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BIDFORD**

THE LAW OF GOD

Having briefly dealt with each of the commandments in the last ten editions of this magazine, it is fitting that a conclusion is drawn showing the pertinence of this Law today, particularly as it applies to the **believer**.

In the introductory section to these articles it was pointed out that, unlike the ceremonial and judicial aspects of the Old Testament Law which ceased with the advent of Christ and of the establishing of the New Covenant, this Law, the Ten Commandments or Decalogue, did not. This Law is a transcript of holiness and just as God Himself is eternal and unchanging in His holiness and character, so is His Divine Law. There is never a hint given in the New Testament that the Ten Commandments have been abolished; rightly understood, such a thought would be blasphemous; indeed it is stated that, "*The Law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good the Law is spiritual*" (Romans 7:12 & 14). Paul goes on to say, "*I delight in the Law of God*" (Romans 7:22). Constantly did this New Testament apostle make mention of the Ten Commandments in his epistles as he wrote to believers of the New Covenant age. "*Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*" (Romans 13:9); "*Honour thy father and mother*" (Ephesians 6:2). How could the Holy Spirit inspire an apostle to pen such words to believers if this Law had no place in their lives? Despite all these and many other references, there are large numbers of ministers who teach, and Christians who believe that the Decalogue has no relevance today and most certainly has no place in the life and conduct of the redeemed. This is a most serious deduction.

God's Law is the expression of His character, it cannot be changed, let alone abrogated. As God does not change, neither does His Law; He is the Lord, He changes not (cf Malachi 3:6). For this reason adultery is sin in every age, in every nation, in every generation and in every individual, be they believer or unregenerate. To interpret the Law of God in any other way borders on the ridiculous; God's standards of holiness and justice are universal and timeless. Only if the New Testament clearly states that an Old Testament teaching or institution has been abolished, then we can set it aside; this certainly does not apply to the Decalogue. The Hebrew epistle expresses most clearly that the ceremonial laws concerning sacrifices and the Old Covenant order of worship have been annulled because of the one, all-efficacious sacrifice of Christ; nowhere is it indicated that the Ten Commandments have been revoked; indeed they cannot be. The Decalogue is the essential basis of all Biblical theology and sound Christian experience. Not only does our understanding of it affect the central doctrines of the Faith, it also determines our view of practice and sanctification.

We live in a day of relativism. Quite recently a so-called reverend gentleman was writing in the Daily Telegraph on issues which included marriage, divorce, homosexuality, relationship situations of a triangular kind, living together and so on. Concerning these matters it was stated, "The rightness of an action is to be judged in relation to the situation in which it takes place, rather than with reference to laws or universally binding rules". Little wonder that the world and the professing church is in such a mess, it has abandoned the one and only standard of uprightness. Man's thought and assessment of a given situation is the ruling factor; "*Thus saith the Lord*" is of no consequence. **I think** supplants the Divine Mandate; this is rank humanism.

It is sad that not only the world and nominal christendom has set aside the irrevocable Law of God, but many a true believer has been

ensnared by the pernicious teaching that, when born again, they are no longer under the Law but under grace (cf Romans 6:14). Few statements in Holy Scripture have been more misinterpreted than this. Hymns have been based upon it, containing such lines as, "Free from the Law, oh, happy condition". The freedom from the Law in which the believer can rejoice, is that he is no longer under the Law's **condemning** power, but he is most certainly still under its **commanding** power. The believing sinner does not keep the Law in order to be saved, for this he could never do, but having been saved, he continues to be under obligation to that Law. To the believer, nothing of the Law is taken away other than its curse. "*Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness*" (Romans 6:18). "*But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life*" (Romans 6:22). "*Righteousness*" and "*Holiness*" are the two great characteristics mentioned in these verses, they are to be found in God alone; but that perfect, holy Law is the transcript of the Divine nature, which is the rule of the believer's life. It is our guideline to the **Divine standard** to which Christians should strive, namely **holiness**. "*Be ye holy; for I am holy*" (1 Peter 1:16); "*Perfecting holiness in the fear of God*" (2 Corinthians 7:1); the believer is to "*follow holiness*" (Hebrews 12:14); his behaviour is to be such as "*becometh holiness*" (Titus 2:3).

The implicit obedience to God and to His Law marked out the life of Christ as being holy. At the very outset of His ministry the Lord said, "*I am not come to destroy (the Law), but to fulfil*" (Matthew 5:17). The word 'destroy' in the Greek means to 'dissolve' or 'overthrow'. By this statement it is clear that the Mediator did not destroy that Law. He fulfilled the demands of the Law vicariously for His elect, securing their justification through His sovereign grace, imputing His righteousness to every believing sinner and thus delivering them from the curse and penal consequences of that Law. That Law cannot be repealed for it is eternal, it is a Law forever "*settled in heaven*". If

the Son of God Himself has not dissolved that Law, then who can? That Law still stands with all its Divine authority, it is the infallible expression of God's holy character and unchanging will. To this, every one of Adam's race is under lasting obligation to obedience. For a Christian to say 'I am now saved by God's grace, therefore the Law has no place in my life', is a very serious misapprehension of Biblical truth.

Under the New Covenant, far from the Law being abrogated in the life of believers, that Law is written upon their hearts. *"I will put my Law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people"* (Jeremiah 31:33). Added to this, at regeneration the Holy Spirit Himself comes and indwells us, enabling us to **be** obedient. *"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them"* (Ezekiel 36:26 &27). It is as the Christian is subservient to the promptings of the Holy Spirit through the Word, that the Law is fulfilled (carried out, executed) by us. *"That the righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit"* (Romans 8:4).

In the case of a genuine work of grace in a person's life, that same Spirit which brings unto us salvation, will impart that desire of obedience, causing us to exclaim, *"O how I love thy Law!"* (Psalm 119:97); *"Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight"* (Psalm 119:35).

Christ. our Lord and Saviour, not only died for our sins and so redeemed us unto God, He also left us an example that we should follow His steps (cf 1 Peter 2:21). The life of the Mediator was one of implicit obedience to God's Law and will. Only as we follow His steps in obedience, shall we be seen to walk in the paths of

righteousness and so make headway in the perfecting of holiness in the fear of the Lord.

Conclusion.

Let no Christian ever be misled into thinking that the Law of God, that transcript of God Himself, is now abrogated, or that this holy standard has no place in the rule and conduct of their lives; such is an ill inspired delusion.

W.H.Molland

The Song of Deborah and Barak

(Judges ch.5)

Its Relevance to Today

The fifth chapter of the Book of Judges is a wonderful ascription of praise to God for the deliverance of His people from their enemies. It is generally supposed that Deborah composed this hymn or song; it was through her that God freed the Israelites from twenty years of oppression under Jabin, king of Canaan.

In hymns, as in psalms, the personality of the author can be detected as he or she expresses their experiences in words; this is in fact true of all Scripture. Divine inspiration does not mean the writers became robots; the Holy Spirit communicated the truth through the mind of the person concerned and they expressed it in their natural manner. Thus the language which came from the pen of David, and to a large degree Isaiah, was that of a poet because they were naturally poetical. The style of the historical books of Kings and Chronicles is different; Ezra is thought to be the author of this section of Holy Writ, but whether this is the case or not, it is quite apparent that it was written by a man accustomed to dealing with records and figures. Likewise

Deborah was naturally poetical and this song is not to be regarded as an unusual way for her to communicate.

The fifth chapter of Judges presents Deborah speaking in her normal fashion, but being inspired, it was the highest form of her manner of speech. God was using her natural talent to convey His truth, so in her customary way she composed this song. Not only did she compose it, she sang it and Barak, who had been so intimately involved with all that which had prompted this hymn, joined in. It was a song of thanksgiving; the entire purpose of this hymn was to put this great deliverance on record. When the deliverance was accomplished, *"Then sang Deborah and Barak"* (Judges 5:1). The subject of this robust song is stated, it was to praise the Lord for the avenging of Israel (cf Judges 5:2). *"I, even I, will sing unto the Lord; I will sing praise to the Lord God of Israel"* (Judges 5:3).

This song is obviously a natural manifestation of Deborah's demonstrative and outgoing personality; her heart was so full that she freely expressed, *"Bless ye the Lord"* (Judges 5:9); *Awake, awake, Deborah: awake, awake, utter a song: arise, Barak"* (v.12). It is as if she is saying to herself, 'I am so alive to this wondrous deliverance which God has wrought, that I cannot sufficiently tell it forth'. *"Awake Deborah", "Arise Barak"*, sing up! This woman was indeed exuberant.

Some might criticise and say she was excitable, her language was extravagant, maybe for some, such conduct would be out of place. One cannot envisage Ezra the scribe expressing himself in this manner; neither would it be in character for that disciple who leaned upon Jesus' bosom in the upper room. God has not created a standard pattern in human beings; some are extroverts, others are of a more retiring nature. Do not the analogies of the Church make this clear? The Church is likened unto a body, it is one, but it has many members (cf 1 Corinthians 12:12). The foot is not the hand, the ear is not the

eye; the one cannot say to the other *"I have no need of thee"* (v.21); *"But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him"* (v.18); what is more, *"Those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary"* (v.22).

The Church is also likened to a building (cf Ephesians 2:20-22). Not a building of uniform blocks or pre-cast slabs, but out of *"lively (living) stones"* (1 Peter 2:5). A visit to any quarry will soon prove that no two identical stones will ever be found, so is it in the Church of Jesus Christ. Each living stone is unique and selected by God from quarries of all nationalities; every one is hand-picked by the great 'Master Builder' and although so different, they all fit into His marvellous spiritual edifice which *"Groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord"* (Ephesians 2:21).

There are times and situations when God needs the quiet, somewhat reserved person's witness. Take as an example a wife, who after a number of years of married life is converted; in consequence she no longer desires the old life; the husband cannot understand this, he still wants to continue as before and naturally feels very upset if his wife does not join with him in what was previously their common enjoyment. What is more, every Sunday she wants to go to worship, she reads the Bible but all this is irksome to him. What kind of a witness does God require in this situation? Certainly not an abrasive approach in such a delicate set of circumstances, for that could soon cause such irritation as to bring about a more serious condition. This is a situation where the graces of forbearance, gentleness and kindness come in. Some might say that would be a feeble witness; God says feeble, but necessary (cf 1 Corinthians 12:22).

There are occasions when the gift of the thoughtful scribe is needed. In a difficult situation where one has to be very guarded in phraseology and the manner in which a matter is handled, it is no good to call in a verbose person or an outspoken man like Peter. This

is where the even, well balanced stones come into prominence. However Peter, as others, was necessary; he was the man selected by God to preach in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. Devotional men such as John have their place too; it was he who was entrusted with that wonderful revelation, by which we all now have some knowledge of the wonder and glory of heaven.

The poets are the members who can lay their tongues upon most expressive words; from them flow wonderful ascriptions of praise, they have the ability to let their very heart overflow and their exuberance inspires others to join with them; this is how it was with Deborah. Let none accuse her of being extravagant in either word or conduct for the Scripture clearly states that the Lord raised up those Judges (cf Judges 2:16), of whom Deborah was one; she arose to be a mother in Israel (cf Judges 5:7). Like Saul of Tarsus, she was a chosen vessel unto God, a woman talented in a special way to be an instrument in God's hand in a given situation.

This 'Song of Deborah' was spontaneous; she was not commanded of God to compose something suitable for the occasion; it was words which came to her at the time, and in her perfectly natural manner she put them together and openly expressed them. Well over three thousand years have passed since this song was written yet it is still with us today; its notes of praise and thanksgiving still vibrate with fervour and power. **Why?** Because it is Holy Spirit inspired, that is why it has been preserved; God raised up this woman to be a deliverer in Israel, but when the deliverance was effected, she must also record it in such a telling manner for it to impress future generations. The enthusiasm and unreserved spontaneity of this woman inspires the hearts of others. This principle is set forth in the Book of Proverbs, though the figures used are different, "*Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend*". "*As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man*" (Proverbs 27:17&19). It is a blessing to others when our lives, and even our faces are an

encouragement to them; when there is such affinity of spirit that one heart answereth to another. The words of David enlarge upon this, *"He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord"* (Psalm 40:2,3).

Through the grace of God in salvation what a deliverance we, His people have experienced! We have a new song to sing, a song of praise unto our God. Are we singing it? Are we like Deborah, calling upon ourselves to *"Awake, awake"*, to bless the Lord, manifesting to the world that our goings are established. Many should see this, such a manner of life will influence others. It is obvious that Deborah had been a tremendous influence and inspiration to Barak. The first two verses of Judges 5 depict them singing together, recalling the mighty victory over Jabin's armies; the Lord hath avenged Israel, they say (cf v.2). They then go on to state, *"When the people willingly offered themselves"* (v.2). A very important note is struck here by Deborah; Barak was instructed to raise ten thousand men (cf Judges 4:6); now we learn that none were conscripted, none were commanded under threat of penalty, every one of those ten thousand came of their own free will. What is more they knew what they were coming for, they knew the strength of Jabin's forces and of the military skill of Sisera, his General. Every man who enlisted under Barak was aware of the tremendous risks involved, yet not one hesitated. How can this be explained? The New Testament supplies the answer; Barak, among others, subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness and obtained promises; all this was done **through faith** (cf Hebrews 11:32,33).

This faith was seen in action in chapters four and five of the Book of Judges. Through Deborah the prophetess, God spoke. The word was to Barak and his ten thousand men. *"Up; for this is the day in which the Lord hath delivered Sisera into thine hand: is not the Lord gone*

*out before thee? So Barak went down from Mount Tabor, and ten thousand men after him" (Judges 4:14). First came the command "Up"; coupled with this was the promise, the Lord is gone out before thee, Sisera will be delivered into thine hand. Barak and his men **believed** those words and **acted upon** them, they went forth; that is faith. By their obedience and action they "obtained promises", they "subdued" the Canaanite king Jabin and his armies, by so doing they "wrought righteousness". Having sung of the ten thousand men of Naphtali and Zebulun who had come forth **willingly** to the battle, another note is struck by Deborah in her song. Reuben, "Why abodest thou among the sheepfolds?" (Judges 5:16); "Why did Dan remain in ships? Asher continued on the sea shore, and abode in his breaches" (v.17). Was it not a shame unto them, that "Zebulun and Naphtali were a people that jeopardated their lives unto the death in the high places of the field" (v.18), whilst they took no action?*

This prophetess now issues words of stern rebuke. Ten thousand men who came forth willingly out of just two tribes was a very small percentage of the twelve tribes who had been brought out of Egypt; where were the others? Reuben was busy with his sheep; Dan, the tribe whose territory bordered on to the Mediterranean, had built up a large maritime connection, they could not get away because of the many cargoes coming in and out. Asher had a lovely stretch of coastline in their part of the country, they were not interested in fighting, they were enjoying themselves in the many coves. Just as the early part of Deborah's song has relevance to the Church of the New Testament age, so is this latter part most pertinent to the present day. Out of all the people who make some kind of profession, that is the many church goers who claim they are Christians, only a small percentage are actually engaged in spiritual warfare! How few offer themselves willingly to stand with the tiny minority to contend earnestly for the faith and to defy the forces of the adversary who, with his troops, is overrunning the professing church; indeed in a large number of cases the enemy has taken over. The masses within

Christendom are otherwise engaged, business and pleasure fully occupy their time. They may go to church on a Sunday morning, put a little money in the collection box and greet their friends of like mind, but as for engaging in spiritual battle, that is out of the question.

To such people, the Holy Spirit of God has most solemn words, "*Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty*" (Judges 5:23); Meroz was an area of Palestine, which according to lexicons and commentators, is difficult to identify. What is obvious is that it embraces all those who would not come "*to the help of the Lord*". Whilst this is Deborah herself speaking, yet it is not her speaking in a revengeful manner. She is speaking as a prophetess, being inspired by the Angel of the Covenant who is none other than the Lord Himself.. Curse all those people who live after such a manner. Curse them "*bitterly*", are the words she is inspired to say. The literal meaning in the Hebrew is, 'Give them curse upon curse in a most vehement manner'. We might well ask why such strong language as this is used of the people who were Israelites? The answer is found in v.23 "*Because they came not to the help of the Lord*" When the adversary had to be engaged, it was left to just a few; but the Lord was with that minority and they prevailed, they wrought righteousness, obtaining the promises. They were men of faith whereas the masses, although Israelites, were not men of faith at all; upon them rested the curse of God, just as it did upon the heathen. This is the truth which is expounded by Paul in the New Testament, "*They are not all Israel which are of Israel*" (Romans 9:6).

So today amongst the masses who make up the professing church, it is only a minority who are of the true remnant of grace. These are known by their fruits (cf Matthew 7:20). They offer themselves willingly for spiritual conflict, whereas the professors of that which

is but a nominal christianity come under the curse of God, just as do the unregenerate. This solemn fact was forcefully confirmed by the Lord Himself, when upon earth. *"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity"* (Matthew 7:21-23).

Sad it is that many profess a faith which, in the light of Holy Scripture, is not the **true** faith. A genuine God-given faith will always be evidenced by a striving to be obedient to the Word of God. How relevant in every respect is the Song of Deborah to the present day!

W.H.Molland

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

In the middle of the present century, the late Mr G.H.Lang wrote a book entitled "**God at Work on His Own Lines**". It is reminiscent of a number of ordinary men who were raised up in particular areas and who were wonderfully used to God's glory as great spiritual blessing came to many. Extracts from this book and some of the characters concerned will be the subjects of this continuing series.

The first man to be considered is Mr Robert Gribble of North Devon, who lived in the first half of the last century. Before going into the detail as to how the Lord used Robert Gribble in his own locality, the excellent introduction given by G.H.Lang in his book should be

quoted: "This man of God (Robert Gribble), was of quite humble rank, a draper. Here at once is something to be pondered. God is about to visit a dark district to save many sinners and found many churches of saints, and He chooses as His first instrument a small tradesman. This is not an exception but rather a rule in the ways of God. It is exceptional when He works otherwise.

The cultured prince of Egypt must be reduced to the lowly status of a desert shepherd: then in due time God called and used Moses. It was a shepherd lad whom God called to shepherd His people Israel and be ancestor of the incarnate King of glory. That King of glory became a village carpenter, and of Him God says, "*Behold, my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect*" (Isaiah 42:1). When God would commence His modern world-wide evangelistic movement He chose another working man, a shoemaker, William Carey. Of this chosen instrument an ecclesiastic, pitifully unlearned as to Divine knowledge, spoke sarcastically as "this dreamer of dreams who dreams that he has dreamed"; but the foolishness of God was wiser than men. This was only a little before He chose draper Gribble to serve Him in Devon. And when God would open up Central Africa to the gospel, He chose a youth from the loom, David Livingstone; and neither F.S.Arnot nor Dan Crawford, who developed so widely the work Livingstone started, had social status or special education.

This, we say, is not exceptional in the ways of God. When the Lord chose His special apostles, twelve were men from lowly life and only one came from a university city, Tarsus, or had academic training; and it is this one learned man who points out that "*not many wise men after the flesh are called*", but that rather "*God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise*" (1 Corinthians 1:26 & 27). As Mrs Booth well said, "He has not made shift with them, taken them because there were no others. No, He hath chosen them".

To be sure, God makes exceptions. Some learned men He chooses and uses. They reduce languages to writing; they translate His Word; they explain His Book with technical accuracy; they investigate ancient records and so illuminate His ancient Scriptures; which type of service is invaluable and some of them have suffered much for Christ. But as compared with the great mass of disciples and the majority of God's servants, these are the few, always the minority. They are specialists and have an honoured place; but the vast majority of a kingdom, upon whom mainly its work devolves and its stability and progress depend, are not specialists. Today special organizations exist and special efforts are made to reach students as a class. May these efforts be blessed, for students need deliverance from damnation equally with the rest of us. Yet from the gospel point of view it would appear that they are one of the less hopeful classes and that in general the results are scarcely proportionate to the efforts. Nor is the reason hard to find. It is that "*knowledge puffeth up*" (1 Corinthians 8:1). From pride, above all other sins, we must be saved, if we are to be saved at all. God's good news is not addressed to students but to sinners, and to the former only because they are the latter.

In a drawing room in Oxford I had addressed some dozens of students of both sexes. Some of them were among the most brilliant classical and divinity students of the day. Our host asked if I had ever thought of living in such a centre to seek to influence such. I replied that I had not because, in the first place their scholastic conceit would cause many of them to set little value upon one like myself without a university degree; and then from the outlook of the work of the gospel, I did not set much value upon the class of person that had been gathered that afternoon, for observation in many lands had satisfied me that the more part of the solid, enduring work of the kingdom of God is not being done by such but by men and women in humbler walks of life. My host, himself a university graduate, expressed agreement.

Of course, there is no evil in genuine learning, and it gives certain real advantages. God knows everything and is of necessity, the most learned of all beings. But in a world of vain, conceited sinners, and in an age and region inordinately proud of the little it knew, and profoundly ignorant of its ignorance (which conditions mark the modern Western world as they marked Greece of old), that one highly educated apostle determined to appear to be an ignoramus as regards all subjects but Christ, and to set Him before those proud hearers in the offensive status of one crucified (cf 1 Corinthians 2:1-5). The learned man who can thus reduce himself to the position of one unlearned can be used of God. In place of parading, to his own glory, a form of knowledge which is wholly powerless to save man from sin, he will set forth Him who is the power of God and the wisdom of God unto salvation. This last, the humble Robert Gribble could do, and God chose and used him, he being also otherwise qualified in ways we shall soon observe. Let those who look for a God-given awakening, look in the right direction and not be stumbled if it begin in God's usual way. It may be associated with a learned Jonathan Edwards in America, or a cultured John Wesley in England; but it is more likely to begin with a cobbler Carey, or a draper Gribble, or an untrained youth like Evan Roberts. One of those other qualifications which marked Robert Gribble was a consuming love for the souls of others. The love of God which had found him constrained him to seek others. The narrative begins thus:

The First Step

"Who hath despised the day of small things?" (Zechariah 4:10)

When the Lord first made known His precious salvation to my own soul, the prevailing thought of my mind was, "How can I be useful to the souls of others?" I was continually enquiring, "*Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?*" This desire, if sincere and earnest, is never, I believe, disappointed; and it may be instructive to observe the way in which, in my case, the Lord was pleased to fulfil it. It occurred to me that my service as a teacher in the Sunday school of my native town,

Barnstaple, would not be much missed, while it might be very useful in some of the neighbouring villages. At that period (1815), a village Sunday school was a new thing in that part of the country; but the result of this thought was the establishment of several within the space of one year, through my own personal exertions and the help of others who were stirred up to follow my example; so that nearly three hundred children were soon brought under religious instruction.

The character of the whole agricultural population in that neighbourhood at this period was that of gross darkness. In a district nearly twenty miles in length, there was scarcely any gospel ministry; nor did I know or hear of a single family, only one excepted, where the truth was known or valued. I remember to have heard about that time that some ignorant persons were in the habit of preserving the clothes in which they were married, from an impression that they could not go worthily to the Lord's table without a 'wedding garment'. Equally ignorant was an old man who told me that he was now sure the Bible was true; for his master had lately bought a threshing machine, and it was prophesied that there should be "*a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth*".

The Sunday school teacher was now to advance to preaching. He says;

A considerable crowd assembled within and around the cottage where the gospel was first preached in November 1815, and its results were interesting and important, far beyond any previous anticipation. A cry for the gospel was soon heard from these ignorant villagers, and it was responded to on some succeeding week evenings. This however did not satisfy, and I was earnestly entreated to provide a Sunday evening service also. But there was no one to undertake this. My heart yearned over the poor villagers and I longed to send them the bread of life. At length I offered to read a sermon to them and this was gladly accepted, and for a few weeks I read one of Burder's

Village Sermons to a crowded congregation of rustic hearers. This was my first step in service to the Lord in the gospel. Up to this time I do not remember to have had a single thought of ministry, nor did I consider myself at all qualified for such a work, but I was drawn into it as by necessity for the sake of others; and as I then thought, merely to supply the present need. But "*My thoughts are not your thoughts saith the Lord*" and the word to me, although at that time I knew it not, was "*Arise and preach the preaching that I bid thee*".

I was soon tired of reading a printed sermon and began to write one, and was gradually led on step by step until, within less than twelve months, I usually preached without notes.

Within a few months of my first effort to preach, some farmers living at Hiscot, another village of the same large parish of Tawstock, requested me to come and minister to them also and I consented to go there in the morning; so that my time on the Lord's Day became fully occupied.

The instruction at the Sunday school was attended with much blessing. About ninety children were collected in one village which contained but twelve or fourteen houses, and several were afterwards converted. Two of the earliest scholars have for many years engaged in the ministry of the gospel.

This account is instructive as to a Divine call to minister the Word of God. There is (1) no personal choice of the ministry as a desirable earthly vocation, with social status and guaranteed income; nor (2) any personal intention to devote life wholly thereto. But rather there is (3) a sense of personal insufficiency for this high and holy service, with (4) simply a response of love to an urgent and felt need in the

souls of others. Humility, love, and an obedient spirit, wrought in the heart by the Spirit of God, were the requisite qualifications. These being present, Robert Gribble could be led on, receive spiritual training and be used by the Lord. It is also to be observed that (5) concurrently with the preparation of the preacher's heart there went an awakening sense of need in those he was to help, so that they sought instruction.

G.H.Lang

To be continued

Editorial

There is one word pertaining to vital Christianity which stands supreme; that word is **obedience**. We come into possession of spiritual life by obeying the gospel. Having through the grace of God been given this life which is eternal, and so becoming the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus (cf Galatians 3:22) we are, as his children, to be obedient, not fashioning ourselves according to our former lusts, but as He who has called us is holy, so are we to be holy (cf 1 Peter 1:14,15). Holiness and uprightness in life is dependent solely upon obedience to the Word of God. To be wilfully disobedient to any part of God's will, as set out in Holy Writ is to dishonour Him. What could be more serious? The question of obedience should be the controlling motive in the life of the believer. *"Take heed, and hearken, O Israel; this day thou art become the people of the Lord thy God. Thou shalt therefore obey the voice of the Lord thy God, and do His commandments"* (Deuteronomy 27:9,10).

This subject of **obedience** is dealt with profoundly by Thomas Watson, the Puritan, in a question and answer form. This editorial

can do no better than quote extracts from his writings, which will aptly enforce other articles in this magazine.

Q. What is the duty that God requireth of man?

A. Obedience to His revealed will. It is not enough to hear God's voice, we must obey The end why God has given us His laws is obedience. *"Ye shall do my judgments, and keep my ordinances"* (Leviticus 18:4).

Q. What is the rule of obedience?

A. The written Word Our obedience must correspond with the Word To seem to be zealous, if it be not according to the Word, is not obedience, but will-worship.

Q. What are the ingredients in our worship that make it acceptable?

A1. It must be free and cheerful, or it is penance, not sacrifice. *"If ye be willing and obedient"* (Isaiah 1:19). God will have a free will offering (cf Deuteronomy 16:10).

A2. Obedience must be devout and fervent; *"Fervent in spirit"* (Romans 12:11). Obedience without fervency is like a sacrifice without fire.

A3. Obedience must be extensive, it must reach to all God's commands; *"Then shall I not be ashamed when I have respect unto all Thy commandments"* (Psalm 119:6). There is a stamp of Divine authority upon all God's commands Herein some discover their hypocrisy: they will obey God in some things which are more facile and may raise their repute, but other things they leave undone.

A4. Obedience must be sincere; we must aim at the glory of God in it. *"Do all to the glory of God"* (1 Corinthians 10:31). O let us look to our ends in obedience: it is possible the action may be right and not the heart. Amaziah *"did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, but not with a perfect heart"* (2 Chronicles 25:2).

A5. Obedience must be in and through Christ; *"He hath made us accepted in the Beloved"* (Ephesians 1:6). Unless we serve God thus, in hope and confidence of Christ's merits, we rather provoke Him than please Him.

A6. Obedience must be constant; *"Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doeth righteousness at all times"* (Psalm 106:3). Hypocrites obedience is but for a season but true obedience is constant *"The righteous shall hold on his way"* (Job 17:9). We have vowed constancy, to renounce the pomp and vanities of the world, and to fight under Christ's banner unto death.

Q. Whence is it that men do not obey God? They know their duty but do it not.

A1. Not obeying God is for want of faith Satan knows if he can keep men from believing the truth, he is sure to keep them from obeying it.

A2. Not obeying God is for want of self-denial. God commands one thing and men's lusts command another if lust cannot be denied, God cannot be obeyed".

How better can obedience be explained than by these words of Watson? Does not every true believer know all this to be right? Yet by making only a general observation, one has to admit to a widespread spirit of disobedience. How far short are the people of God today from the example set by Caleb of whom God said, he *"hath followed me fully"* (Numbers 14:24).

In the main, professing Christians of this age are only prepared to go so far in respect to obedience, that which is acceptable is received, but that which entails ridicule and brings the reproach of Christ is rejected. In consequence of this prevalent spirit of rebellion to so much of God's Word on the part of those who profess to be Christian, the lamp of testimony is burning exceeding dim. Alas, numerous ministers and preachers 'play to the gallery' by only saying what the people want to hear. One discovers that certain teachings and practices are being treated as secondary and of little import in many places which would claim to be paragons of orthodoxy. For such matters to be preached from the pulpit, let alone made mandatory to membership, would disrupt the unity of the church, therefore a

seeming unity is maintained through silence on these issues, but this is not the unity of the faith; it is at variance with it, therefore **disobedience**.

It is sad when church members are disobedient, but it is infinitely sadder when a minister is influenced by them so that he holds back certain truths. What is more reprehensible than for a minister of God's Word to fail in teaching **all** the counsel of God?

Visiting Preachers

5 October 1997	Mr R.J.Hooper	(Saltash)
12 October 1997	Mr G. Thrussell	(Truro)
19 October 1997	Mr M.R.Wood	(Bridgewater)

New Publications

The Head Covering	Timothy Nelson	31p stamp
Divorce	Dennis Williamson	31p stamp

Highly recommended:

Dispensationalism - Rightly Dividing the People of God
by Keith A.Mathison £5.64 post paid

Please Note:

From now on, the Annual Bible Convention will be held, God willing, on the first weekend in June, instead of the first weekend in August.