

January - March 2017

# The Link

**NORTH ROAD CHAPEL**

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**BIDEFORD**

# THE LORD'S DAY

## Part 2

*“...the works were finished from the foundation of the world. For He spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all His works ... For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from His.”* (Hebrews 4:3-4, 10)

The previous article commenced in the Book of Genesis or the Book of Beginnings, and the vital question of the Sabbath. As soon as creation was effected and man given dominion over the creation of this planet, God immediately established a principle of one day in seven to be set apart for Himself. Man was to work for six days, then give himself to rest on the seventh – for that day was sanctified for God. This is a foundation truth, a divine institution as old as the world itself.

There is much ground to be covered in relation to this subject of the Sabbath. By way of a broad outline, it will be addressed as follows:

- 1.) Its institution at creation;
- 2.) Its incorporation into the Ten Commandments;
- 3.) Its position within the Mosaic Law;
- 4.) The testimony of the prophets regarding it;
- 5.) Its transference to the first day in the New Testament.

Then the many objections to this must be examined; for a great number of Christians in this age will rise up and say: ‘you cannot find any trace of Sabbath observance right through the age of the Patriarchs’; ‘it was not established until Sinai’. ‘It was Jewish, we have no express command for it in the New Testament’. ‘We are under a better covenant’. ‘We are not under the law, we have been brought into liberty’. ‘We are not

in bondage to these things'. 'Sabbath observance is suspended now and will not be valid again until a future millennium'.

All these things and many more do we hear, which in the main have sprung from differing sections of Arminian Dispensationalism, and Antinomianism. Little did the early exponents of these theories realise that they were creating a seed-plot for the raising of a host of erroneous plants – and what a harvest is reaped within the Church today (cf Hosea 8:7); what utter confusion! The Word of God must be kept intact; it is 'The Faith', 'The Doctrine', 'The Truth', when held in its entirety. But carve it up, take it out of its context, and it can be made to prove a lie.

So to return to the subject of the Sabbath's **institution at creation**. The whole controversy hinges upon this point. If the Sabbath principle was **not** a creation ordinance, then the door is open for all these arguments, just described. How Christians (let alone theologians and students of the Word of God) can persuade themselves that Genesis 2:2-3 are just figures of speech inserted into the creation account is unfathomable. Such an interpretation makes it appear that God had worked hard for six days and was tired, and so on the seventh He took the day off. If that is all the significance which these two verses have, it is tantamount to blasphemy.

The Spirit of God expressly states that God **sanctified** that day. Sanctified things are of very great importance. There is also a notion with some that God was 'anticipating Israel' here, 'dropping a hint' as it were; a hook on which the Fourth Commandment could be hung 2500 years later. According to John Owen, this theory was originally proposed by some ancient Jewish doctors who wanted to magnify Jewish ritual and their law. This man-made notion does not deserve having any time wasted on a study of its detail; but it may receive mention again, as it is the dubious foundation upon which a large proportion of modern evangelicalism have built their doctrines.

As the creation account is examined, there are certain features which stand out. All is in sequence. It is chronological. It is unbroken. It is complete. Each day, with its instantaneous supernatural events, follows on from the other; the second day followed the first; the third day followed the second; the fourth day followed the third; and so on. The form of the language in Genesis 1 and 2 emphasises this point. Therefore, did not the seventh day follow the sixth? Is not this a part of the very same account? This is God's revelation of His 'act of giving origin to'. Just as the origin of the dry land is traced back to Day Three, the sun and moon to Day Four, animals and man to Day Six, so the origin of the Sabbath belongs to Day Seven. If not, then words have no meaning.

How men can so distort the plain and obvious interpretation of Scripture by saying that this was 'only a hint', which was carried forward 2500 years to be included in the Mosaic economy, and was for the Jews only, is inexplicable. But this is exactly what so many have done. By so doing they mar the whole account. They make the days of Genesis 1 to mean anything, and stretch them out to whatever length of time suits them.

Go wrong in Genesis, and you will be wrong right through the Scriptures. Are we to believe that on Day Four God created the sun, but it did not shine for a few thousand years? Of course not! Neither are we to believe that on Day Seven God established a Sabbath, but it was not to be seen or observed for two-and-a-half millennia, and then only by the Jews. What rubbish! The plain, literal, common-sense interpretation of Holy Scripture is indispensable to faith. 'God has said it, therefore we believe it'.

When God appointed the Passover, He did not wait for thousands of years before its observance commenced; nor was this the case with other institutions such as circumcision, baptism or the Lord's Supper. To stress this point even more, consider the words of the Decalogue as given

upon Sinai, generations later: *“Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.”* (Exodus 20: 8-11). Observe the tense here. It does not say that the Lord **now** blesses and hallows the Sabbath Day; neither does it say that He is **going** to bless and set apart the Sabbath Day. No! The Word says he **blessed** it and **hallowed** it on the Seventh Day of Creation, in the historical past. It had been set apart and ordained twenty-five centuries prior to Sinai.

This still does not satisfy many people who will continue in this vein: ‘God may have blessed and sanctified the Seventh Day, but it does not state the purpose or meaning of this.’ This is not correct, for the answer is contained in the word “*sanctified*”. In its Biblical sense, this means: ‘set apart for God’; ‘for holy use only’. The Tabernacle was a structure set apart solely for spiritual things. The priests were sanctified for the service of God. The furniture was hallowed for a sacred purpose and was not to be put to ordinary use. Common sense alone requires that the same meaning is applied to a ‘sanctified day’. It is solely for spiritual exercises; it is for the service of God; it is for a sacred purpose; it is not for common use.

Is not this as plain as the Word of God can put it? Here in Genesis 1, the Creator sets the example of six days’ work. God could have done it all in one day. He could as easily have brought all creation into being in one instant of time. But no, He establishes a principle from the very beginning, for all time, of six days of activity, followed by one day set apart. The period between the sanctified days was to be six days – that is the principle. This is the ground upon which we stand – a Sabbath that is part of Creation. If we plant our feet here and will not budge, then

we shall have no difficulties later. But stray from this foundational truth, and as it is with physical foundations, so we shall soon be tottering and falling into error.

Consider a still deeper question. When the Sabbath was brought into being, Adam was sinless. He loved his God with all his heart, his soul, his mind and his strength, and enjoyed constant and unbroken communion with his Creator. In this holy relationship, was a day of rest from all pursuits necessary? Did he need a special day set apart, to dwell only on spiritual things? Surely every day to him was a holy day in his blissful, sinless state? This might be man's reasoning, but it was not God's. God said, 'Adam: six days of activity, then one day for Me'. This day was, in a very special sense, for the glory of God, **and** for the blessing of man. Man was never without a Sabbath. This day expresses something of the essential relationship between man and His glorious Creator. God worked in a particular order in Creation: six days of activity, and one hallowed day of rest. This is the perpetual pattern for His creatures to follow. If God deemed a Sabbath necessary in Paradise for sinless creatures, how much **more** needful it is now!

In conclusion, let it be emphasised that the Sabbath finds its **origin** in Eden – a sinless Paradise past. Its great **consummation** is in a sinless Paradise future; the eternal rest of heaven; the sanctified home of God's sanctified people: "*For we which have believed do enter into rest, as He said ... For He spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works ... There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from His*" (Hebrews 4:3-4, 9-10). The writer is speaking of the eternal Sabbath; the day when God shall be all in all. It is inextricably linked with the Sabbath first instituted in Genesis 2:2, when God finished His great work of making the world, and rested on the Sabbath Day.

The Sabbath is a vital truth which runs right through Scripture – from Genesis to Revelation – and the Spirit of God ties it all in together: “*Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief*” (Hebrews 4:11). Let us labour. We live in the valley between these two mountain peaks – the Sabbath of Eden Paradise past, and the Sabbath of the New Jerusalem Paradise future. Then let us labour to set forth this God-ordained principle with all clarity, in our personal lives, in our family life, in our church life; in this dark valley where the Name of God is dishonoured, and the Day of God profaned. May we in very truth remember the Sabbath Day and keep it holy.

W. H. Molland (1920 – 2012)

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“God’s working six days, and resting the seventh, and blessing and hallowing it ... is written, that the practice of mankind in general might some way or other be regulated by it. What could be the meaning of God’s resting the seventh day, and hallowing and blessing it, which He did, before the giving of the fourth commandment, unless He hallowed and blessed it with respect to mankind? ... It is unreasonable to suppose that He hallowed it only with respect to the Jews, a particular nation, which rose up above two thousand years after.”

J. Edwards (1703 – 1758)

“When it is therefore said by the inspired historian, that God: “*sanctified the seventh day*”, I must understand him to say, that God set it apart (from the other six days of labour), to be religiously employed by man. The use of the same words in the fourth commandment (cf Exodus 20:8-11) confirms this meaning, beyond all the power of scepticism. The word ‘bless’, when used of an act of God, signifies, in the Scriptures, to confer blessings on men (cf Genesis 1:22, 30:27, 39:5); when spoken of things, it signifies to make them means of happiness to men (cf Exodus 23:25, Deuteronomy 28:12, 33:11).”

J. N. Brown (1803 – 1868)

## ADVICE TO SUFFERERS

*“Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator” (1 Peter 4:19).*

In this phrase, “*a Faithful Creator*”, behold the wisdom of the Holy Ghost; how fitly and to the purpose He speaketh. ‘King’ is a great title, and God is sometimes called a King; but He is not set forth by this title here, but by the title of a Creator; for it is not always in the power of a king to succour and relieve his subjects, that are suffering for his crown and dignity. ‘Father’ is a sweet title – a title that carrieth in it an intimation of a great deal of bowels and compassion, and God is often set forth also by this title in the Holy Scriptures. But so He is not here, but rather as a Creator. For a father, a compassionate father, cannot always help, succour, or relieve his children, though he knows they are under affliction! Oh! but a Creator can. Wherefore, I say, He is set forth here under the title of Creator.

**First**, a Creator! Nothing can die under a Creator’s hands. A Creator can sustain all. A Creator can, as a Creator, do what He pleases. “*The everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary*” (Isaiah 40:28).

The cause of God, for which His people suffer, [would have] been dead and buried a thousand years ago, had it not been in the hand of a Creator ... Who could have hoped, when Israel was going in, even into the mouth of the Red Sea, that ever His cause, or that people, should have revived again? A huge host of the Egyptians were behind them, and nothing but death before and on every hand of them; but they lived, they flourished, they outlived their enemies, for they were in the hand of a Creator. Who could have hoped that Israel should have returned again from the land, from the hand, and from under the tyranny of the king of Babylon? They



could not deliver themselves from going thither, they could not preserve themselves from being diminished when they came there, their power was gone, they were in captivity, their distance from home was far, their enemies possessed their land, their city of defence was ruined, and their houses burned down to the ground; and yet they came home again: there is nothing impossible to a Creator. Who could have thought that the three children could have lived in a fiery furnace? That Daniel could have been safe among the lions? That Jonah could have come home to his country, when he was in the whale's belly? Or that our Lord should have risen again from the dead? But what is impossible to a Creator?

This, therefore, is a rare consideration for those to let their hearts be acquainted with, that suffer according to the will of God, and that have committed the keeping of their souls to Him in well-doing. They have a Creator to maintain and uphold their cause, a Creator to oppose its opposers ...

**Second**, a Creator! A Creator can not only support a dying cause, but also fainting spirits. For as He fainteth not, nor is weary, so "*He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength*" (Isaiah 40:29). He is the God of the spirits of all flesh, and has the life of the spirit of His people in His own hand. Spirits have their being from Him; He is the Father of spirits. Spirits are made strong by Him, nor can any crush that spirit that God the Creator will uphold.

Is it not a thing amazing, to see one poor inconsiderable man, in a spirit of faith and patience, overcome all the threatenings, cruelties, afflictions and sorrows, that a whole world can lay upon him? None can [overpower] him, none can crush him, none can bend down his spirit. None can make him to forsake what he has received of God – a commandment to hold fast. His holy, harmless, and profitable notions, because they are spiced with grace, yield to him more comfort, joy, and

peace, and do kindle in his soul so goodly a fire of love to, and zeal for, God, that all the waters of the world shall never be able to quench.

‘Aye’, say some, ‘that is because he is headstrong, obstinate, and one that will hear no reason’. No, say I, but it is because his spirit is in the hand, under the conduct and preservation, of a Creator. A Creator can make spirits, uphold spirits, and make one spirit stronger to stand, than are all the spirits of the world to cast down. To stand, I say, in a way of patient enduring in well-doing, against all that hell can do to suppress.

**Third**, a Creator! A Creator can bring down the spirits that oppose, and make them weak and unstable as water ... *“He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength”*; now mark, *“even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall”* (Isaiah 40:29-30). A Creator can dash the spirits of the enemies with fear. God can put them in fear, and make them know that they are men and not God, and that their horses are flesh and not spirit (cf Isaiah 31:3). When the enemy came to take Jesus Christ, their spirits fainted, their hearts died in them; they went backwards, and fell to the ground. They had hard work to strengthen their spirits to a sufficiency of boldness and courage, though they brought halberds, and staves, and swords, and weapons with them, to take [an unarmed] man (cf John 18:3-7).

And although this is that which is not so visible to the world as some other things are, yet I believe that God treads down the spirits of men in a day when they afflict His people, oftener than we are aware of, or than they are willing to confess. How was the hostile spirit of Esau trod down of God, when he came out to meet his poor [defenceless] brother, with no less than four hundred armed men? He fainted before his brother, and instead of killing, kissed him (cf Genesis 33:4). How was the [raging] spirit of Saul trod down, when David met him at the mouth of the cave, and also at the hill Hachilah (cf 1 Samuel 24, 26)? God is a Creator, and

as a Creator, is a spirit maker, a spirit reviver, a spirit destroyer; He can destroy body and soul in hell (cf Luke 12:5).

**Fourth**, a Creator! As a Creator, He is over all arts, inventions, and crafts of men that are set on work to destroy God's people, whether they be soldiers, excellent orators, or any other whatsoever; we will single out one – the smith, that roaring fellow, who with his coals and his bellows makes a continual noise. *“I have created the smith”,* said God, *“that bloweth the coals in the fire, and that bringeth forth an instrument for his work; and I have created the waster to destroy”* (Isaiah 54:16). The smith, what is he? I answer, an idol maker, a promoter of false worship, and one that makes instruments of cruelty, therewith to help to suppress the true [worship] (cf Isaiah 41:7; 44:12; 46:6) ... ‘He is My creature’, saith God, to teach that He has power to reach him, and to command His sword to approach him at His pleasure, notwithstanding his roaring with his bellows, and his coals in the fire. So then, he cannot do what he will in the fire, nor with his idol when he has made it; the instrument, also that he makes for the defence of his idol, and for the suppressing of God's true worship, shall not do the thing for the which it is designed by him. And so the very next verse saith: *“No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of Me, saith the Lord”* (Isaiah 54:17).

And the text saith moreover, *“I have created the waster to destroy”*. The waster, what is that? Why, the smith makes an idol, and God has made the rust; the smith makes a sword, and God has made the rust. The rust eats them up, the moth shall eat them up, the fire shall devour them. *“The wicked”,* saith the Psalmist, *“have drawn out the sword, and have bent their bow, to cast down the poor and needy, and to slay such as be of upright conversation. Their sword shall enter into their own heart, and their bows shall be broken”* (Psalm 37:14,15).

All this can God do, because He is a Creator; and none but God can do it. Wherefore by this peculiar title of Creator, the apostle prepareth support for suffering saints, and also shows what a good conclusion is like to be made with them that suffer for righteousness' sake, according to His will; and that commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator.

**Fifth**, a Creator! A Creator can make such provision for a suffering people, in all respects, as shall answer all their wants. Have they lost their peace with the world? Have they no more peace with this world? Why, a Creator can make, can create peace: peace with God, and peace with his conscience; and that is better than all the peace that can be found elsewhere in the world (cf Isaiah 57:19). Have they lost a good frame of heart? Do they want a right frame of spirit? Why, though this is to be had nowhere in the world, yet a Creator can help them to it (cf Psalm 51:10). Have they lost their spiritual defence? Do they lie too open to their spiritual foes? Why, this Creator can help. *“And the Lord will create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defence”* (Isaiah 4:5) ...

Our new man is a creation; our graces are a creation; our joys and comforts are a creation (cf 2 Corinthians 5:17,18; Ephesians 4:24; Isaiah 65:17-19). Now a creation none can destroy but a Creator; wherefore here is comfort. But again, God hath created us in Christ Jesus; that is another thing. The sun is created in the heavens; the stars are created in the heavens; the moon is created in the heavens. Who can reach them, touch them, destroy them, but the Creator? Why, this is the case of the saint; because he has to do with a Creator, he is fastened to Christ; yea, is in him by an act of creation (cf Ephesians 2:10), so that unless Christ and the creation of the Holy Ghost can be destroyed, he is safe that is suffering according to the will of God, and that hath committed the keeping of his soul to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator ...

**Sixth**, a Creator! He that can create can turn and alter anything, to what Himself would have it. He that made, “*the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning*” (Amos 5:8), He can, “*make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water*” (Isaiah 41:18). Our most afflicted and desolate conditions, He can make as a little haven unto us; He can make us sing in the wilderness, and can give us our vineyards from thence (cf Hosea 2:14,15). He can make Paul sing in the stocks ... Jails, and mocks, and scourgings, and flouts and imprisonments, and hunger, and nakedness, and peril, and sword, and dens, and caves, and rocks, and mountains, God can so sweeten with the honey of His Word, and make so famous for situation by the glory of His presence, and so rich and fruitful by the communications of the Holy Ghost, and so easy by the spreading of His feathers over us, that we shall not be able to say, that in all the world a more commodious place, or comfortable condition, can be found. Some have known this, and have been rather ready to covet to be here, than to shun and fly from it, as a most unsavoury condition.

All these things, I say, God doth as a Creator. He hath created antipathies, and He can make antipathies cease, and have favour one for another. The lion and the calf, the wolf and the lamb, the little boy and the cockatrice’s den He can reconcile, and make to be at agreement. So, sufferings and the saint; the prison and the saint; losses, crosses, and afflictions and the saint: He can make to lie down sweetly together.

**Seventh**, a Creator! A Creator can make up all that thou hast or shalt lose for the sake of thy profession by the hands of the children of men, be they friends, relations, a world, life, or what you can conceive of. Hast thou lost thy friend for the sake of thy profession? Is the whole world set against thee for thy love to God, to Christ, His cause, and righteousness? Why, a Creator can make up all. Here, therefore, is the advantage that he hath that suffereth for righteousness’ sake ... Obadiah, Ahab’s steward, when the saints were driven even under ground by the

rage of Jezebel the queen, he is appointed of God to feed them in caves and holes of the earth (cf 1 Kings 18:13). Yea, the very raven complied with the will of a Creator to bring the prophet bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh at night (cf 1 Kings 17:6). When Jeremiah the prophet was rejected of all, yea, the church that then was, could not help him; he was cast into the dungeon, and sunk to a great depth there in the mire. God the Creator, who ruleth the spirits of all men, stirred up the heart of Ebed-melech the Ethiopian both to petition for his liberty, and to put him out of the dungeon by the help of thirty men (cf Jeremiah 38:7-13). These now, as Christ says, were both fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, and as a loving wife or child (cf Matthew 19:29) ...

Is thy life at stake – is it like to be forfeit for thy profession, for thy harmless profession of the gospel? Why, God the Creator is Lord of life, and to God the Lord belong the issues from death. So then, He can, if He will, hold thy breath in thy nostrils, in spite of all the world; or if He shall suffer them to take away this for His glory, He can give thee another ten times as good for thy comfort. *“He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal ”* (John 12:25) ...

**Eighth**, a Creator! Peter sets Him before us here as a Creator, because he would have us live upon Him as such; as well as upon His grace, love, and mercy. In Job’s day this was bewailed, that none, or but a few said, *“Where is God my maker, who giveth songs in the night?”* (Job 35:10).

‘Creator’, as was hinted before, is one of God’s peculiar titles. It is not given to Him above five or six times in all the [Scriptures]; and usually, when given Him, it is either to show His greatness, or else to convince us that of duty we ought to depend upon Him; and not to faint, if He be on our side. For under any adversity, according as we are bidden in the text: *“Let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping*

*of their souls to Him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator*". Shall God display His glory before us under the character and title of a Creator, and shall we yet fear man? Shall He do this to us when we are under a suffering condition, and that on purpose that we might commit our souls to Him in well-doing, and be quiet, and shall we take no notice of this? *"Who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass; and forgettest the Lord thy maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth?"* (Isaiah 51:12,13) ...

Every nation will have confidence [in] their own gods, though but gods that are made with hands; though but the work of the smith and carpenter; and shall not we trust in the name of the Lord our God, who is not only a God, but a Creator and former of all things (cf Micah 4:5), consequently, the only living and true God, and one that alone can sustain us?

We therefore are to be greatly blamed if we overlook the ground, such ground of support and comfort as presenteth itself unto us under the title of a Creator; but then most of all, if, when we have heard, believed, and known that our God is such, we shall yet be afraid of a man that shall die, and forget the Lord our maker. We, I say, have heard, seen, known, and believed, that our God is the Creator. The heavens declare His glory, and the firmament showeth His handiwork, and thus He has showed unto us His eternal power and Godhead (cf Romans 1:20).

Behold, then, thou fearful worm, Jacob, the heavens, the sun, the moon, the stars; behold the earth, the sea, the air, the fire, and vapours. Behold, all living things, from leviathan and behemoth to the least that creepeth in the earth and waters. Yea, behold thyself, thy soul, thy body, thy fashion, thy building, and consider; thy God hath made even all these things, and hath given to thee this being; yea, and all this also He made from that which doth not appear (cf Hebrews 11:1-3). This is that which

thou art called to the consideration of by Peter, in the text; when he letteth fall from his apostolical meditation that thy God is the Creator, and commandeth that thou, in thy suffering for Him according to His will, shouldest commit the keeping of thy soul to Him as unto a faithful Creator ... For such a man will thus conclude, that since the Creator of all is with him, what but creatures are there to be against him? ...

Every man stayeth up, or letteth his spirit fail, according to what he knoweth concerning the nature of a thing. He that knows the sea, knows the waves will toss themselves: he that knows a lion, will not much wonder to see his paw, or to hear the voice of his roaring. And shall we, that know our God, be stricken with a panic fear, when He cometh out of His holy place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity? We should stand like those that are next to angels, and tell the blind world who it is that is thus mounted upon His steed, and that hath the clouds for the dust of His feet, and that thus rideth upon the wings of the wind: we should say unto them, *“This God is our God for ever and ever: and He will be our guide even unto death”* (Psalm 48:14).

Our God! The Creator! He can turn men to destruction, and say, ‘Return, ye children of men’ (cf Psalm 90:3). When our God shows Himself, it is worth the while to see the sight, though it cost us all that we have to behold it.

Shall saints, then, like slaves, be afraid of their God, the Creator; of their own God, when He rendeth the heavens, and comes down (cf Isaiah 64:1)? When God comes into the world to do great things, He must come like Himself – like Him that is a Creator: wherefore the heavens and the earth must move at His presence, to signify that they acknowledge Him as such, and pay Him that homage that is due to Him as their God and great Creator.

John Bunyan (1628 – 1688)



## CHRIST IN CREATION

Confronted with adversities and trials of extraordinary severity, the patriarch Job and his three companions were at a loss to explain the cause or remedy of them. They might have continued indefinitely under their various misapprehensions, had not God Himself intervened, and by direct revelation declared His sovereignty and prerogative in all the circumstances of human existence. The object lesson by which God illustrated this fundamental truth was the natural creation surrounding His hearers – gloriously described in Job chapters 38 to 41. To emphasise the immeasurable difference between God and man, the human and the Divine, the Lord asks a series of profound rhetorical questions: “*Who hath laid the measures thereof . . . who hath stretched the line upon it . . . who laid the corner stone thereof . . . who shut up the sea with doors?*” (Job 38:5, 6, 8). The answer to these questions is highly instructive.

Proverbs chapter 8 is phrased in such a way as to almost answer Job 38 word-for-word. “*When He prepared the heavens, I was there: when He set a compass upon the face of the depth: When He established the clouds above: when He strengthened the fountains of the deep: When He gave to the sea His decree, that the waters should not pass His commandment: when He appointed the foundations of the earth: Then I was by Him, as one brought up with Him: and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him*” (Proverbs 8:27-30). This remarkable passage, beginning as a poetic personification of ‘Wisdom’, proceeds to draw back the veil on a past eternity, and the dwelling place of God before the founding of the world. It reveals a plurality of persons present at Creation, one of whom is **Christ**, the ‘Wisdom of God’ (cf 1 Corinthians 1:24, 30).

That Creation is a Trinitarian work is evident from the opening words of Scripture: “*In the beginning **God** created the heaven and the earth. And the*

*earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the **Spirit** of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God **said**...*” (Genesis 1:1-3). The presence of the Father and the Spirit is clear; but it is further reported that God brought all things into being by speech. He might as readily have used thought only; or produced an image of creation which He then animated; or indeed employed no device or means whatsoever – but it is specifically described how God enacted Creation by a series of spoken commandments, formed of words. This is no coincidence, but shows the Second Person of the Godhead to be present: *“In the beginning was the **Word**, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. **All things were made by Him**; and without Him was not any thing made that was made ... He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not”* (John 1:1-3, 10).

This is not mere conjecture, or a ‘striving over words to no profit’ – it is the consistent testimony of the Word of God, which repeatedly declares the work of the Son in Creation: *“... there is but one God, the Father, **of Whom** are all things, and we in Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, **by Whom** are all things, and we by Him”* (1 Corinthians 8:6); *“...from the beginning of the world ... God ... created all things by Jesus Christ”* (Ephesians 3:9). He is: *“the beginning of the creation of God”* (Revelation 3:4). Any and every manifestation of God to the human senses is wrought by the Second Person of His being. From the beginning of the world, whatever has been ‘seen or heard or touched or handled’ concerning God (cf 1 John 1:1-3) was effected by the Son. Whenever in history a word from God was spoken, or the voice of God heard, or an image of God seen, Christ accomplished it. *“No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, **He hath declared Him**”* (John 1:18); for Christ is the Mediator; He is the ‘expression of God’ (cf Hebrews 1:3); He is: *“**the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For 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 1:15-17). "God ...hath ... spoken unto us by His Son ... by whom also He made the worlds" (Hebrews 1:1-2).

The concluding verses of Psalm 102 speak of God's power over the material creation, and read like an ascription of praise from man to God. But the great Old Testament commentary that is the Hebrew Epistle casts those same words in a new light, and shows them to be the testimony of the Father to the Son: "*But unto the Son He saith ... 'Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of Thine hands: They shall perish; but Thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; And as a vesture shalt Thou fold them up, and they shall be changed'*" (Hebrews 1:8, 10-12). This is the last and greatest word on the subject, "*for this is the witness of God which He hath testified of His Son*" (1 John 5:9).

There is great comfort for the Lord's people to reflect that in Christ, they have One who is both Creator, and was also 'made like unto His brethren' (cf Hebrews 2:17). He is not a God afar off, remote, ignorant or unconcerned about the creatures He has made; but He absolutely 'knoweth our frame', 'rememberest that we are dust', and moreover has been 'touched with the feeling of our infirmities'. (cf Psalm 103:14, Hebrews 4:15). In any earthly example that one calls to mind, an insuperable difference or division exists between the maker of a thing, and the thing that is made; but Christ has condescended, and humbled Himself, and traversed this fixed gulf. The great Creator has 'made Himself a house of clay'; the Potter has become a vessel. A more intimate acquaintance with our human nature He could not have. What consolation may be derived from this truth then, in days of difficulty, temptation and need? He will never inadvertently afflict unto their destruction or grieve those who are but frail children of men (cf

Lamentations 3:33-34); He will not cause us to suffer above measure, but personally guarantee that we are able to bear it (cf 1 Corinthians 10:13).

Likewise, it is wonderful to contemplate that in Christ, the powers of Creation and Salvation are met together. For how great a transformation is required to turn the fallen, sin-stained descendants of Adam into the sons of God; to convert the mortal, finite inhabitants of this world into the heirs of heaven; to bring those who were dead and corrupted in transgressions into newness of life? Nothing less than complete re-generation – a second birth – will suffice to accomplish it. This the Lord Jesus, our Saviour-Creator, can do. He, and He alone, can make whole, make alive, make righteous, make one, make perfect – behold He maketh all things new (cf Revelation 21:5)! Every one of the Lord's people (saved by grace, through faith) is "*created in Christ Jesus unto good works*" (Ephesians 2:10). "*Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new*" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

A thing that is made bears the hallmarks of its maker; the unmistakeable impress of the one who gave it being. This is gloriously true of the Christian, whose "*new man . . . is renewed in knowledge **after the image of Him that created him***" (Colossians 3:10). A striking resemblance exists between the believer and the Lord, for He has made it to be so. It is a likeness that will ultimately become much more evident: "*it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is*" (1 John 3:2); for He, "*shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body*" (Philippians 3:21), and thus receive us unto that place which He Himself has created; the kingdom which He has prepared for us; a new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness (cf John 14:2, Matthew 25:34, 2 Peter 3:13).

R. J. Steward

## EDITORIAL

A febrile and factious political atmosphere afflicts many countries of the world at the present time – further reason, were any needed, for true Biblical separatism on the part of God’s people (cf 2 Corinthians 6:17). Those who are self-confessed pilgrims and strangers do not entangle themselves with the affairs of this alien scene (cf Hebrews 11:13, 2 Timothy 2:4); especially when the Lord’s judgmental purposes are manifestly being outworked.

Divine sovereignty transcends national democracy, and regardless of human systems of government, “*the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will, and setteth up over it the basest of men ... And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?*” (Daniel 4:17, 35). The Lord rules over appointments to high office, ballot-boxes, elections and referenda, working all things according to the counsel of His own will. And if His design is one of judgment, He will permit nations and peoples to heap unto themselves leaders ‘after their own lusts’ (cf 2 Timothy 4:3); He will grant them their request, and send a consequent leanness into their midst (cf Psalm 106:15); He will bestow certain rulers in His anger, and take away others in His wrath (cf Hosea 13:11).

Under such circumstances, what manner of persons ought true Christians to be? Clearly not questioning or murmuring at the works of God; much less seeking to change them by casting a contrary vote. Rather, we should give heed to the numerous instructions provided in the Scriptures, so that we may, “*If it be possible, as much as lieth in [us], live peaceably with all men*” (Romans 12:18). Even though they be as ‘Caesar’ for ungodliness and vice, earthly rulers are still to be rendered their dues in the following God-appointed currency (cf Romans 13:7):

**Honour:** *“Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people”* (Acts 23:5). Here is a reasonable word in these critical and opinionated days. *“Curse not the king, no not in thy thought”* (Ecclesiastes 10:20), but rather, *“Honour the king”* (1 Peter 2:17).

**Obedience:** Where the law of God is not being opposed or contradicted, there can be no justification for civil disobedience or strife. No Christian should be prosecuted as an evildoer (cf 1 Peter 4:15) or merit the world’s accusations: *“Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors... For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men”* (1 Peter 2:13-15).

**Prayer:** Concerning wicked King Saul and his subjects, righteous Samuel said: *“as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you”* (1 Samuel 12:23). The Apostle adds, *“I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour”* (1 Timothy 2:1-3). Rulers of men warrant our prayers for many reasons; not least because they will be held more accountable before God (cf James 3:1).

*“Finally, brethren, pray ... that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified ... And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men”* (2 Thessalonians 3:1-2).

*Preliminary Announcement*

## **ANNUAL BIBLE CONVENTION**

**Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2017 D.V.**

*Preacher : Mr G. D. Buss*