

July – September 2006

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**North Road Chapel (Evangelical)
BIDEFORD**

FORTY MOMENTOUS DAYS

Before pursuing any further this examination of the post-Resurrection appearances of Christ, it is important to establish the sequence of events which occurred in the small hours of that first day of the week. A careful comparison of the four Gospel accounts suggests the following order: The ‘women’, including Mary Magdalene, came to the sepulchre and found it empty. She, in the first shock of disappointment at this discovery, did not wait, but ran back to the city to tell Peter and John that the body of Jesus was missing. In her absence, angels appeared to the other women who lingered at the graveside, and bade them to quickly go and tell the disciples that the Lord was risen. These other women duly departed to convey the news.

Meanwhile Mary Magdalene, accompanied by Peter and John, returned to the tomb by another route. These two disciples, having viewed the deserted sepulchre and the folded grave clothes (cf John 20:1-10) went home again, musing on these strange happenings, having neither seen nor heard any message of angels. This left Mary Magdalene standing alone beside the grave – whereupon she received first, the angelic visitation (cf John 20:11-13), and then beheld the Lord, as described in the previous article.

This leaves those ‘other women’ still en route to Jerusalem, bearing the news: *“And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held Him by the feet, and worshipped Him. Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell My brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.”* (Matthew 28:9-10). Whilst they were returning with tidings for the disciples, the Lord met with them.

This is His second appearance, and again it is to **women** and not to men. It is a very significant point that the two visions of angels, the

first two annunciations of the resurrection, and the first two appearances of Christ were all made to women. This is a fact which cannot be lightly ignored. Why did the Lord not instead make His first appearance unto Joseph of Arimathea, or Nicodemus, who had so tenderly buried Him? Or why was not the beloved disciple John honoured with the first sight of the risen Christ?

There is without doubt a certain quality in the heart of a woman which is not present in man. Generally speaking, there is a spirit of quick discernment; the virtues of fortitude, patience and endurance are also more developed in women than in men. The narrative of Scripture which surrounds these events bears this out: it was the men who forsook the Lord and fled; it was the men who refused to believe the first announcement of the resurrection; it was the men who gave up hope. But the women were last at the cross, and last at the sepulchre, earliest to return thence, and first to accept the news that Christ was risen indeed.

In some respects, it seems strange that the **first tidings** of the resurrection ever borne upon human lips should have come from women. It was not from the mouths of the Apostles, who were the authorised heralds of the faith, but from women – who were forbidden to speak within the Church. Yet this unusual order of precedence is perhaps not so exceptional, for it has been repeated in the lives of many Christians from that day to this. From whom did a great proportion of saints first hear the story of the Saviour; His life, His cross, His sepulchre, and His rising from the dead? Was it from a man in the pulpit? No – in a majority of cases, it was from the lips of a woman: **godly mothers**, who from the earliest days of their children's understanding poured into their infant hearts the wonderful news of God's love and mercy. Even those who have been orphaned, or raised in an institution often testify to the influence of a pious sister or nurse, who told them in simple language of the love of the Saviour. John Randolph of several

generations ago said, “I believe I should have been swept away by the flood of French infidelity, if it had not been for one thing – the remembrance of the time when my saintly mother used to make me kneel by her side, taking my hands folded in hers and causing me to say the Lord’s Prayer”. A Missionary tells the tale of a scoffing heathen who at length was brought to his knees in contrition, and the first cry that burst from his lips was, “God of my mother, have mercy on me!”

There is something in the devoted heart of a godly mother that communicates, perhaps unconsciously, to the mind of her child impressions which can never be effaced, and which may in the process of time be used of God to bring that one to salvation. The memorable little verses sung in childhood, the emotion that accompanied a mother’s telling of the gospel story; these are deep, indelible inscriptions upon tender hearts, which cannot be erased. That child may become wayward, and mock religion in adulthood; but let sickness or sorrow come, and within the quietness of the soul, memories arise – of a mother’s gentle touch, or earnest prayer at the bedside. Many are the testimonies of those who, after years of hardness and rebellion, have at last repented and turned to Christ for salvation, long after their godly mother has gone to glory.

This practical aside is not far removed from the subject in hand. The mission of women, be they mother, wife or sister, is one of high and solemn import. It is different from that of a man, but no less significant. The risen Lord first appeared to women. They trusted and believed, and hastened to tell the glad news. Here is a clear demonstration of a woman’s timeless mission – in sincerity and faithfulness, she can be the first to bring news of the Saviour – to a child or grandchild, a young nephew or niece. This is an area of evangelism to which a woman is peculiarly fitted, more so than a man.

Whilst much ministry, both spoken and written, tends to be directed toward men, recognition must be given to the numerous Scripture references concerning godly consistent women. The Holy Spirit gives prominence to many a woman through the pages of God's Word, and it is important for ministers to afford the same emphasis in the course of consecutive preaching. Let every sister be encouraged: her role may be one of submission as the weaker vessel, but in no way is it inferior. In the heart of the Lord Jesus Christ, the sisters are equal in preciousness and worth to the brethren.

Returning now to the 'other women' of the text, who sought the disciples, it is recorded: "*Jesus met them, saying, **All hail***". In the original language, this salutation carries both the meaning of 'joy', and of 'health'. The English expression '**hale** and hearty', whilst spelt differently, conveys a similar thought. "All hail", said the Saviour: "Rejoice – be well." They were no longer to be depressed, cast down or 'under the weather', but to be joyful. It is a fact that morbid, gloomy Christians know very little of true joy. Like the Pilgrims of Bunyan's allegory, they are shut up in Doubting Castle; and saints in such a state of mind bring no honour to the Lord. The cause of this attitude is often a preoccupation with the present difficulties and troubles of life, viewed from an earthly perspective. As the old couplet goes: "Two men looked out through prison bars, One saw mud, the other – stars". The difference lies in the direction in which one's sight is fixed: upward, or downward. Christians who are always focussed upon the trials and distresses of earth will never attain to true spiritual joy.

The women whom the Saviour met on the road were, in all probability, in a similar condition to Mary Magdalene, and despite the message of angels, continued to be perplexed and afraid. To them the Lord spoke this greeting: "be well". "I am alive for evermore, and able to save to the uttermost!" "You are one of My

sheep and will be brought unerringly to Glory at the last – for where I am, ye shall be also”. “I am the resurrection and the life – Rejoice!” “All hail!” At which point, these women came and held Him by the feet, and worshipped. Gone was any vestige of depression or doubt, and at once they were spiritually ‘well’. Where before they had repined, now their spirit revived, and they rejoiced as they recognised their Lord. He had risen as He said; He was the Son of God, declared now “*with power...by the resurrection from the dead*” (Romans 1:4).

*“Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my **brethren** that they go into Galilee”*. Only once before had this term ‘brethren’ been used by the Lord, and then it was in special circumstances, with a broad application (cf Matthew 12:50). Here in Matthew 28:10 it comes for the first time as a spontaneous appellation, as He calls His disciples **His brethren**. In this, the tenderness of the Saviour’s heart is revealed. These men had forsaken Him and fled. In unbelieving despair, they had given up all as lost. Yet in wonderful condescension and grace He addresses them, not as cowards or deserters, not even simply as friends, but with an endearing title entirely new to them: as brethren.

This was the message given by the Lord at His second appearance – and it touches the heart. For herein lies a pertinent application: every Christian can testify to times when they have forsaken, forgotten, or disbelieved their Saviour. Has not every saint on occasions been guilty of the Ephesians’ sin, and left their first love? (cf Revelation 2:4). If the Lord was to deal with His people in the same manner in which they so often treat Him, all would be hopelessly rejected – but no! Despite all their wanderings and driftings, as soon as there is the faintest sign of penitence and contrition, His message has ever been “tell My brethren to return”. For all their faults and failings, and alas they are many, still the

Scripture says concerning His redeemed ones, “*He is not ashamed to call them brethren*” (Hebrews 2:11).

What profound truths and lessons are conveyed by this second post-resurrection appearance of the Lord! These are just a few of the things which He spake pertaining to the Kingdom of God during that forty-day period which preceded His ascension. These were days in which the disciples were being prepared for the path that lay before them. It was therefore essential that from the outset they should have this assurance: that though they might often fail Him, He would never fail them. They must be convinced that they were His brethren, and that He would be with them, even unto the end. The same great verity applies to all His believing people to this day. Christ Jesus, in His powerful, fraternal, unchanging love, will never leave them, nor forsake them.

W. H. Molland (*transcribed by R. Steward*)

SMOOTH THINGS

The men who millennia ago said “*Speak unto us smooth things*” (Isaiah 30:10), have many successors and adherents. Sentimental opinions, diluted interpretations of the Holy Scriptures, indifference to primal faith and doctrine, never made any positive mark in the Church of God. Negative preaching does not satisfy the soul. Liberal Christianity has no productive power. With the disuse of such terms as ‘depravity’, ‘wrath’, ‘propitiation’, ‘regeneration’, ‘conversion’ and many other cardinal words, the truth which precise terminology conveys is lost; the punctiliousness of Holy Writ and the ineffable rectitude of Almighty God is degraded. The humanistic approach claims to be more understandable and to widen man’s horizons concerning spiritual matters, but the enlightenment

is carnal, in that it is man-centred. It has no Holy Spirit evangelising power, and leaves the sinner in his blindness. Those who clamour against theology and have no time for fundamental doctrine, soon drift into becoming empty religionists, they have a name to live but are dead.

Anon.

Freedom of Speech?

PART 1

Behind the title of this article lies a subject of great controversy which has, in recent months, occupied the attention of the secular and Christian press alike. The term is believed to have been popularised by F. D. Roosevelt who, in an address given in 1941, used the phrase “freedom of speech and expression”. Since then, it has found its way into all manner of policies, charters and constitutions, and has frequently been at the centre of public debate. Does the Religious Hatred Bill threaten or restrict ‘freedom of speech’? Do the media have an absolute freedom, or should they? Do particular individuals or groups have the right to produce inflammatory statements, placards and caricatures? Confusion and consternation abound.

Why has the ‘freedom of speech’ issue descended into such turmoil? The reason is patently clear: the speech of Almighty God – His Word – has been discarded. Politicians vainly try to legislate for ‘free speech’ without any standard or guide as to what constitutes **good speech**. There is no longer a final authority in what is right, and what is wrong. In these ‘un-Biblical’ and anti-Biblical days, national statesmen are attempting to devise a humanistic creed and values of their own. They talk in grand terms about ‘freedom’ as if it were a universally desirable principle to which all should aspire. But in the absence of any definition or

qualification, 'freedom' is both meaningless, and dangerous. What is the individual 'freed' from? What liberties may they subsequently exercise? Without an absolute moral standard in place, 'freedom' is nothing more than 'anarchy'.

What then saith the Scripture concerning 'freedom of speech'? The first point to register is that **the world has no freedom of speech**. Try telling that to an unsaved neighbour or work colleague, and the likely response is an indignant protest. They will insist that they have complete liberty to say whatever they like, and none can stop or prevent them. This is how worldly men think. They believe themselves to be their own masters, in complete control of their words, and proudly say so: "*Who have said, With our tongue will we prevail; our lips are our own; who is lord over us?*" (Psalm 12:4). Such is the attitude of the unsaved; they imagine themselves to be possessors of 'freedom of speech'.

The truth of the matter is very different. In reality, "*we cannot order our speech by reason of darkness*" (Job 37:19). This aptly describes the sinners' condition: they are in darkness, "*in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not*" (2 Corinthians 4:4), and in consequence, cannot order their speech aright. Their lips are **not** their own – they are 'fast bound in sin and nature's night', taken captive by the Devil (cf 2 Timothy 2:26). Whatever the unbeliever may protest to the contrary, he cannot utter a single phrase, or sentence, or syllable that is **free** from **sin** – the bondage is entire.

In the practical sense, to stop a prisoner from speaking, it is necessary to use a gag. Even then, it is impossible to bind his unspoken thoughts, intents and motives. The dreadful Jailer Sin has no such difficulty – it allows a man the use of his mouth, and yet his every word remains in the 'bond of iniquity', the product and slave of sin. For all their lofty aspirations to 'liberty', the world know

nothing of it, either in thought, word or action: “*the whole world lieth in wickedness*” (1 John 5:19), and from that state of helpless prostration, none have power to raise themselves. What exacerbates the situation is that none realise this imprisonment of their speech, nor the impending punishment they incur: “*Why boasteth thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man? ... Thy tongue deviseth mischiefs; like a sharp razor, working deceitfully... Thou lovest devouring words, O thou deceitful tongue. God shall likewise destroy thee for ever, He shall take thee away, and pluck thee out of thy dwelling place*” (Psalm 52:1-5).

The only possible means of escape from the spiritual prison house is afforded by God. He sends His Holy Spirit, who in regenerating power imparts to the soul a conviction and realisation of its enslaved condition. Thus was the Psalmist caused to cry unto God, “*Deliver my soul, O Lord, from lying lips, and from a deceitful tongue*” (Psalm 120:2). He prayed for rescue from ‘bondage of speech’, from a tongue bound to indulge falsehood, lies and hypocrisy. He sought deliverance from the Lord, knowing that He alone could grant it; for He it is who can loose the bands of wickedness, break every yoke and set at liberty the heart and mind, and the speech also.

An example of this work of grace is given in the case of Isaiah, whose call to service is recorded. “*Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips... Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand... And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged*” (Isaiah 6:5-7). Visions of angels and burning altar coals are exceptional – but still today, God is calling His people in, and emancipating their **whole person** (speech and lips included) from the uncleanness of sin, to work in His service. Many are the saints who have shared a similar testimony –

not least John Bunyan. “His profaneness especially was so intense and dreadful, that profane and irreligious persons were shocked by it. He stood one day cursing and swearing...beneath a neighbour’s shop window, when the woman of the house...declared that Bunyan’s fury of cursing was such that it made her tremble to hear him... This reproof, so coming, and from such a source, struck Bunyan with a sudden and irresistible conviction and shame...just at this time God began to snatch him from the ruin of his vices.” (G. B. Cheever, *Memoir of Bunyan*). It is widely known how from this point Bunyan’s conversion began to develop, and at length he became one of the foremost preachers of his generation. Whilst the transformation is more apparent in some than others, every Christian has the same basic experience – the release of the soul, and the freeing of their speech.

Is this the answer then? **Does true ‘freedom of speech’ lie with the people of God?** Are they at liberty to speak as they please? Not so: “*Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness...for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.*” “*...he that is called, being free, is Christ’s servant*” (Romans 6:18-19, 1 Corinthians 7:22). Having been freed from the slavery of sin, the saints are thenceforth in willing servitude to the Lord who redeemed them, bringing all their sanctified persons and powers into subjection – including their speech. Every bodily member is to be yielded to the cause of righteousness – including that unruly member, the tongue.

This is no easy process, because the tendency and temptation to sin continue to beset the Christian; and the tongue when given a free rein will run amok, doing untold damage in the process. Consider the warnings of Scripture: “*And 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...the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison” (James 3:6, 8). The believer’s earnest desire is to see righteousness do the work which sin once did before, namely to control and govern the tongue.

The Psalms give timely, practical instruction in this matter. *“I will bless the Lord at all times: His praise shall continually be in my mouth...Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it”* (Psalm 34:1, 13-14). The tongue needs to be actively and positively kept from its pursuit of evil, and a sure way of accomplishing this is to engage it continually in godly employment. The ongoing praise of God will ever prove an antidote to evil speaking and rash words. The control of one’s own speech presents a very great challenge, and if any measure of success is to be had, Divine intervention and aid must be sought. Hence David is heard to pray *“Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips”* (Psalm 141:3).

The Christian should **never** desire the ‘freedom of speech’, the license and licentiousness, for which the world campaigns. A wild horse may appear attractive from a distance, yet it is of no practical use; but the horse broken in and harnessed may be of untold profit. Similarly, God’s people should not seek after ‘freedom of speech’, but rather ‘servitude of speech’, and lips that are captivated in obedience to Christ (cf 2 Corinthians 10:5).

PART 2

The speech of the unbeliever is in slavery to sin, and that of the saint in willing bondage to the Lord. So, **is there any form of speech that might rightly be described as ‘free’**, making no allowance, and subject to no restraint? Yes indeed there is: *“the Word of God is not bound”* (2 Timothy 2:9). Who would dare to restrict or reduce the speech of the Almighty? The Word of the

Lord is **free**: it knows no bonds or bounds. As Paul penned those words, he was himself manacled and imprisoned in Rome – but not all the force and ingenuity of that great empire could bind the Word of God, or prevent its dissemination and effect. God Himself hath spoken, and said: “*So shall My Word be that goeth forth out of My mouth: it shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it*” (Isaiah 55:11).

This feature of God’s Word has very important implications for those who handle or publish it, or send it forth: His Word is **not** bound – and woe to that man who seeks to bind it, or impair it in any way. For there are those who would “*hold the truth in unrighteousness*” (Romans 1:18), literally ‘restrain’ or ‘withhold’ the Truth. This is done in many ways. Some tamper with the language of Scripture to make it more conducive to their own way of thinking. Others divest the text of its power by subtle alterations and substitutions. Still another category maintain an uncorrupted version of the Bible, but their ministry is deficient – certain aspects going unpreached for fear of man. What does such behaviour amount to? It is man’s attempt to deny God His ‘freedom of speech’; He who alone can claim the right to it, they would censor and edit, entrapping God’s Word in the cage of their own sinfulness. It is a fearful course of action to take. The solemn warnings which close the volume of Holy Writ are still valid to this day – would that men might heed them!

What then should the Christian’s attitude be? “*Brethren, pray that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified*” (2 Thessalonians 3:1). Pray that the Truth may go forth in the freedom of the free Spirit who inspired it. Pray for those who proclaim God’s word, that utterance may be given, that they may speak boldly as they ought to speak (cf Ephesians 6:19); because the free and unbounded Word of God demands to be preached in certain

ways (be that from the pulpit, or at an inter-personal level). **Boldness** is one of those ways, as Paul demonstrated to the Corinthians, “*great is my boldness of speech toward you*” (2 Corinthians 7:4). Another quality is described thus: “*Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great **plainness** of speech*” (2 Corinthians 3:12) – a word which implies a frank and outspoken style. Since the Word of God is free, it must be freely declared in liberty and fullness. Of both Peter at Pentecost, and Paul before Agrippa, the Scripture records ‘they spoke **freely**’ (cf Acts 2:29, 26:26).

This then is the attitude which the Word of God demands: boldness, plainness and freedom of speech. This should be borne in mind in these days of increasing political opposition and unrest. Whatever obstacles may arise to try to prevent it, God’s Word must ever be declared with a godly **freedom of speech**. Anything less is not worthy of Him, or the lively oracles which He has authored.

With that principle, there comes a cautionary footnote: “*For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king*” (1 Peter 2:15-17). In freely declaring the Word of God, His people are called upon to “*silence the ignorance*” of men; but the manner in which that is done is of utmost importance. It is not to be achieved through aggressive argumentation, or wearying persistence, but by **well doing**. The Christian must never use his God-given freedoms as an excuse for malice, nastiness or insensitive unkindness. The “*servants of God*” should act as becomes servants. The saints are commanded to “*Honour all men*”, however great their folly, however belligerent their ignorance of God might have made them.

Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, said: “*I abuse not my power in the gospel. For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more*” (1 Corinthians 9:18-19). The Word of God is vested with power, and that power is conferred to those who take its message upon their lips – they are given a Divine authority to speak freely. But that power and authority must not be abused. Together with boldness, plainness and liberty in the presentation of Truth, the Christian must also emulate the Master’s character of servanthood, in all humility, patience and meekness.

It is inevitable that the gospel, when faithfully and freely preached, **will cause offence**, and men will be offended by it. To them that are lost, the truth is as repulsive as the smell of death (cf 2 Corinthians 2:16). Paul speaks of the “*offence of the cross*” (Galatians 5:11), and Isaiah actually accorded Christ the title: “*rock of offence*” (1 Peter 2:8). The veracity of these words can be seen clearly at this present time. If, when a saint gives testimony to the truth, the hearers are offended by it – that is only to be expected: it is the natural reaction of the natural man. What is important, is that the offence is caused by **what** is said – not in consequence of **who** says it, or **how** they deliver the message. If an antagonistic reaction is provoked only as a result of an uncharitable nature or unchristian attitude on the part of the speaker, then nothing has been achieved. This is why Paul – whose preaching stirred up whole cities, and jeopardised his own life several times – could say: “*Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God* ” (1 Corinthians 10:32). There is godly logic in this instruction, for as the Proverb says: “*A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city: and their contentions are like the bars of a castle*” (Proverbs 18:19). **Let the Truth produce its own offence.** Only let the Christian be sure that they are not personally the cause of it, by reason of their own sinfulness, or abuse of their God-given liberty.

It is evident that **how** the child of God speaks is as important as **what** they say. Recall the words of that fireside maid who said to Peter, “*thy speech bewrayeth thee*”. “*Surely thou art one of them, for thy speech agreeth thereto*” (Matthew 26:73, Mark 14:70). Her comments, originally intended in a derogatory sense, should be an exhortation to every Christian. Does your mode and manner of speech, your choice of language, your way of replying and responding, all betray the fact that you are one of Christ’s people? Do those around who hear you, and your boldness in speaking the truth, take note that you have been with Jesus? (cf Acts 4:13).

*“Speak thou the things which become sound doctrine...In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, **Sound speech that cannot be condemned**; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you”* (Titus 2:1, 7-8). Of the saints’ Lord, Master and Example Christ Jesus, it is recorded: “*all bear Him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth*” (Luke 4:22). May God in grace, and by His transforming power, evermore conform His people to the image of His Dear Son.

R. J. Steward

FREEDOM

“If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed” (John 8:36). ...But are we ourselves free? The question is one which demands special attention at the present...The minds of many are wholly absorbed in politics. Yet there is a freedom, within the reach of all, which few, I am afraid, ever think of – a freedom independent of all political changes – a freedom which neither Queen, Lords and

Commons, nor the cleverest popular leaders can bestow. This is the freedom about which I write this day. Do we know anything of it? Are we free?

...Let no reader think for a moment that this is going to be a political paper. I am no politician: I have no politics but those of the Bible. The only party I care for is the Lord's side: show me where that is, and it shall have my support. The only election I am very anxious about is the election of grace. My one desire is, that sinners should make their own calling and election sure. The liberty I desire above all things to make known and further, is the glorious liberty of the children of God. The Government I care to support is the government which is on the shoulder of my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Before Christ I want every knee to bow, and every tongue confess that He is Lord. I ask attention while I canvass these subjects. If you are not free, I want to guide you into true liberty. If you are free, I want you to know the full value of your freedom.

...What shall it profit you to be a citizen of a free country, so long as your soul is not free? What is the use of living in a free land...with free thought, free speech, free action, free conscience, so long as you are a slave to sin, and a captive to the Devil?

...The true freedom I speak of is spiritual freedom – freedom of the soul. It is the freedom which Christ bestows without money and without price, on all true Christians. Those whom the Son makes free are free indeed: “*Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty*” (2 Corinthians 3:17). Let men talk what they please of the comparative freedom of monarchies and republics; let them struggle if they will, for universal liberty, fraternity and equality: we never know the highest style of liberty till we are enrolled citizens of the kingdom of God. We are ignorant of the best kind of freedom if we are not Christ's freemen.

...Christ's freemen are free from the **power of sin**. It no longer rules and reigns in their hearts, and carries them before it like a flood. Through the power of Christ's Spirit they mortify the deeds of their bodies, and crucify their flesh with its affections and lusts. Through His grace working in them, they get the victory over their evil inclinations. The flesh may fight, but it does not conquer them; the Devil may tempt and vex, but does not overcome them: they are no longer the bondslaves of lusts and appetites, and passions, and tempers. Over all these things they are more than conquerors through Him that loved them. This is true liberty. This is to be free.

...Christ's freemen are free from the **fear of man**. They are no longer afraid of man's opinions, or care much what man thinks of them; they are alike indifferent to his favour or his enmity, his smile or his frown. They look away from man who can be seen, to Christ who is not seen, and having the favour of Christ, they care little for the blame of man. "*The fear of man*" was once a snare to them. They trembled at the thought of what man would say, or think, or do: they dared not run counter to the fashions and customs of those around them; they shrank from the idea of standing alone. But the snare is now broken and they are delivered. This is true liberty. This is to be free.

...Best of all, Christ's freemen are **free for ever**. Once enrolled in the list of heavenly citizens, their names shall never be struck off. Once presented with the freedom of Christ's kingdom, they shall possess it for evermore. The highest privileges of this world's freedom can only endure for a lifetime; the freest citizen on earth must submit at length to die, and lose his franchise for ever: but the franchise of Christ's people is eternal. They carry it down to the grave, and it lives still; they will rise again with it at the last day, and enjoy the privileges of it for evermore. This is true liberty. This is to be free.

J. C. Ryle (1878)

AN ORGANISATIONAL ANNOUNCEMENT FROM THE CHURCH

Ministerial Appointment

Lord's Day, 21st May 2006 was an important occasion in the life of North Road Chapel, as the gathered Church recognised Mr R. J. Steward as their new Minister. A service was specially convened for the purpose, which was fraught with a keen sense of God's presence, and much blessing.

Mr Steward's association with the Church began in the mid-1990s, after reading some of its published literature. This led to a period of growing interest, and increasingly frequent visits to the fellowship in Bideford, during which time he became more fully acquainted with the Church's doctrinal position. Being convicted by the Biblical stance of the Church, he took the first opportunity to relocate to North Devon, and having secured accommodation and employment in the area, was received into membership in October 2002. By this time, Mr Steward was well known to the congregation, having preached on several occasions. He was subsequently invited to minister on a regular basis under the guidance and tutelage of the Church Elders, and was himself appointed as an Elder and Assistant Minister in November 2004.

The sovereignty and overruling of the Lord in these matters became apparent, when in July 2005 the Church's Minister, Mr W. H. Molland, suffered a stroke and was consequently unable to preach. Since this time, Mr Steward has been enabled to sustain the services each Lord's Day, with the timely support of certain other brethren. The Church is thankful to God for His providence, and for a clear demonstration that "*all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose*" (Romans 8:28).

Mr Molland and his wife moved to Bideford in 1944, and joined the fellowship at North Road Chapel, where they have laboured tirelessly for over sixty years. Mr Molland's gift for preaching soon became evident, and after a number of years, he prayerfully accepted the Elders' request to take responsibility for the ministry. The Church owes an immeasurable debt of gratitude to God for past decades of sound expository preaching, accompanied by a godly and consistent personal testimony on the part of His servant. Throughout this long period of faithful and diligent service, he has been used of God to bring the Church to an ever more Biblical position in its doctrine and practice. Over recent years he, and fellow Elder Mr D. C. Wort, have been seeking to discern the Lord's will for succession in the ministry, and the future maintenance of the Church's stand, ever praying that the Lord would 'raise one up from among their brethren'. They believe that such a provision has now been made.

These conclusions were shared with the fellowship for their consideration, in accordance with the Church Rules of Government, and the members and Trustees unanimously supported Mr Steward's appointment. Mr Molland will continue to serve in the office of Elder, where his pastoral and prayerful involvement will be of ongoing blessing to the Church. All those concerned acknowledge that this transition has been Divinely directed throughout. As in nature, so in His Church: a tree which, according to God's providence sheds its autumnal leaves, by that same energizing power puts forth new growth in the springtide; thus continuity is given

The prayer of the congregation at North Road is that God will fulfil His promise, and "*set up shepherds over them which shall feed them: and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, saith the Lord*" (Jeremiah 23:4); and that the Great Head will be pleased to uphold this local body of believers in the years ahead.

Editorial

The attitude of the Lord's **people** toward their Lord's **Day** is a matter of very great importance. A man may show his love and regard for a friend by observing their anniversaries or special days. Similarly, the honour which a Christian holds for His Lord is reflected by the way in which he keeps the Sabbath. For this one-day-in-seven is indeed an anniversary, which simultaneously commemorates the Creation, the Resurrection, and the Advent of the Holy Spirit – three of the greatest events in the history of redemption. “This is the day the Lord hath made, He calls the hours His own”. The same God who wrought these momentous works at the first has also appointed their weekly remembrance.

Despite the Divine origin of this institution, the reaction of modern Christians toward it varies greatly. There are those who ‘call the Sabbath a **displeasure**’ – though not verbalised, this is clearly their state of mind. They regard the Lord's Day as an irksome intrusion into their enjoyment of the weekend; an occasion of restriction and prohibition, limiting the pursuit of secular activities. Some go further, and ridicule the very idea that the Christian Sabbath should be sanctified or hallowed in any way. In this, they more resemble the enemies of God's people, who mocked at the Sabbath (cf Lamentations 1:7), and display a basic ignorance of its purpose and significance. The Lord's Day, with the laws pertaining to its observance, is “*made for man*” (Mark 2:27); but those manward blessings and benefits will only be realised when it is observed in the Biblical way.

There are Christians of another type who ‘call the Sabbath a **duty**’. They have an appreciation and acceptance of this God-given ordinance, and resolve to faithfully adhere to it – but do so only through a sense of obligation, compelled by conscience. Attendance at the Lord's house is motivated by routine, and though

the experience be painful, they hope that at least the flesh may be mortified, and a degree of sanctification attained. This is also an entirely erroneous view of the Sabbath. Such an approach is doomed to produce only depressed saints, whose pathway is never illuminated by the light of true fellowship; whose wilderness journey is unrelieved by the arbour of an earthly Zion. This mindset can be caused by many external factors, such as membership at a defective local Church, ongoing discord with other believers, or unconfessed sin harboured in the heart. Should these things be true of any Christian, let them manfully resolve to address the issue.

The exhortation of Scripture to all God's people is that they "*call the Sabbath a **delight**, the holy of the Lord, honourable*" (Isaiah 58:13). But such an appellation will only arise from those saints who genuinely find the Sabbath delightful. The means to this end are also described: "*thou...shalt honour Him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord*" (v.13-14). If the Lord's Day is consistently characterised by these objectives: honouring Him, obeying His ways, doing His pleasure, declaring and hearing His Word – then gladness is the promised outcome. When these conditions obtain, the gathered people of God are caused "*to ride upon the high places of the earth*" (v.14) – that is, they come as close to Heaven as it is possible to be in this world (cf Genesis 28:17). For every Lord's Day is a foretaste and portent of Heaven, every Sabbath is a type of the eternal day of rest (cf Hebrews 4:9-11). Those Christians who find no delight in this weekly ordinance can have no true joy in the prospect of Glory. Where are those saints who can say with sincerity and feeling:

“Oh when, thou City of my God
Shall I thy courts ascend,
Where congregations ne'er break up
And **Sabbaths have no end?**