? **Or** will they be such things as we have adopted in an attempt to accommodate the things of God to the spirit of the world, and the gratification of the fleshly part, rather than the edification of the spiritual? In the three areas mentioned then, the **worship of God**, the **walk of godliness** the **work of the**

gospel, we are duty bound to ask ourselves if our behaviour falls into the latter category. If so, then it is high time to realize that if this is what is going to be handed on to an oncoming generation, then that which will come to be proclaimed as Christianity will be nothing but an empty box with the name Christianity written on it. We must never forget the general principle that a thing running downhill gathers momentum, and the degree to which one generation erodes "*the faith*" is multiplied a dozen times over in the next which inherits the erosion. It is a shameful thing, even in worldly terms, when one generation of a country lives only with an eye to present gratification without diligent investment for what is to follow; it can be no less so for the Churches of Christ.

Of all the three areas mentioned, it is perhaps true to say that in none of them is the eroding process more evident than in the first - the **worship of God our Saviour**. It is correct to say also that this is the most far-reaching of all such influences, because out of a right worship of God, comes a right **walk of godliness**, and a right endeavour in the **work of the gospel**. We can now see that what began as a trickle of eroding influence in the worship of God with some in a former generation or so of Christians, has now reached enormous proportions among many today. In a good many places the worship of God is virtually indistinguishable in essence from a theatre, a disco, a rock concert or a circus; or a combination of all four. It is impossible to justify any of this apart from standing the Scriptures on their head. If ever one emphasis stands out clearly in God's Word, it is that the worship of God's Church is **different** from everything else. It never reflects, nor imitates the world. Greek theatre and Roman entertainment were at their heights in the days of the early church but they never incorporated such things into the worship of God in the Churches of Christ. They "*continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers*". That speaks volumes.

There is little doubt that the erosion of worship has come about through two main channels; an attempt to attract the unconverted into the church, and an attempt to accommodate the children and young people of believers while they remain in the church. Both attempts have moved the focus from God to man, and that in itself has spelled the death-knell to any true interpretation of worship.

We trust we have a desire to see souls saved; and what a desire we all must have for the salvation of our own children. But as David said of Solomon his young son, in connection with the building of the "old" house, "*The palace is not for man, but for the Lord God*". Indeed, when Solomon 'came of age', and had received the wisdom and grace of God in his life, then he did put forth his hand in that marvellous building work of the Temple. While he was still a child however, he "*thought as a child*", and his father **lovingly** considered him as such. It is quite an amazing thing among Christians that many will allow the opinions and estimations of their children to dictate the course of their Christian lives in expressing their worship and service to God. I know of no children who would be called into their father's business premises to act as advisors on how the business should be run! Of course not, you say; they are too immature for such a high calling. Indeed! Why then should their immaturity play such an important part in the direction of a church's worship and praise of God. And that is not all, of course; children, for as long as they are out of Christ, are not only immature in stature, but are also sinful by nature (cf Psalm 51:5). It is not simply 'boredom' that underlies children's behaviour in the spiritual worship of God by His people, it is the inbuilt animosity and hostility of the fallen heart. Children differ of course, in the way that is expressed, but to fail to take it into consideration is to capitulate to unsanctified wishes and swing the door open to the erosion of unmixed worship to our God.

What holds good with children and young people of course, also applies with the unconverted in general. Without entering into the

question of what the true sphere of the church's evangelism is anyway, most of us realize that it is difficult to 'get people into the church' where God is the only attraction! Hence, the multiplicity of Christianized versions of what the world finds attractive. The determining factor in this process should be, not whether or not the attraction works, but whether or not such things are among those things which the Lord requires of us. This is no plea for dull, uninspired, unmeaningful worship, in the praise and preaching and fellowship of God's church; indeed no, "Religion never was designed to make our pleasures less". What we need to aim at however, is the satisfaction and fulfilment of our spiritual beings. It should be pondered - if a church service is greatly geared to attract the unconverted heart, what good (or harm) is it doing the converted one? Will an oncoming generation rise up and call us blessed, or not?

W.J.Seaton

WARNING: Do not attend a church which prefers science to Scripture, reason to revelation, theories to Truth, culture to conversion, benevolence to Blood, goodness to grace, sociability to spirituality, play to praise, programmes to power, reformation to regeneration, speculation to salvation, jubilation to justification, feelings to faith, politics to precepts.

Anon

Faith looks straight to the command in order to obey it, and takes the promise for her support. She pushes on her way regardless of dangers. Moses must go forward, though the next step lead the people into the sea. Whatever appearances may say to us, it is by advancing in the narrow way of obedience that we prove the truth of the promises, and the faithfulness, wisdom and power of our promise-keeping God.

R.C.Chapman

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).

My father's home-call

This memoir now reaches the end of my father's journey. My dear mother passed away in 1891, and many were the expressions of loving sympathy as we laid that dear one to rest in the Bridford Parish churchyard. This time there were no unseemly demonstrations, such as my father had experienced in the past. The funeral service around the open grave was simple, yet impressive, and radiant with the 'blessed hope' that lies beyond this vale of tears.

For some five years or more, I had been going over to Trusham every Sunday evening to carry on the little gospel testimony there, but mother's death so upset father that he had to give up conducting the meetings here. The brethren asked me if I could see my way clear to stay at home and carry on in my father's place, which I was able to arrange.

My father would often spend a good deal of his time now with my sister and her husband at Bishopsteignton, where for some years they arranged to have their annual meeting on father's birthday; this they did in 1902. How well I remember driving him over there on the 15th October in that year, so as to be ready for the meetings the next day. That afternoon they invited a brother by the name of John Coles to come and spend the evening with father for conversation and company. Feeling tired after the journey, he went to bed quite

early. Taking his candle, he wished John Coles 'Goodnight' and said, "Well John, if the Lord comes before the morning I am quite ready". The next morning, my sister sent him up the usual cup of tea, but the girl brought it down again, saying she could get no response from her knocks. My sister, thinking that he was tired said, "We will leave him for a time and then I will go up myself". But when she went up later and still received no answer, she opened the door and found that he was gone. The doctor told me afterwards that father could not have known anything about it; there was not a muscle moved. He must have put his head on the pillow and was gone. He added, "What a glorious death after, I understand, such a pious life".

On the evening before the funeral, we had a meeting at the hall to go into detailed arrangements, and knowing how eager so many were to be bearers, I suggested that we would be thankful if those who so kindly acted as bearers for mother would be good enough to do the same for father. But after my brother and I had left the meeting, the friends would not think of the body being taken up to Bridford in a hearse; they must carry him. And there amongst themselves they chose eight sets of bearers, to take their turn carrying him up the hill. Like Jacob's of old, "*it was a very great mourning*". Mr Peter Childs from Bow conducted the service, at which nearly all the neighbourhood appeared to gather. Our brother gave a very solemn and suitable address, which had a very touching effect on many.

New chapel required and built

It was evident soon after my father's death that the room which he had enlarged for the meetings in 1881 was now quite inadequate to accommodate us, and by the year 1904 three very strong reasons had arisen as to why we should build a new room. Firstly we had completely outgrown the present one, secondly the floor was rotting and becoming unsafe and thirdly, owing to the heavy road traffic, the foundations had sunk and dangerous cracks appeared in the

walls. As the need for a new building was constantly being mooted at our elders' meetings, I suggested that if we were all in agreement that a new chapel was necessary, we should begin to take proceedings at once, otherwise the matter should be dropped. It was quite unanimous that all were of one mind in the matter, so a meeting of the whole assembly of the believers was called, to ascertain if we were all of one mind. We made it a standing rule never to make a move until we were all in agreement.

There was no dissent whatever. All were agreed and approved that we should begin as soon as possible. Two brethren were appointed to visit the whole assembly and ascertain what we were prepared to give. These brethren reported that a sum of three hundred pounds was promised and more if needed, so we judged that this was sufficient to warrant going forward with the work. Everyone wished to have the new building on the same site as the old, so next we had to find accommodation for carrying on the meetings while the old place was demolished and the new was being erected.

Mr Saunders from Plymouth was staying with us at the time and he was as much concerned about the matter as the rest of us. One Sunday morning as I stood at the window preparing for the meeting, my eye lighted on the large hay shed in the field at the back of the stable and I cried out to my wife, "Why my dear, there's the ideal place for our meetings". At the same instant I saw Mr Saunders hurrying along the road, with a beaming and excited face and as soon as he came inside, he was bursting to tell us that he had just seen the very place where we could hold our meetings while the new chapel was being built. Smilingly, I asked "Where?" "Why, in that hay shed at the back of the stable", he answered; so you see how the Lord gave us one mind about that matter. The brethren were delighted with the proposal. I bought six new hay sheets (which could be disposed of afterwards to the various farms around), and we covered the sides with them and the gable end with matchboard from the old building and put in a window. The forms and table all

fitted in as if it were made for them and the place was soon made comfortable and weather proof for the services. Best of all God's blessing rested on all our gatherings in that temporary home. One remarkable feature was that under the iron roof of that hay shed the sound of singing and preaching was often heard quite clearly two miles away.

The new building, double the size of the old one, was erected and opened in the autumn of 1904. There was such a crowd at the opening that we had to arrange for three meetings to be going on at the same time. The main meeting was in the new chapel and the overflows were held in the hay shed and the large blacksmith's shop opposite.

The blast of the trumpet

After the second chapel had been built and the services were established, there was a great stir in the district. Many were being saved and the reality of the Lord's coming was a vital truth in all the meetings. Few indeed were the services in which that subject was not emphasized and very frequently the 'Trumpet Hymn' was given out and sung with solemnity and power. It is not found in our modern hymn books, I regret to say, but here are the words and may they speak to your heart as you read them:

"The blast of the Trumpet, so loud and so shrill,
Will shortly re-echo o'er mountain and hill,
When the mighty, mighty, mighty trump sounds,
Come, come away,
O may we be ready to hail that great day."

Many careless, godless and unconverted folk knew the hymn and made fun of it. There was a group of eight or ten young farm lads who would walk the lanes, hang about the chapel doors, scoff and laugh and in every possible way seek to disturb the meetings. One of them remembered that at home there was a hunting horn and planned with the rest a huge practical joke. With the horn hidden

under his coat, he hung around the door and waited his opportunity and sure enough it soon came. The chapel was packed, a crowd was around the door and the trumpet hymn was given out. With his foot just inside the door and the horn ready to hand, he waited for the chorus to begin and as all sang with fervour, "When the mighty, mighty, mighty trump sounds", this lad thrust the horn to his lips and blew a blast with all his might. Immediately the whole company was in a frenzy of emotion. Men were awe-struck, women fainted and for some time the meeting was uncontrollable. "The whole place was shaken and fear fell upon all". Among those who were present at that meeting was Mary, the eldest daughter of the old sexton at Bridford. She had just come home from a situation and had heard of our meetings. There was no interest, rather opposition and ridicule, but she thought she would see and hear what we had got to say. She was convicted of sin in the meeting; she fainted when the trumpet sounded for she knew she was unready to meet Christ as judge, but was more than ready afterwards to make Him her Lord and Saviour and was gloriously converted.

Fiery Skittles

In the nineteenth century the recreation of the youth of the countryside was restricted to wrestling, fist-fighting and skittle-alley playing and of course each of these was associated with public house drinking and swearing. The old sexton's eldest son Jack, brother to Mary of whom we have just written, was a well acknowledged champion in all these particulars. All his associates were afraid of his iron fists; few could beat him at skittles, and his drinking, swearing and filthy language was patent to all. Christians and fellow workmen had often warned him of his wicked ways and of hell fire at the end of his course, a fire that would never be quenched. His father was ill-kempt and ugly, both in features and character. Jack was growing even more uncouth than his father and his work as a navvy on the railway cutting did not improve his appearance nor his habits. Every penny he earned was spent on drink and quite literally his only possessions were the rags he wore

and they only consisted of a pair of filthy boots, tattered trousers, a rag of a shirt, a bit of a waistcoat and something he called a hat on his head.

One particular afternoon a few months after Mary was converted, he made his way to the public house and skittle alley for some fun. In his own words afterwards, this is how he described what happened. "I held the ball in my hand to take aim and shove the skittles over, but all I could see was 'flaming fires'. I dropped the ball and ran but it was no use; in front of me the whole time, the fiery flames kept leaping at me. I turned but there they were again. I ran this way and that, backwards and forwards along all the lanes and paths of the district, crying in terror at the flames of fire that pursued me wherever I went. For hours I was in this demented state and for the first time in my life I knew what terror was like". Jack R. still in the fellowship, can recall the incident, and as a little boy, remembers seeing the mad man as he rushed about the place, screaming of hell fires and judgment. At last, utterly exhausted and trembling with fear, he made his way to the Barton where his sister Mary was working, and in her kind and gentle manner she soothed him and told him of the Saviour's love. She gently pointed out that in this way the Lord had brought him to an end of himself and had graciously warned him to flee from the wrath to come. "You have been fleeing from the fires in real earnest today; now fly to those arms outstretched on Calvary for you, just as earnestly, just as really". He did so. He was as surely saved now as he had been lost before and instead of panic, he had peace and a sound mind. Mary went straight upstairs and brought him six shillings of her savings and told him to buy himself a decent coat and make himself respectable. He went home to tell them what the Lord had done for him, but his father and mother were bitter against him and wanted none of his religion or company. They rudely turned him out and another of his sisters threw open an upstairs window as he went out and uttered awful curses upon him. But from now on he was a

changed man. Physically he was tall, well-built and strong. Now he made a stalwart soldier of Jesus Christ and although he was very illiterate, he was well able to testify to his fellows of the power of Christ to save.

Some time after his conversion he married a charming young wife; she was really a sweet and beautiful character. He obtained a job on a farm at six shillings a week and managed for a time to support a family. But as it grew he looked about for something better and started marketing potatoes; in this the Lord prospered him. Jack had the finest family of sons and daughters that I have ever known. When they all sat around the table for family reading, the boys had the great privilege of teaching their own father to read the Bible. All his children are saved and are in happy fellowship with the Lord's people. Harold, one of the boys, is an evangelist and has been much used of the Lord. He had the touching experience of meeting his old aunt in the Midlands, the one who had so wickedly cursed his father on the day of his conversion, and was blessed in her reconciliation.

As a personal testimony, I would like to add that for many years I had the great joy of walking many miles with dear Jack, visiting the villages around and preaching the gospel. He could preach in a way that was understood by all the village folk. His presence, life, testimony and determination to defend the gospel, was in itself a power and an influence that gave us a hearing in every place.

To be continued

Visiting Preachers D.V.

Lord's Day	20 April	Mr G.Thrussell (Truro)
Lord's Day (a.m.only)	4 May	Mr J.Hooper (Saltash)
Lord's Day	18 May	Mr Douglas D.Jones (Nailsea)

EDITORIAL

Whilst on earth, the Great Head of the Church clearly stated the purpose of His coming; it was to bear witness to **the truth** (cf John 18:37). Returning to heaven, He commissioned His disciples to teach **all things** whatsoever He had commanded them (cf Matthew 28:20). The Church of the living God is the pillar and ground of truth (1 Timothy 3:15). Witnessing to this truth is now the solemn charge of every truly born again person. Each generation needs to ask, 'Are we bearing witness to the truth as taught and exemplified by Christ, or have we turned from the truth, giving heed to the commandments of man?' (cf Titus 1:14). Many, who fail to search the Scriptures for themselves, follow credal traditions such as infant sprinkling and ritualistic worship. Others engage in open, free-for-all types of gatherings where the emphasis is on gimmicks and entertainment. In no way can such things be held as adhering to **the truth** and to engage in them is to bear **false witness**. The Christian must know God's Word and tremble at it (cf Isaiah 66:5). Both in the home and in the Church, the believer's words and practices are to be according to **truth**. Only in this way shall we leave a **legacy** to the glory of God.

Preliminary Announcement

Annual Bible Convention

Saturday 2 August 1997 D.V.

Speaker: Mr J.G.Roberts (Chessington)

Further details in the next edition.