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**North Road Chapel (Evangelical)  
BIDEFORD**

# *Lessons from John's Gospel*

## *chapter seventeen*

*“I in them, and Thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved me” (John 17:23).*

The truth contained in this verse is stupendous; who can fathom the depth of it, that God loves His redeemed children just as He loves Christ? Such a subject demands that we approach it in a spirit of holy awe.

Man was originally created for the Glory of God; that is his chief end, but he fell, then were communications severed. Nevertheless, God who knows all things in advance, was in perfect knowledge of this, and elected a remnant of Adam's fallen race unto salvation. This salvation would effect a radical transformation, in that it would regenerate and restore depraved sinners, constituting them priests unto God; rendering men and women, by faith, to have absolute freedom of access into heaven itself, there to commune with the eternal God. *“They shall be priests of God”* (Revelation 20:6). They *“are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people”* (1 Peter 2:9), called out specifically *“to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable unto God”* (1 Peter 2:5).

This amazing reconstitution of fallen sinners was, and only could be, effected by the Son of God in His mediatorial work of redemption: **Thou** hast made us unto our God kings and priests, for Thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood (cf Revelation 5:9-10). We who by sovereign grace are established priests, have this wondrous liberty and boldness to enter into the holiest, but it is only by the blood of Jesus (cf Hebrews 10:19).

Christ is not only the meritorious cause; He is the one and only means. God does not bless us as persons distinct from the Mediator. He blesses as being in Christ, members of His body; He is in us, and we in Him. He is our establishment. This is a profound mystery and the deeper we probe, the more mysterious it becomes to finite minds.

*“I in them, and Thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one”*. In order that this kingdom of priests, this mystical body be so founded and perfected, we must be Christ’s, as Christ is God’s. That is, Christ must be in us, as God is in Christ. How can this be explained? God is in Christ in the unity of essence or nature. In the Mediator *“dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily”* (Colossians 2:9). *“God was in Christ”* (2 Corinthians 5:19). *“I and My Father are one”* (John 10:30). It must be immediately stated that we are not of the same essence as Christ was with the Father; nevertheless, there is that which answereth to, or resembles it. In our mystical union with Christ, we have in us that same spirit of communion which was in the Mediator. The believer is as indissolubly linked with Christ the Head as Christ is with God. We are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones; great mystery though it be, this is the truth concerning Christ and the Church (cf Ephesians 5:30&32).

Christ is in us, and we are in Him in the same indivisible manner that unites the Trinity. Just as God and the Mediator cannot be disjoined neither can we ever be severed from Christ. *“I in them and Thou in me”*. Once in Him, in Him for ever. This was and is the great design of Almighty God in the Everlasting Covenant. Consequently, as this verse continues, it looks on to an **ultimate consummation**. This illustrious company of people, the remnant of grace, are to be made perfect in one. It is a fact that Christ, by virtue of His infinity, ever sees His Church as a glorious body entire and complete, with no members missing. Yet it is equally true, that

at the present time it is not complete, in as much that there are still souls ordained unto eternal life, who, up to the present have not been called by the Holy Spirit. It could well be that some are not yet born, for no one knows how many more generations will arise before the end comes; but as long as there are those of Adam's race who are ordained unto eternal life, the world will continue. However, as soon as the last of the election of grace is brought to salvation, so soon will time be finalized and Christ will come – as quickly and unexpectedly as a thief in the night (cf Matthew 24:43).

It is the Lord's second advent which will effect the great event of the resurrection of the dead, usher in the day of judgement and bring all the elect of all history into that state of glorification. From among all nations will they be gathered, clothed in the very likeness of Christ, and presented a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, for it will be holy and without blemish (cf Ephesians 5:27). This glorious consummation cannot come about "*Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ*" (Ephesians 4:13). All those chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world (cf Ephesians 1:4), must come to faith before the **perfect body** can be made manifest.

Further elucidation concerning the entirety of 'the body' is given in the Hebrew epistle: "*God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect*" (Hebrews 11:40). This brings into view the Old Testament saints. They were of the election of grace just as we are in the New Testament age. They came to faith under the Old Covenant, we under the New – the better covenant (cf Hebrews 8:6). That which is being explained in this verse is that they, the Old Testament believers, cannot come into the **ultimate** blessing until all the elect of the New Testament age are also gathered. Even the believers of the New Testament

generations who have died over the centuries are in the same state. They are all with Christ which is far better (cf Philippians 1:23); their **spirits** are already made perfect (cf Hebrews 12:23). Yet all await the redemption of the **body** (cf Romans 8:23). This does not take place until “*the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ*” (Titus 2:13), which will immediately follow the calling of the last elect sinner to salvation.

The second advent of Christ will see the final settlement, and the ushering in of the New Heavens and the New Earth; with all the redeemed from Abel to the last name registered in the Lamb’s Book of Life made perfect in one; all in glorified bodies reunited to their spirits long since gone before.

“Soul and body, reunited,  
Thenceforth nothing shall divide;  
Waking up in Christ’s own likeness,  
Satisfied.”

(S. Baring-Gould)

This is the **ultimate** eternal glorification.

At present this state has not been reached, many of the saints are upon earth and many more are in Heaven, but wherever the redeemed are, we are all of the same family, we all bear the same name. “*Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named*” (Ephesians 3:15). All have come “*To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven*” (Hebrews 12:23). Whether above or below, we are united to the same Head, each one bears the name of Christ.

Throughout history, even in our day, the children of God are to be found in all parts of the world, just where Divine providence has ordained. Here they remain until they reach the end of their

appointed lives. In this state “*We groan within ourselves*” (Romans 8:23) “*Having a desire to depart and to be with Christ; which is far better*” (Philippians 1:23). Whilst this is true of those on earth, it is also true of those in heaven. Although their spirits are “*made perfect*”, they too are depicted as crying “*How long O Lord?*” (Revelation 6:10). So is set out the wondrous union of the saints in all ages. This is superbly put by Briggs in his communion hymn:

“One body we, one body who partake,  
One Church united in communion blest;  
One name we bear, one Bread of Life we break,  
With all the saints on earth and saints at rest.”

Those already in the heavenly realm long for our company, as we long for theirs; we praise God for their deliverance, whilst they cry aloud for ours. In this way does the Holy Spirit bring before us the indivisibility of the body of Christ. Death, which breaks every other union, cannot break this. It is a oneness which is eternally unbreakable. Such is the profundity of Christ being in us and we in Him.

The verse being considered continues – “*That the world may know that Thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as Thou hast loved me*”. The petitions of our Lord in John’s Gospel chapter seventeen concerning love and unity give no grounds for that unity of which the ecumenists speak and dream. Christ is treating of a **perfect unity**, to be made perfect in one.

True it is, that we should strive for unity on earth, but this most certainly does not mean that we join with all and sundry who profess the name of Christianity; quite the reverse is the case, Holy Scripture sanctions one union only, the unity of the faith; the believer is only to unite in the truth. Anything which is not according to the truth he is to **separate** from, not **unite** with.

Apart from true unity within the local church of which we are members, there is very little hope of achieving it; but within a gathered assembly of the Lord's people, such unity should be striven for and jealously guarded. Anything or anybody who would in any way upset this holy and blessed order amongst the people of God must be rigorously dealt with, because the world looks on. It may be common belief today that peace and love must obtain at all costs; this is a heretical belief. We are only to love in the truth. Biblical order is "*Love the truth **and** peace*" (Zechariah 8:19). The truth comes first; peace follows. Peace at the expense of truth will in due time, always bring trouble and degeneration.

The world knew that Christ was sent by God because He stood first for truth. This great fact He most positively made known: "*To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth*" (John 18:37). Truth should be the hallmark of the believer and of a local church – united **in the truth** as it is in Christ. The world should see this stamp of Christ upon us; only in this way will they be impressed.

However, that which is the main thrust of our verse is its focus into the future as has already been seen. Not until the Church is complete and every elect soul gathered, will the world really comprehend that Christ was sent to this earth as a man by Divine appointment, and that God loved a remnant of guilty sinners just as He loved His Son incarnate. At that great day when the dazzling throne is set up and all appear before Almighty God; the sheep set on His right hand and the goats on His left; all kindreds of the earth will then wail because of Him (cf Revelation 1:7). Consoling words will the sheep hear: "*Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world*" (Matthew 25:34). In shattering contrast will the goats be addressed, "*Then shall He say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me*

*ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels”* (Matthew 25:41). Then will all the goats of this world be convinced **of the truth** for which Christ was born to bear witness to.

The day is yet to come when the teeming millions of human generations, who have rejected the truth as it is in Christ Jesus, will see an amazing sight. A concourse of people so vast that they cannot be calculated, all in resurrected bodies of glory, like unto Christ’s glorified body, will be on view as they file through the gates of pearl into the Eternal City. Men and women called by grace out of every tribe and nation throughout the millennia of human history, all **made perfect in one**. So will that multitudinous doom-stricken company on the left hand, **the world**, know that God loved that now glorified remnant even as He loved Christ.

W. H. Molland

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“Those who have no part or lot in this glory union shall, nevertheless, be given a glimpse of the same as was the rich man in Hell; (for the augmenting of his torment) he was permitted to see *“Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom”* (Luke 16:23). The sight of Christ’s ‘Queen’ standing at His right hand in gold of Ophir (cf Psalm 45:9, Matthew 25:34) – figure of His glory – will be self-convicting to the reprobate, that Christ is what He declared Himself to be. As they behold the honour which God has put upon the Church, it will openly appear that He has loved them as He has loved their Head. For having despised and rejected Christ, and reproached and persecuted His people, they will be filled with confusion and everlasting shame (cf Daniel 12:2). Whereas the Church shall be filled with joy unspeakable and have everlasting proof of the wondrous love of God for them.”

A. W. Pink



## *Citizens of Heaven*

There is in the world today a great flux of people from place to place. Ease of travel, and the international political climate has prompted the movement and migration of unprecedented volumes of humanity from one land to another. The practical effects of this phenomenon are clearly seen and felt, all around.

Whilst bemoaning the current world situation, how many Christians forget that they too have experienced such a change – a translation from their original country of residence, to a new kingdom – the kingdom of Christ (cf Colossians 1:13). Here is a move more radical than any earthly journey, as it involves crossing from the worldly to the spiritual; from a corrupt, benighted nation of Earth, to the Holy Nation that belongs unto God (cf 1 Peter 2:9).

This is a doctrine much neglected and despised by the church at large today. Many Christians are heard referring to the sin-cursed part of the world in which they were born as ‘our country’, or to a fallen, reprobate man or woman as ‘our monarch’. Is such an attitude in accord with Holy Scripture? No indeed! The words of Christ are conclusive: “*They are not of the world even as I am not of the world*” (John 17:16). Every true child of God is to “*desire a better country, that is, an **heavenly**: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city*” (Hebrews 11:16). And whilst honour and prayer is due for those in positions of worldly authority (cf 1 Peter 2:17, Romans 13:7), ‘our king’ is no less than “*the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God*” (1 Timothy 1:17), to Him and His mandate we owe our allegiance.

Every truly saved person has **changed** their nationality, and is made a **citizen of Heaven**. This is not some future prospect – it is here

and now. Said Christ of His disciples: “*ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world*” (John 15:19), to which Peter adds: “*ye are ... a holy nation, a peculiar people...Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God*” (1 Peter 2:9, 10). There can be no mistaking the present tense of these verses of God’s Word – the transformation described has happened already.

How then is this change of citizenship effected? In the natural, citizenship is conferred by birth or adoption, by the payment of a certain sum of money (cf Acts 22:27-28), or even by marriage. The Christian is secured on every count. At salvation, the Holy Ghost comes in regenerating power upon the repentant sinner, and he is born again of the Spirit; thus is entrance granted into the kingdom of God (cf John 3:5). Elsewhere in Scripture, the truth of adoption is seen: “*ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father*” (Romans 8:15). By virtue of a heavenly Father, heavenly citizenship is assured – it is the Christian’s by ‘new-birthright’.

Further substantiating this transformation, a ransom price has been paid: “*ye are not your own...For ye are bought with a price*” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20), in consequence of which, the saint is made a ‘freeman’ of the Lord (cf 1 Corinthians 7:22-23). That same Lord is also the heavenly bridegroom of the church, betrothing His people to Himself in mystical union (cf Hosea 2:19-20 Ephesians 5:30-31).

Let the reader observe that in every instance listed above, God is the prime mover and instigator. He effects the new birth, His Spirit certifies the adoption, His Son has outworked the redemption, and makes the espousals. “*Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you*” (John 15:16). No man of himself could ever achieve heavenly citizenship, neither is the desire in his mind; for by nature he is a child of disobedience and wrath, blindly serving the ‘prince of the power of the air’. The change is wrought by God, by virtue of his

inexorable sovereignty, richness of mercy, and greatness of love (cf Ephesians 2:1-10). Words spoken to Israel of old are even more applicable to the New Testament Church: “*the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto Himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth*” (Deuteronomy 7:6f).

There can be no questioning the Christian’s divinely conferred, holy nationality to the kingdom of heaven. Covenant relationship with God through Christ, and the redemption He has accomplished are the irrefutable foundations of it. This heavenly citizenship is granted at salvation, guaranteed throughout the wilderness years of earthly existence, and gains the ultimate consummation of glory. As Toplady so potently put it:

“More happy, but not more secure  
The glorified spirits in heaven.”

Having confirmed this fundamental truth, consider again the physical parallel. A complaint often levelled against foreign nationals who are granted citizenship of a new country, is their subsequent failure to integrate into their adoptive society. Perhaps no effort is made to learn the language, or engage with their neighbours. The anticipated process of integration is conspicuous by its absence.

Let the Christian examine himself. Having been made by grace, a **citizen of heaven**, what progress has been made in heavenly matters? What learning of the language? What communion with other believers? “*Now ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God*” (Ephesians 2:19). Having severed all ties with this present evil world, there must now follow a development of the new identity, and holy nationality. The Christian must become naturalized into his heavenly country; domiciled in the kingdom of God.

The language of heaven is read and learned in the pages of Holy Scripture – God’s Word. Let this be the Christian’s continual recourse and delight. Then will his “*conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ*” (Philippians 1:27). As the Word abides within him, so he too will abide in his Lord (cf 1 John 2:24). Expression is also given to this language in prayer, when the child of God engages in direct communion with his heavenly Father. “Prayer is the Christian’s vital breath, The Christian’s native air”, said the hymn-writer, so conscious of this truth. When the saint begins to pray, in the closet, or in the church, they take upon their lips the divine vernacular, the native tongue of heaven.

Whilst this tongue is unknown or unappreciated by the worldly man, it should be the habitual dialect of fellow believers. They freely converse together upon the matters of their eternal kingdom, and “*things...touching the King*” (Psalm 45:1). Such was the experience of faithful Jews in the Old Covenant’s closing days: “*Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened and heard it*” (Malachi 3:16). Engaged in verbal communion together, the saints experience that burning-heart emotion which arises from such discussion (cf Luke 24:32), and know that their words are divinely registered in heaven’s courts.

Let such a prospect inspire every Christian to have their conversation in heaven (cf Philippians 3:20), for how reticent and embarrassed so many are, and would sooner talk of anything else than thus employ their tongues. Yet such heavenly communication is the peculiar privilege and blessing of the saints, the common ground between fellow countrymen, and a foretaste of that which will be our continual and delightful experience in Glory.

As a citizen of heaven, the Christian’s union with other saints is not limited to those upon earth – they also have a special relationship

and fellowship with those who have gone before, and now enjoy the full realisation of their citizenship above. Death is but a ‘narrow sea’ that divides the visible, earthly members of the Church from their glorified compatriots now in God’s presence. Speaking of the Church, S. J. Stone wrote:

“Yet she on earth hath union  
With God the Three in One,  
And mystic sweet communion  
With those whose rest is won.”

This union is due to the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom “*the whole family in heaven and earth is named*” (Ephesians 3:14-15). The Christian belongs to a family which bridges the division of natural and spiritual, for God has reconciled them all unto himself, whether they are in earth, or in heaven (cf Colossians 1:18-21). All share the same Lord, the same faith, the same baptism, the same God and Father; all await the glorious consummation, and redemption of the body; all are citizens together. The saints upon earth follow the faith of their predecessors, whilst they, as a great cloud of witnesses, observe that which is accomplished in their brethren that are in the world. As with any community of people, all have a shared purpose and destiny, in this case, glorification, and unification: “*they without us should not be made perfect*” (Hebrews 11:40), “*we which are alive and remain shall be caught up with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: so shall we ever be with the Lord*” (1 Thessalonians 4:18). Let all take comfort and inspiration from these words.

In this matter of integration, and appreciation of the consequences of heavenly citizenship, none can afford to be negligent. Reverting again to the natural, there is a great threat to society posed by those who obtain citizenship of a nation, yet fail to integrate. Instead, they perhaps maintain a fierce independence, promoting the values

and policies of their country of origin, often in contradiction to those of their new home nation. They want the benefits of the land to which they have moved, without taking any responsibility, or undergoing any change of attitude.

There are Christians of this calibre. They now belong to the kingdom of God, but hold fast to their earthly values and sinful ways, and thus establish ghettos of worldliness within the Church. Alas that in so many companies of God's people today, the 'World Quarter' may be easily identified – individuals whose apparent aim is to remain altogether unchanged, and prevent their alleged Christianity from affecting their behaviour or conduct in any way. They desire the perceived blessings of heavenly citizenship, without any impact upon their manner of life, namely: "*having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away*" (2 Timothy 3:5).

This mindset is wholly incompatible with true faith, and a real and present danger in the Church; the professions of its protagonists should be seriously questioned. "*Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God*" (James 4:4)

The true Christian meanwhile, ever conscious of his high calling and heavenly citizenship, must renounce his former nation, not becoming entangled with the affairs of this life (cf 2 Timothy 2:4), its people, its policies and its priorities. Rather, let his only patriotism be for that better country, of which by grace, he is made a naturalized member.

“So shall I ever be  
Now and eternally  
United with the Citizens of Heaven.”

R. J. Steward

## *The Divine Planning Authority*

Every area throughout the country has a corporate body known as the Planning Committee; all matters concerned or affected by the Planning Act come under its jurisdiction. Questions relating to development, demolition, industry, housing, alteration, allocation of land for specific purposes, change of use, all have to be sanctioned and carried out according to the Planning Authority. However, such corporations are not infallible, and it is in no way uncommon for plans to have to be amended, sometimes even withdrawn, as in the execution of the plan, it becomes apparent that the development is not feasible, or other situations arise which demand modification. All this is understandable, because mortals, despite their ability and dexterity are not exempt from misjudgement or error.

Turning from the human to the Divine, which is the subject of this article, the situation is entirely different. Here we treat of plans which do not pertain to a local area of earth, but to **the universe**; an unerring design laid down by the eternal God who is immutable and who sees the end from the beginning. Not only so, He also has the wisdom and the power to bring all things unto one glorious consummation. The human onlooker is completely mystified by this; far from seeing a perfect plan outworked, he sees what appears to be chaos and confusion. This is not so, for all things, in all places, at all times, are predetermined: “*Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did He in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places*” (Psalm 135:6), and all move on to a foreordained goal, as laid out on the drawing board of heaven’s counsel chambers. The execution of the final plan as it is there set out, never presents a problem which calls for amendment or modification. There are never any embarrassing moments in the legislative halls of the Divine Planning Authority.

The subject here before us can be encapsulated in just five words: **‘the absolute sovereignty of God’**. This is a topic, together with the accompanying doctrine of **Divine Providence**, which is alien to the thoughts of modern society. Sadly, it is a line of truth which is not heralded forth by the people of God as it should be. The *“eternal power and Godhead”* (Romans 1:20) of the ‘Most High’ is little appreciated by many Christians today; He is almost an unknown God to many, who worship Him in ignorance (cf Acts 17:23). The God of Holy Scripture is supreme, unlimited and absolute; He orders all affairs in every part of His vast creation, even to the most minute detail of the least of His creatures.

Concerning the universe, with all its galaxies, each containing such a multiplicity of orbs, planets and satellites, despite modern science, discovery and space travel, human knowledge remains so infinitesimal as to be of little consequence. The immensity of the creation of the Almighty, Eternal God cannot even be contemplated, let alone discovered, by finite man. *“To whom then will ye liken Me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: He calleth them all by names by the greatness of His might, for that He is strong in power; not one faileth”* (Isaiah 40:25-26). Why no failure? Because of the Divine plan - all being appointed and set in their correct orbit, place and order.

From the incomprehensibility of space, we have to turn and consider even the humble sparrow that chirps upon the roof tops; although a tiny object, nevertheless a subject of the **same** supreme authority. The God of heaven created, coordinates, and is in control of **all**; to the degree that not even one of these little feathered creatures falls to the ground without your Father which is in heaven (cf Matthew 10:29).



In his *Theological Outlines*, Hodge states: “Providence literally means, foresight and a careful arrangement prepared beforehand for the accomplishment of predetermined ends. Therefore providence assures the continued preservation of all things created and of the continual government of all things thus preserved, so that all the ends for which they were created are infallibly accomplished”. Unger’s definition is: “The providence of God is unlimited. All things and all creatures, visible and invisible are affected by it, and it has respect to all that takes place in the universe”.

Bounteous provision, blasting pestilence; sickness, health; joy, sorrow; all are of God’s ordering. All the seeming complexities of national and international affairs are under sovereign control. This is a matter of tremendous magnitude. The raising up and the putting down of kings, monarchs, emperors, presidents and dictators (cf Psalm 75:6-7, Proverbs 8:15, Romans 13:1), the establishing and overthrow of nations and empires, all are also subject to the imperial ordering of Him who sitteth upon the circle of the earth and vieweth the inhabitants thereof as but grasshoppers; bringing the princes to nothing and reducing the judges of the earth to vanity (cf Isaiah 40:22-23).

Both the effecting of creation, and the planning and ordering of **all** things created, are **exclusively** the work of the One Almighty God, who in His sovereignty and Divine authority “*worketh all things after the counsel of His own will*” (Ephesians 1:11). “*By Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him: and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist*” (Colossians 1:16-17).

What has been written thus far could be misconstrued as implying that within the Divine Planning there are schemes of evil as well as

for good; this is not so. The Supreme Potentate is a God of intrinsic holiness, rectitude and unsullied righteousness; anything which would in the slightest degree suggest that He was the author of evil, or impinge upon the inherent nature of Him whose very name is Holy, is blasphemy. The author of evil is Satan, a fallen spirit being, styled in Scripture the ‘Great Deceiver’ and ‘Father of Lies’ (cf Revelation 12:9, John 8:44). True it is that Satan is allowed, even bidden, by God to bring about judgement; but the purpose of the Supreme Ruler in this is to exercise equitable justice upon those He deems it necessary so to judge. All this comes within the Divine Planning regulations.

This is an area which perplexes many, yet intelligible elucidation is given in God’s Word. The Medes and Persians were termed ‘God’s sanctified ones’ (cf Isaiah 13:3). In no way does this mean they were elected unto eternal salvation; they were reprobate nations, yet were they set apart by God to execute His will in bringing righteous judgement upon Babylon. The accuser of the brethren, Satan (cf Revelation 12:10), entered into the Divine Courts with defamatory words concerning Job. In order that Job’s sincerity and fidelity be proved, God bade the Great Adversary to go forth and attack him from every conceivable angle, excepting his life. In his attacks, as is his wont, Satan brought in human agents; first it was the Sabeans; later Job’s own wife (cf Job chs1&2). God was not the author of the barbarity of the Medes, the savagery of the Sabeans, nor the unfaithfulness of Job’s wife; for their sins, each will be held accountable. Judas Iscariot is a further example. Satan entered into Judas (cf Luke 22:3). Substantiated further, *“The Son of Man goeth as it is written of Him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born”* (Matthew 26:24). It was prophesied and ordained that our Lord should be betrayed into the hands of sinners, but God was not the author; Judas Iscariot, into whom Satan entered, is responsible for his actions.

Such is the infallibility of Divine Planning; whether or not our puny minds can attain to it is irrelevant; we have to bow to unerring sovereignty. Finite man must grasp the infinity of God. *“Remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like Me. Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure: Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country; yea I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it”*(Isaiah 46 9-11).

In order to make all this relevant to the individual, no words could be more apposite than those of David: *“The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me”* (Psalm 138:8). He performeth all things for me (cf Psalm 57:2). As the Lord carries into effect that which concerns us, our experiences are many: disappointment, frustration and chastisement; as well as prosperity assuagement and felicity; occasioned either by our folly or faithfulness. This **unerring plan**, known aforetime by an infallible God, is thus outworked by the various means and persons whom He ordains to use.

The Christian who fully appreciates and accepts **the absolute sovereignty of God** has made much progress in the path of holiness.

W. H. Molland

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“When the records of eternity shall be exposed to view, all the counsels and results of that profound wisdom looked into; how it will transport when it shall be discerned: Lo, thus were the designs laid: here were the apt junctures and admirable dependencies of things, which when acted upon the stage of time, seemed so perplexing and intricate.”

Howe

## ***IT DIDN'T JUST HAPPEN...***

Things don't just happen to the children of God;  
They're part of a wonderful plan;  
The trouble and hardship, the sorrows, the rod;  
Are strokes of the Great Sculptor's hand.

When some fearful accident strikes you a blow,  
And you worry and fret and demand;  
Why try with such earnest the reason to know?  
It's not a disaster, it's planned.

Persecution and trial come down like a storm;  
Friends disappoint and withstand;  
At last, all alone, bewildered, forlorn,  
You ask, and He answers: "It's planned".

Do you wonder why God to affliction should call,  
And cause you to suffer a blow?  
"No man should be moved by affliction" says Paul,  
"For it's part of the plan, as you know."

Did some dear one sicken, and finally die?  
Did your heart break with anguish and woe?  
Did you doubt then your Lord and cry out: "My God, why?"  
Don't question – He planned it just so.

Things don't just happen to the children of God,  
The blueprint was drawn by His hand;  
He designed every part to conform to His Son  
So all things that happen are planned.

No matter what happens to those called 'His Own'  
Events that are awful or grand;  
Every trial of your life He sends down from His Throne;  
Things don't just happen, they're **planned**.

Anon

## *Positive, Negative*

Today we find men claiming to be born again Christians who say, “We are too busy preaching a positive gospel; we do not have time to be negative”. Beware of the man who speaks only of a positive Gospel, for there is no such thing. It is the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of Him it is said: “*Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity*” (Hebrews 1:9). The Gospel is both positive and negative. Many times a man’s love of righteousness is determined by how strongly he hates evil. The true Gospel preacher is a ‘savour of death unto death, and of life unto life’ (cf 2 Corinthians 2:16). It is impossible to really say **yes** to Truth, without saying **no** to Error. The three Hebrew children not only claimed positively that Jehovah could save them from the burning fiery furnace, but that even if He didn’t, they would not bow down, nor worship the golden image that the king had made (cf Daniel 2:18). Their negative action was essential to their positive claim, or it meant nothing. Many times it is the negative refusal to go along with the crowd that draws the attention of the world (cf 1 Peter 4:4)!

The late Timothy Pietsch (Japan)

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Dr and Mrs Cutajar have been frequent visitors to North Road Chapel for a number of years, during which time we have come to know them well. They, with their two children Michael and Mary, have now moved from Grantham to reside in the Bideford area; Dr Cutajar continuing in the practice of medicine in North Devon. It was a great joy and encouragement to receive our brother and sister into the membership of the Church on Lord’s Day 15<sup>th</sup> August 2004. As we thus unite in fellowship, we pray that the work of the Lord at North Road may be the more strengthened, to His glory.

# Editorial

Neutrality is a very prevalent attitude within the Church today. The people of God to a large degree have lost their determinate character. There is indifference to much truth, which is now regarded as secondary. Should matters arise which are branded controversial, many are heard to say, 'I am impartial', meaning, not interested. Thus complacently and almost with a sense of pride they adopt this spirit of neutrality. Can this be justified? Indeed, is it honouring to God? The answer is a decided **no!** It is always wrong to be neutral when the Word of God is being questioned, or certain sections marginalized. How can it be said that a Christian is earnestly contending for the faith which was once delivered to the saints (cf Jude 3), if he does not take a positive and resolute stand upon "*all the counsel of God*" (Acts 20:27)? This indifferent disposition to areas of doctrine and practice on the part of so many, has led the Church into a position of tolerance and compromise.

The futility of neutrality within companies of the people of God can find no more fitting analogy than that of an automobile. This is a very sophisticated piece of engineering, where every part is dependant the one upon the other; but that which is of paramount importance is the gearbox. Here is a complicated system of cogs whereby power is transmitted from the engine to the wheels. There is however, a position within this mechanical gearing which is neutral. When in this state, regardless of the engine running, the vehicle remains stationary. It is ironic, but the only movement that an automobile can make if in neutral is downhill; this motion is to free wheel, disregarding the locomotive power, being disconnected from the driving gear. This is reckless practice, indeed it is unlawful, and renders the offender liable to prosecution.

Surely the spiritual counterpart is apparent! Is not the Church in neutral and freewheeling on many issues when she should be firmly enmeshed into the Word of God?