

January - March 2013

# The Link

**NORTH ROAD CHAPEL**

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**BIDEFORD**

# OBITUARY

*“Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.”* (Revelation 14:13)

**Mrs Norah Irene Molland**  
1917 – 2012  
died 6<sup>th</sup> October, aged 95

**Mr William Herbert Molland**  
1920 – 2012  
died 18<sup>th</sup> October, aged 92

It is with profound emotion that we report the home-call to Glory of Mr W. H. Molland, formerly the minister of North Road Chapel and editor of this magazine; and also of his dear wife, after a prolonged period of illness. This double bereavement in such rapid succession, whilst grievous to the Church and family, nevertheless bears all the hallmarks of Divine Sovereignty. It has been brought to pass at the prerogative and appointment of a loving and all-wise God, who is able to ‘sanctify to us our deepest distress’.

Both Mr and Mrs Molland (née Dunn) were born into Christian families in mid Devon during the early part of last century, and were brought up to regularly attend services, in the assemblies at Lapford and Umberleigh respectively. In the purposes of God, the effectual call of grace reached them in their teenage years, and they came to salvation, being baptised shortly thereafter. Becoming acquainted with one another in 1939, they were married five years later, and enjoyed a devoted and affectionate relationship, which was the very model of a Biblical marriage, for the rest of their lives.

As a young convert, Mr Molland accompanied his uncle, William senior, on several of his preaching engagements around the county, and

was encouraged to take a more active role himself. The first occasion of his doing so happened to occur at North Road Chapel, where he gave a scripture reading, aged just sixteen years; little knowing what future plans God had for him, in that very pulpit.

In 1944, as a newly-married couple, Mr and Mrs Molland took on the tenancy of Cockington Farm near Abbotsham in North Devon, and being resident in the area, joined the fellowship at Bideford where they both became heavily involved. Mr Molland was appointed as an elder in 1950, and in 1971 took over primary responsibility for the Church from Mr C. Nethercott. Over this period, his extensive itinerant ministry was giving way to more regular preaching engagements at home; and, convinced of a great need amongst the Lord's people, he began at that time a pattern of consecutive, expository teaching which would characterise the North Road pulpit for years to come.

April 1971 was also significant for the commencement of The Link magazine, which was originally conceived by Mr Molland as a means of connecting with aged, infirm Church members, unable to attend the weekly services. In the purposes of God, this simple news-letter with a circulation of a few dozen copies has grown to its present condition, being read by several hundred recipients worldwide every quarter.

Desiring to be fashioned according to the New Testament Scriptures, the Church recognised Mr Molland as their Minister in 1980, in which office he continued faithfully to nurture the fellowship. In this, he was ably supported by his wife, who served very diligently as organist for many years, and whose abundant hospitality is fondly remembered by all who were privileged to experience it.

Their labours were, however, attended often by adversity. Both experienced times of serious illness, and in 1989 they endured the tragic loss of their only son, Bryan. Their bold stand for truth also

brought opposition of its own peculiar kind, and many battles had to be fought over vital matters of doctrine and practice. Notwithstanding, in every condition, they were caused to prove the Lord's exceeding power and goodness, and the work continued unabated.

In the purposes of God, Mr Molland's 61 years of preaching at North Road were brought to a close in 2005 through failing health. However, he continued to serve as an Elder, maintaining a prayerful interest in all the work of the Church, and ministering to many by means of regular phone-calls, even after becoming house-bound. Further physical deterioration necessitated relocation to a local Care Home in December 2011.

It was there that the death of Mrs Molland occurred suddenly on 6<sup>th</sup> October. At her funeral, the text: "*Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord*" (Revelation 14:13) was preached upon. In the providence of God, Mr Molland was enabled to attend the service, to be present at the graveside, and to speak to many who attended. He thus spent his last full day upon earth in the very place which had been the scene of his life's labours. For on the evening of his wife's funeral, he suffered a further stroke; and on the day following there was 'ministered unto him abundantly an entrance into the everlasting kingdom of his Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ'.

The passage of time will prove to what extent the labours of these dear saints continue to 'follow them', and bear fruit. Mr Molland leaves a spiritual legacy of twenty published booklets, more than 160 editions of The Link, and over 1,500 recorded sermons; by which means, 'he being dead, yet speaketh'. It is the prayer of the Church that these works will continue to be used of God, to the blessing of His people, the accomplishment of His purposes, and the glory of His great Name.

**Recordings of the funeral services are available upon request**

## ON THE DEATH OF A BELIEVER

In vain the fancy strives to paint  
The moment after death,  
The glories that surround the  
saints,  
When yielding up their breath.

One gentle sigh their fetters  
breaks;  
We scarce can say, "They're  
gone!"  
Before the willing spirit takes  
Its mansion near the throne.

Faith strives, but all its efforts  
fail,  
To comprehend that flight:  
No eye can pierce within the veil  
Which hides the world of light.

Thus much (and this is all) we  
know,  
They are completely blest;  
Have done with sin, and care,  
and woe,  
And with their Saviour rest.

On harps of gold they praise His  
name,  
His face they always view;  
Then let us followers be of them,  
That we may praise Him too.

Their faith and patience, love and  
zeal,  
Should make their memory dear;  
And, Lord, do Thou the prayers  
fulfil  
They offered for us here!

While they have gained, we  
losers are,  
We miss them day by day;  
But Thou canst every breach  
repair,  
And wipe our tears away.

We pray, as in Elisha's case,  
When great Elijah went,  
May double portions of Thy  
grace,  
To us who stay, be sent.

John Newton (1725 – 1807)

## TO SERVE AND THEN TO SLEEP

*“For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers...” (Acts 13:36)*

Let us ask, first, ‘What is it to serve our own generation?’ ... And... with tender memories of many who have gone from us, let us ask, ‘What will happen to us when our service is done?’ Even that which happened to David; we shall, like him, *“fall on sleep”*.

First, then, **‘What is it to serve our own generation?’** This is a question which ought to interest us all very deeply. We live in the midst of our own generation, and seeing that we are part of it, we should serve it, that the generation in which our children shall live may be better than our own. Though our citizenship is in heaven, yet as we live on earth, we should seek to serve our generation while we pass as pilgrims to the better country.

What, then, is it for a man to serve his own generation? I note, first, that **it is not to be a slave to it**. It is not to drop into the habits, customs, and ideas of the generation in which we live. People talk nowadays about ‘zeitgeist’... and one of the papers says, ‘Spurgeon does not know whether there is such a thing’. Well, whether he knows anything about ‘zeitgeist’ or not, he is not to serve this generation by yielding to any of its notions or ideas which are contrary to the Word of the Lord. The gospel of Jesus Christ is not only for one generation, it is for all generations. It is the faith which needed to be only *“once delivered unto the saints”* (Jude 3)... It cannot change, because it has been given of God, and is therefore perfect; to change it would be to make it imperfect. It cannot change because it has been given to answer for ever the same purpose, namely, to save sinners from going down to the pit, and to fit them for going to heaven. That man serves

his generation best who is not caught by every new current of opinion, but stands firmly by the truth of God, which is a solid, immovable rock. But to serve our own generation in the sense of being a slave to it, its vassal, and its varlet – let those who care to do so go into such bondage and slavery if they will. Do you know what such a course involves? If any young man here shall begin to preach the doctrine and the thought of the age, within the next ten years, perhaps within the next ten months, he will have to eat his own words, and begin his work all over again. When he has got into the new style, and is beginning to serve the present world, he will within a short time have to contradict himself again, for this age, like every other, is “*ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth*” (2 Timothy 3:7).

But if you begin with God’s Word, and pray God the Holy Ghost to reveal it to you till you really know it, then, if you are spared to teach for the next fifty years, your testimony at the close will not contradict your testimony at the beginning. You will ripen in experience; you will expand in your apprehension of the truth; you will become more clear in your utterance; but it will be the same truth all along. Is it not a grand thing to build up, from the beginning of life to the end of it, the same gospel? But to set up opinions to knock them down again, as though they were ninepins, is a poor business for any servant of Christ. David did not, in that way serve his own generation; he was the master of his age, and not its slave. I would urge every Christian man to rise to his true dignity, and be a blessing to those amongst whom he lives, as David was. Christ “*hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father*” (Revelation 1:6); it is not meet that we should cringe before the spirit of the age, or lick the dust whereon ‘advanced thinkers’ have chosen to tread.

Beloved, see to this; and learn the distinction between serving your own generation and being a slave to it.

In the next place, in seeking to answer the question, ‘What is it to serve our own generation?’, I would say, **it is not to fly from it**. If any man says, ‘The world is so bad, that I will avoid coming into contact with it altogether; even the teaching of Christianity has become so diluted, and is so thoroughly on the down-grade, that I will have nothing to do with it’, he is certainly not serving his own generation. If he shall shut himself up, like a hermit, in his cave, and leave the world to go to ruin as it may, he will not be like David, for he served his own generation before he fell asleep.

She that goes into a nunnery, and he that enters a monastery are like soldiers who run away, and hide among the baggage. You must not do anything of the sort. Come forward and fight evil, and triumph over it, whether it be evil of doctrine, evil of practice, or evil of any other kind. Be bold for Christ; bear your witness, and be not ashamed. If you do not take your stand in this way, it can never truly be said of you that you served your generation. Instead of that, the truth will be that you allowed your generation to make a coward of you, or, to muzzle you like a dog, and to send you out, into the streets neither to bark nor to bite, nor to do anything by which you might prove that there is a soul within you.

If we ask again, ‘What is it to serve our generation?’ I answer, **it is to perform the common duties of life**, as David did. David was the son of a farmer, a sheep-owner, and he took first of all to the keeping of the sheep. Many young men do not like to do the common work of their own father’s business. You do not want to drudge, you say, you want to be a king. Well, there are not many openings in that line of business; and I shall not recommend anyone to be eager to enter them if there were. “*Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not*” (Jeremiah 45:5). Before David swayed the sceptre, he grasped the shepherd’s crook. He that at home cannot or will not undertake ordinary duties, will not be likely to serve his age. The girl who

dreams about the foreign missionary field, but cannot darn her stockings, will not be of service either at home or abroad. Do the commonplace things, the ordinary things that come in your way, and you will begin to serve your generation, as David served his.

But 'serving our generation' means more than this. **It is to be ready for the occasion when it comes.** In the midst of the routine of daily life, we should, by diligence in duty, prepare for whatever may be our future opportunity, waiting patiently until it comes. Look at David's occasion of becoming famous. He never sought it. He did not go up and down among his sheep, sighing and crying, 'Oh, that I could get away from this dull business of looking after these flocks! My brothers have gone to the camp; they will get on as soldiers; but here am I, buried among these rocks, to look after these poor beasts'. He was wiser than that; he quietly waited God's time. That is always a wise thing to do. If you are to serve God, wait till He calls you to do His work; He knows where to find you when He wants you; you need not advertise yourself to his omniscience.

At length the set time came for David. On a certain day, his father bade him go to his brethren, and take them some corn and some loaves, with cheeses for their captain; and he reached the camp just at the time when the giant Goliath was stalking forth, and defying all the armies of Israel to meet him. Now is David's time, and the young man is ready for it. If he had lost the opportunity he might have remained a shepherd all the rest of his days. He tells Saul how he slew both the lion and the bear, and prophesies that the uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he had defied the armies of the living God. Disdaining Saul's armour, he takes his sling, and his five smooth stones out of the brook, and soon he comes back with the gory head of the giant in his hand. If you want to serve the church and serve the age, beloved friend, be wide awake when the occasion comes. Jump into

the saddle when the horse is at your door; and God will bless you if you are on the look-out for opportunities of serving him.

What is it, again, to ‘serve our generation’? **It is to maintain true religion.** This David did. He had grave faults in his later life, which we will not extenuate; but he never swerved from his allegiance to Jehovah the true God. No word or action of his ever sanctioned anything like idolatry, or turning aside from the worship of Jehovah, the God of Israel. He bore a noble witness to his Lord. He said, “*I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed*” (Psalm 119:46) and we may be sure that he was as good as his word, and that when he met with foreign potentates, he vindicated the living God before them. The whole set and current of his life, with the exception of his terrible fall, was to the glory of God in whom he trusted, and to the praise of that God who had delivered him.

We, too, shall truly serve those amongst whom we dwell by maintaining true religion. Had ten righteous men been found in Sodom, it would have been spared, and the world to-day only escapes the righteous judgment of God because of the presence in it of those who fear him, and tremble at his word. The spread of ‘pure and undefiled religion’ (cf James 1:27) is a certain way to serve those around us...

To ‘serve our own generation’ is not a single action, done at once, and over for ever; **it is to continue to serve all our life.** Notice well that David served “*his own generation*”; not only a part of it, but the whole of it. He began to serve God, and he kept on serving God. How many young men have I seen who were going to do wonders! Ah, me! They were as proud of the intention as though they had already done the deed. They took a front seat, and they seemed to think that everybody ought to admire them because of what they were going to do; but they were so pleased with the project that they never

carried it out. They thought that they might meet with some mishap if they really attempted to do the thing, and the project was so beautiful that they preserved it under a glass shade, and there it is now. Nothing has been accomplished; nothing has been done, though much has been thought of. This is folly.

Some, too, begin well, and they serve their God earnestly for a time, but on a sudden their service stops. One cannot quite tell how it happens, but we never hear of them afterwards. Men, as far as I know them, are wonderfully like horses. You get a horse, and you think, 'This is a first-rate animal', and so it is. It goes well for a while, but on a sudden it drops lame, and you have to get another. So it is with church-members. I notice that, every now and then, they get a singular lameness. To very many we have to say, even as Paul said to the Galatians, "*Ye did run well; who did hinder you, that ye should not obey the truth?*" (Galatians 5:7). But David continually served God to the end of his life. May we all, by divine grace, thus serve our whole generation, too!

Yet more is included in this faithful 'serving of our generation'. **It is to prepare for those who are to come after us.** David served his generation to the very end by providing for the next generation. He was not permitted to build the temple; but he stored up a great mass of gold and silver to enable his son Solomon to carry out his noble design, and build a house for God. This is real service; to begin to serve God in early youth; to keep on till old age shall come; and even then to say, 'I cannot expect to serve the Lord much longer, but I will prepare the way as far as I can for those who will come after me'...

So must you and I do. We must be looking ahead as far as ever we can, not with unbelieving anxiety or unholy curiosity; but after the fashion in which David prepared abundantly before his death. If we cannot find

a successor to enter upon our service when we have to leave it, yet let us do all we can to make his work the easier when he comes to it.

Now, I have done, when I have tried for just a minute or two, to answer this question: **‘What will happen to us when our work is done?’** *“David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep”* The day’s work is done; the worker is weary; he falls on sleep: what can he do better? It was all ‘by the will of God’. To what part of the sentence do you think that clause belongs? Did David serve his generation by the will of God; or did he fall asleep by the will of God? **Both.** Guided by the will of God, he did his work on earth; and calmly resigned to the will of God, he prepared to die. Even when passing away, he served his generation by giving Solomon some last charges concerning the kingdom, saying, *“I go the way of all the earth: be thou strong therefore, and shew thyself a man”* (1 Kings 2:2). Over both his life and his death may be written the words, ‘By the will of God’.

Oh, that we may all so live, that even in death we may serve our generation; may it be true of us that, *“For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord’s”* (Romans 14:8)! Thus, ‘the will of God’ shall be done both in our service and in our sleep.

David is an example of what will befall those who know Christ, at the end of their service. He did not go to sleep till his work was done. *“David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep”*. Do not want to die till you have done your work. When brethren say, ‘Oh, I wish I could go to heaven! Oh, when shall I get home?’ They remind me of a man who, when he begins work on Monday, says, ‘I wish it was Saturday night’. We do not want servants like that, nor does God either. Be willing to live for two hundred and fifty years, if God wills it. Be willing to live until strength fails you, if God wills it; you can still bear your dying testimony to the Lord’s

faithful and unchanging love. Do not be in a hurry to go home to heaven. Do not want to go to sleep till you also have served your generation well. When David had served his generation, he fell on sleep. We are told that, in the early days of Christianity, when believers were falling asleep in Jesus, their friends did not bid them ‘good-bye’, but ‘good-night’. So we say, in the words of that beautiful hymn:

“Only ‘good-night’, beloved – not ‘farewell’!  
A little while, and all His saints shall dwell  
In hallowed union, indivisible.  
Good-night!”

(Doudney)

But, next we are told that when his work was done, he fell on sleep. Did his soul sleep? By no means. It was not his soul that is spoken of here, for we read that he “*saw corruption*” (Acts 13:36). Souls do not see corruption. Paul is speaking of David’s **body**. “*He fell on sleep, and was laid with his fathers, and saw corruption*”. His body fell into its last, long sleep, and saw corruption. If you like to take the words in the wider sense, he was asleep as far as the world is concerned; he had done with it. No sorrow came to him, no earthly joy, no mingling with the strife of tongues, no girding his harness for the war. “*He fell on sleep*”. He had nothing to do with anything that was under the sun. And that is the case with our dear friend whom we miss from his place to-day, and it will soon be the case also with you and with me. There is not much here worth stopping for; and when our work is finished, like David, we shall fall on sleep. We shall then be asleep to all the declensions of the age, all the strifes of men, and all else which gives us sorrow of heart.

Does this word further mean that his dying was like going to sleep? It usually is so with God’s people. Some die with a considerable measure of pain; but, as a rule, when believers pass away, they just shut their

eyes, and open them in heaven. I have had infinitely more pleasure at death-beds than I have had at weddings. I have been to many marriage-feasts, I have gone there at duty's call; but I can confirm what Solomon said, "*It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting: for it is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart*" (Ecclesiastes 7:2). I am not aware that I have gained anything at a wedding, but I have gained much at the dying bed, as I have seen the joy and peace and rapture of girls and youths, and men and women, passing away joyfully to be 'forever with the Lord' (cf 1 Thessalonians 4:17).

I have known some of our number here who were too bashful and backward to ever say much for Christ when they were well; but when I sent to see them die, there was not a bit of bashfulness about them. They spoke out so boldly that I have said to them, 'Why, if you get better, you must preach for me one of these Sundays'; and they have smiled and said that they would never get better. They have known this, and they have rejoiced to think that they were going where they would not need any preacher, but would see their Lord Jesus face to face. How they have brightened up at the mention of His dear name! Some of them have sung then, though I never knew them to sing before; and some of them have told of things which they seemed to see and hear, which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, till God has revealed them to the departing spirit...

If we know Christ, it shall be ours by-and-by to sleep in him. You who believe in Christ ought no more to dread death than you dread going to sleep at night. You will, 'ere you sleep, commit yourself to God, and as you put your head on the pillow, the similitude of death will be upon you, even sleep which one has called 'death's cousin'. You will not be afraid of that. Why, then, should any dismay seize you in prospect of that which is but another sleep? Rather sing to yourself:

“Since Jesus is mine, I’ll not fear undressing,  
But gladly put off these garments of clay;  
To die in the Lord is a covenant blessing,  
Since Jesus to glory through death lead the way.”

Let us follow where He leads. Perchance some of us may tarry until He comes again. There will be no death for such; they will but change the service of their generation for the service of the glorified. “*Behold, I shew you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed*” (1 Corinthians 15:51). Then, when the trumpet shall sound, this corruptible shall put on incorruption, those who sleep in Christ shall awake in resurrection splendour, and together we shall serve our Lord day and night in his temple for ever. Meanwhile, serve your own generation by the will of God; and if the Lord tarry, you will fall on sleep, even as David did. May God bless you who believe in Jesus, and save the unsaved who are in our midst, for our Lord Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

C. H. Spurgeon (1834 – 1892)

Editorial Notes: *The sermon from which this article is taken was originally preached on 19th October 1890, the Lord’s Day following the death of Mr William Olney, for many years a deacon at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, London.*

*Regular readers are advised that the series of articles on ‘The Tabernacle of God’ is to be resumed in the next edition of The Link, God willing.*

*Preliminary Announcement*

**ANNUAL BIBLE CONVENTION**

**Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> & Lord’s Day 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2013 D.V.**

*Preacher : Mr R. J. Steward*

## PRESENT WITH THE LORD

*“We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.”* (2 Corinthians 5:8)

There seems to linger in the secret thoughts of some of the Lord’s people, a slight shadow of doubt, or at least, rather hazy thoughts as to the state, and place of the believer, during the interval which divides death from the resurrection.

Now it is perfectly true that, in the main, Scripture looks on to the goal, and focuses the mind and the heart upon the return of Christ; not death, but upon resurrection and transformation. Indeed redemption’s work will not be fully completed in us until this has taken place, for no part of His redeemed ones can be allowed to remain in death; the ultimate is the redemption **of** the body – not **from** the body. Only thus will death be swallowed up in victory.

Having said this, it nevertheless remains a fact that the vast majority of the Lord’s dear children have passed over by way of the grave. We ourselves know not whether we shall be among the company who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, or are to be numbered with those who sleep in Jesus (cf 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). So what of this intervening period? Is there something mysterious here, some little measure of uncertainty? Indeed not, for whilst the Scriptures are mainly taken up with the glorious morning of resurrection yet they leave us in no doubt with regard to this waiting time which is the portion of those who have gone before.

Let us refresh our minds with the Word of God, and may the Holy Spirit remove from us for ever any lurking doubts or feelings of anxiety. Let us call to mind the amazing words of the Saviour Himself

to the dying thief upon the cross: *“Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with Me in paradise”* (Luke 23:43). It was this same prospect of going to Christ at death which cheered the martyr Stephen in his last hour: *“calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit”* (Acts 7:59). The same blessed expectation moved Paul to say: *“Having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better”* (Philippians 1:23). Again the apostle wrote: *“Absent from the body”* – how does that statement end? ‘Absent from the body – freed from care and suffering’? No. ‘Absent from the body – unconscious in the grave’? No. It is: *“absent from the body ... present with the Lord”* (2 Corinthians 5:8). To be with Christ in paradise, is what awaits every believer at death.

The devil has gone to great lengths in order to rob the saints of God of this blessed prospect: the doleful dogma of soul-sleep, teaching that believers are in a state of unconsciousness between death and resurrection; or, far more terrifying, the blasphemous teaching of purgatory, the frightening thought of passing into fire in order to be purified and fitted for heaven. The word of Scripture for ever disposes with these God-dishonouring delusions.

The moment a sinner believes, that moment he or she is, *“made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light”* (Colossians 1:12). *“For by one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified ”* (Hebrews 10:14). Our title, as well as our fitness for Christ’s presence rest upon His shed blood, and that alone. Here, beloved, we are forever safe. Christ said concerning His own: *“My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father’s hand”* (John 10:29). Here is the ground of the believer’s great confidence, nothing can touch the spirit of the saint which is grasped by the Hand of Omnipotence. We are literally: *“kept by the power of God”* (1 Peter 1:5).

With such a sure word as this, should we dread the hour of passing? If David in the Old Testament could say: “*Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me*” (Psalm 23:4), why should we fear, who live **after** the victory of Calvary? Death may be, indeed is, the ‘King of Terrors’ to the mortal mind, but to the Christian it is the door into the very presence of the Lord; consciously, and in a state which is far better than anything which we have known as yet (cf Philippians 1:23).

The motions of the Christian’s soul in death, as in life, will turn instinctively to God. Of Stephen at his decease, it is recorded: “*he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God*” (Acts 7:55). How often have we cast a longing look heavenward! So when the soul of the saved reaches the brink, it will instinctively throw itself into the arms of everlasting love. Just as a river after its many turnings and twistings pours itself into the ocean, so at death we shall quit a life of many windings and corners. We shall leave a world which can never really satisfy our spirits, and flow out into a fuller life and experience of eternal satisfaction, to dwell before the very face of our Redeemer. The body for a while will rest in the dust, from whence it was taken, awaiting the shout of the resurrection, when it will be glorified. At that moment, our unclothed spirits which have been so much at home with the Lord during the interval, will immediately be “*Clothed upon with our house which is from heaven*” (2 Corinthians 5:2). Then indeed will ‘mortality be swallowed up of life’.

How the heart of Isaac Watts must have been attuned to this prospect as he wrote:

“There is a land of pure delight,  
Where saints immortal reign;  
Infinite day excludes the night,  
And pleasures banish pain.

There everlasting spring abides,  
And never-withering flowers;  
Death, like a narrow sea, divides  
This heavenly land from ours.

Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood  
Stand dressed in living green;  
So to the Jews old Canaan stood,  
While Jordan rolled between.

But timorous mortals start and shrink  
To cross this narrow sea;  
And linger, shivering, on the brink,  
And fear to launch away.

Could we but climb where Moses stood,  
And view the landscape o'er,  
Not Jordan's stream, nor death's cold flood,  
Should fright us from the shore."

The child of God may be beset with many fears as death approaches, for it is the Last Enemy. We might ask, 'how should we prepare for death?' We can be certain that when the time comes, the Lord **will** prepare us. He is not taken unawares; He has appointed it; He will be with us. He has **promised**, "*When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee*" (Isaiah 43:2).

Beloved believer, consider our Lord Jesus Christ as our Representative in the garden of Gethsemane. There, He prepared for death. A fathomless horror descended upon His holy Soul. Why? Dear child of God, He was bearing the weight of your sins and mine in anticipation of the sword of Divine Wrath and Justice, in the hands of a thrice Holy

God, falling upon Him. He **has** borne our griefs; He **has** carried our sorrows; He **was** wounded for our transgressions; with His stripes we **are** healed; He was oppressed and afflicted for our sins (cf Isaiah 53). All this was done as a substitute for us, in order that, when the hour of **our** death approaches, we may be entirely free from the fear and bondage of sin.

From whence then arises this fear of death? Is not sin the sting of death? (cf 1 Corinthians 15:56). But your sins, beloved, have been blotted out; the penalty has been paid. The filthy garments of your own righteousness have been taken away; you are clothed in the spotless righteousness of the incarnate, eternal Son of God. Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? God has justified you (cf Romans 8:33). These truths silence Satan, devils, men and our own wicked unbelieving hearts. The demands of the Holy Law of God have been kept; the penalty has been paid by One who rose again from the dead for our justification (cf Romans 4:25).

David, anticipating his passing through the valley of the shadow of death, could say with full assurance: "*I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me*" (Psalm 23:4). These are the words of one who lived by faith, and died in faith (cf Hebrews 10:38; 11:13). His trust was not in his feelings, nor in the vicissitudes of his emotions; no, his trust was in the unchanging, inerrant Word of the Eternal God.

May God grant that all our anxious thoughts be dispelled, and these truths be not remote mystical ideas, but deep realities to the soul. "*Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace **in believing**, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost*" (Romans 15:13).

W. H. Molland  
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## EDITORIAL

Throughout the ages, the experiences of death amongst the people of God have been as varied as they are numerous. Some have died old and full of days, others in the prime of life; some at the hands of their foes, others in the bosom of their friends; some in the depths of privation, others in the midst of plenty; some on account of war and disaster; others through illness and the rigours of age. But one abiding truth applies to them each – from Abel to Zacharias, and all the roll-call of the righteous encompassed between those letters, first to last – **not one has ever died alone.**

Of this we may be assured, for God, who observes the last fall to earth of the least sparrow, cannot fail to be witness at the deathbed of one of His own people (cf Matthew 10:29-31). There is no situation so extreme, nor Christian so isolated, but God is present there, when their mortal life expires. For it is emphatically stated that: “*Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints*” (Psalm 116:15).

From a human perspective, this sentiment may seem incongruous. Indeed, even with a measure of understanding it is hard to reconcile. For is not death the ultimate penalty of sin; the last consequence of the curse; the putting asunder of body and spirit, which God hath joined together? How then can it possibly appear ‘precious’ in His Divine sight? The answers lie within the selfsame Psalm. First, the decease in view is only that of the **mortal body** – not spiritual or eternal death. Regarding these matters, the inspired writer says: “*Thou hast delivered my soul from death*” (v 8). Second, the persons in view are **His saints**, who, having “*walk[ed] before the Lord in the land of the living*” (v 9), are destined henceforth to sit at His feet as sons and freemen (cf v 16), “*in the courts of the Lord’s house, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem*” (v 19). For which cause, Almighty God, who takes no pleasure in the death of the

wicked (cf Ezekiel 33:11), accounts the dying of His own redeemed people a thing of great worth. The reasons for this are clear.

Seen from a heavenly and spiritual perspective, the death of a saint is precious, for bringing an end to the flesh; which, as the seat of the old nature, has so long warred against the spirit. The groaning burden of this earthly tabernacle is at last dissolved (cf Romans 7:18-24, 2 Corinthians 5:1-9).

It is precious, for releasing them from this present world; a world that lieth in wickedness, upon which they know tribulation and alienation continually. But in that moment of death, being no longer mindful of the place from whence they came out, they obtain that city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God (cf Hebrews 11:9-16).

It is precious, for putting them forever beyond the reach of sin and Satan. His time is short, his territory limited, and he shall never 'break their peace again', in that realm, where nought that defileth will ever enter (cf Revelation 21:27).

It is precious, for being the instant in which faith is transformed to sight. No longer will communion with God be through the faltering means of prayer; but free and unimpeded, face-to-face and without a veil between. No more hoping for that which is unseen, but a rejoicing in the newly-visible riches of grace and glory. Doubt and fear gone forever "*then shall I know even as also I am known*" (1Corinthians 13:12).

May such facts as these elevate 'the death of the saints' to the same lofty position in our own understanding, as it occupies in the mind of God. For concerning truth of this nature, we freely confess:

"It makes the coward spirit brave,  
And nerves the feeble arm for fight;  
**It takes the terror from the grave,  
And gilds the bed of death with light."** (Kelly)