

April - June 2021

The Link

50TH ANNIVERSARY
SPECIAL EDITION

NORTH ROAD CHAPEL

BIDEFORD

‘Declaring all the counsel of God’

PUBLIC SERVICES

(Meetings are held in the chapel building with some health measures in place, and continue subject to national restrictions and God’s will.)

Lord’s Day:

Prayer Meeting 10.30 a.m.
Morning Service 11.00 a.m.
Evening Service 6.30 p.m.

Thursday:

Prayer Meeting 7.30 p.m.
Bible Teaching Ministry 8.00 p.m.

Live broadcasts can be heard at: **www.northroadchapel.org/livestream**

The Authorized Version of the Scriptures is used at all Services

THE YEAR OF JUBILEE

“Then shalt thou cause the trumpet of the jubilee to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month, in the day of atonement shall ye make the trumpet sound throughout all your land. And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubilee unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family. A jubilee shall that fiftieth year be unto you: ye shall not sow, neither reap that which groweth of itself in it, nor gather the grapes in it of thy vine undressed. For it is the jubilee; it shall be holy unto you: ye shall eat the increase thereof out of the field. In the year of this jubilee ye shall return every man unto his possession.” (Leviticus 25:9-13).

*“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim **the acceptable year of the Lord**, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn” (Isaiah 61:1-2).*

Now, what was the “*year of the Lord*”? There can be, I think, very little question that this relates to the jubilee year. Every seventh year was the Lord’s year, and it was to be a sabbath of rest to the land; but after the seventh seventh year, the **fiftieth year**, which the Lord reserved unto Himself, was in a very marked and especial sense the year of the Lord. Now, our Lord Jesus has come to proclaim a period of jubilee to the true seed of Israel. The seed of Abraham now are not the seed according to the law, but those who are born after the promise . . . every great blessing which was promised to Abraham’s seed after the flesh is now virtually promised to Israel after the Spirit, to those who by faith are the children of believing Abraham. Now, beloved, to all who believe, our Lord Jesus proclaims a year of jubilee. Let us dwell upon the four privileges of the jubilee, and accept with delight the proclamation which our Lord has made.

1.) In the year of jubilee, as we read in the twenty-fifth chapter of Leviticus, there was **a release of all persons who had sold themselves for servants**. Pinched by great poverty, and unable to meet their debts, it sometimes happened that men were compelled to say to their creditor, ‘Take us and our wives and children, and accept our services instead of money. We have no goods or chattels, and our land has been mortgaged long ago, but here we are; we cannot pay in any other way – give us food and raiment and lodging, and we will put ourselves under apprenticeship to you’. The law of Moses ordained that such persons were not to be treated harshly, nor regarded as slaves, but as hired servants; but still it must have been an unpleasant condition of servitude for a freeborn Israelite. How happy then was the morning when the jubilee trumpet sounded, and the generous law came into operation which said, he “*shall serve thee unto the year of jubilee, and then shall he depart from thee, both he and his children with him*” (Leviticus 25:40-41). From that moment he owed no more service, however great his debt might have been; he looked upon his wife and children and rejoiced that they were all his own and all free from the yoke, so that they could at once return to the possession of their fathers, all live in the cottage in which they formerly dwelt, and enjoy the piece of land which they had formerly called their own. Liberty, that gladsome sound, liberty had come to them; no matter that they had long been under obligations to the creditor, those obligations ceased on the sound of the sacred trumpet.

Beloved souls ... proclamation is made to you in the Lord’s name that if you are under bondage to sin and to sinful habits, there is liberty for you; faith in Jesus will set you free. If you are in bondage under justice and the broken law there is deliverance. If you are under bondage through fear of death, or from the rage of Satan, our divine Lord and Master has come into the world on purpose to break these bonds in sunder, and to proclaim liberty to the captives. Ye need be bound no longer; if ye believe in Jesus ye are bound no longer, but ye are set free from all the bondage of the law, from the slavery of Satan and from the dread of

death. Take the liberty which the great Lord freely presents to you, and be no longer slaves. Jesus has brought in redemption and finished atonement, and believers are free; come and rejoice therein.

2.) The next jubilee blessing was **the redemption of alienated possessions**. Every man had his own plot of ground in the Holy Land, but through the pressure of the times it sometimes happened that a man alienated his property: he was in need of ready money, his children wanted bread to eat, and he, therefore, parted with his land. It was gone: the vines and the fig trees, the corn and the oil, passed over to another; but it was not gone for ever, he had no power to sell beyond the year of jubilee. When the joyful morning dawned, he went back to his family estate; it was all his own again, clear of all encumbrances; the little homestead, and the farmyard, and the fields, and the garden, all had come back to him, and none could dispute his right. Just so my Lord and Master declares to all who believe in him that the estate which Adam forfeited is restored to all for whom the Second Adam died. The alienated heritage is our own again. The great Father's love, and favour, and care, yea, all things, whether things present or things to come, or life or death, all are ours, and we are Christ's and Christ is God's. If we are believers, and are of the true seed of Israel, this day the Lord Jesus proclaims to us a restoration of all the lost privileges and blessings which originally belonged to manhood. Behold, believers, all covenant blessings are yours; rejoice in them! Partake of heavenly blessings freely. Let your soul rejoice in its portion, and delight itself in fatness.

3.) It followed, also, as a third blessing of the year of the Lord that **all debts were discharged**. The man who had sold himself had, as it were, made a composition of his debts by the sale of himself, and this implied a full and final discharge at the jubilee. The person also who had mortgaged his land up to the jubilee year had discharged his debts thereby, and when the man received back himself and his property, no further liability rested upon him, he was cleared of all charges. The jubilee did not give the man back himself and his land under a reserve,

but unreservedly. If debt had still been due the release would have been a mere farce, since he would have had to mortgage his land and sell himself again directly to meet the demand. No, there was a full discharge, a cancelling of all debts, a removal of all incumbrances upon the man and upon his estate, and he was free. What a joy this must have been! He who is in debt is in danger; an honest man sleeps on a hard bed till he has paid what he owes. He who is immersed in debt is plunged in misery, driven to his wits' end, not knowing what to do. Happy is he that is delivered from debt once for all. Now behold, O believers in Jesus, your debts before the Lord are all discharged, the handwriting that was against you is nailed to the cross, receipted in the crimson lines of Jesus' precious blood. Being justified by faith ye are clear before the sight of the Eternal; none can lay anything to your charge. What joyful notes are these! Jesus makes the proclamation, who will not believe it and be glad?

4.) A fourth blessing of the jubilee trumpet was **rest**. They had their lands, but they were not to till them for a year. No more the spade and the plough, the sickle and the flail – they were to put away instruments of labour, and rest for twelve months. Think of a whole year of perfect repose, wherein they might worship and adore God all the week round, make every day a holy festival, and the whole year a Sabbath of Sabbaths unto the Most High! Brethren, the Israelites had no small privileges under the ceremonial covenant, if they had lived up to it, but they failed to do so, for it has sometimes been questioned whether they ever kept a jubilee at all, and whether the Sabbatic year was ever once observed. If they had obeyed the Lord they would have been favoured indeed: for in the matter of holidays and quiet resting times they were favoured above all people. Think of one year in seven of absolute cessation from toil. What repose for them! And then they had also the year after the seventh seven, so that every man who reached the fiftieth year enjoyed two consecutive years of absolute rest from all labour, and yet knew no want, for the ground brought forth plentifully, and every man helped himself. Those who had land had a good store to last them through three years,

and those who had none were fed by the spontaneous produce of the soil. We live not under such laws, and if we did, I am afraid we should not have the faith to trust in the Lord and avail ourselves of the divinely appointed holiday. But, beloved, we rest spiritually. He that believes in the Lord Jesus Christ has entered into rest. Now no more does he strive to work out a righteousness of his own, for he has already a divine one, and needs no other. It is his pleasure to worship God, but he no longer trembles beneath His wrath; it is his delight to do His commandments, but he toils and frets no longer as a slave under the law; he has become a free man, and a beloved child, and the peace of God which passeth all understanding keeps his heart and mind. Being justified by faith he has peace with God, and enjoys the influences of the divine Comforter whose indwelling gives rest to the soul.

The jubilee year, according to our text, was called the “*year of the Lord*”; and the reason for all the four jubilee blessings was found in the Lord. First, the servants were set free because God said: “*they are My servants, which I brought forth out of the land of Egypt*” (Leviticus 25: 42). Ah, poor burdened soul, if thou believest in Christ thou shalt go free, for thou art the Lord’s own – His chosen, His redeemed, and therefore He claims thee, and will suffer no other lord to have dominion over thee. The devil seeks to lay an embargo upon thee, and hold thee a slave, but Jesus saith, ‘Let go My captives, for I have redeemed them with My blood’. Jesus claims you, O penitent souls; He cries to sin as once the Lord said to Pharaoh, “*Thus saith the Lord, let my people go*” (Exodus 8:1). Jesus says of each repenting soul, ‘Loose him and let him go, for he is Mine. My Father gave him to Me – he is My chosen, My beloved. Neither sin nor Satan, nor death nor hell, shall hold him, for he is Mine’.

The land also was set free for this same reason, for concerning it the Lord said, “*the land is Mine*” (Leviticus 25:23). The freehold of the land was vested in Jehovah Himself, consequently He ordained that no man should hold any portion of it by right of purchase beyond the fiftieth year, for the land was entailed and must go back to those for whom He had

appointed it at the jubilee year. So the blessings of the everlasting covenant are God's, and therefore He appoints them unto you, poor believing sinners, and you shall have them, for the divine decree shall not be frustrated. As surely as He appointed Christ to reign, and placed Him on the throne, so does He appoint you to reign with Him, and you shall sit upon His throne though all the devils in hell should say you nay.

So, too, the debts were all discharged, because on the day before the jubilee the great atonement had swept away all transgression and indebtedness towards God, and He would have His people forgive all the debts of their fellow men. All things are the Lord's, and He exercised His crown rights on the day of jubilee so far as to declare all debts discharged. "*The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof*" (Psalm 24:1) was the motto of the jubilee, and sufficient reason for the cancelling of obligations between man and man.

As for rest, that came also, because it was God's year, and was hallowed unto the Lord. "*A jubilee shall that fiftieth year be unto you: ye shall not sow, neither reap that which groweth of itself in it, nor gather the grapes in it of thy vine undressed. For it is the jubilee; it shall be holy unto you: ye shall eat the increase thereof out of the field*" (Leviticus 25:11-12). During man's years the earth brings forth thorns and thistles, and man must earn his bread with the sweat of his face; but when God's year comes then the wilderness and the solitary place are glad, and the desert rejoices and blossoms as the rose. When the Lord's own kingdom cometh then shall the earth yield her increase as she has never done before. My beloved, I trust you know the blessedness of living in God's year, for you live by faith upon His providence, casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you. This is the Sabbath of the soul, the counterpart of heaven. You behold the work of atonement fully accomplished on your behalf, and know yourselves to be delivered from all your liabilities to the law, and therefore your heart leaps within you. You are clean delivered, set free, washed in the blood of the Lamb, and therefore do you come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon your heads.

But the text speaks also of the “*acceptable year of the Lord*”. Now, our Lord Jesus Christ has come to proclaim to sinners the Lord’s acceptance of guilty men through His great sacrifice. Apart from the work of our Lord Jesus, men as sinners are unacceptable to God. Some of you know the misery of being in that condition; it is horrible to feel that the Lord is weary of you and your vain oblations. Since you have come in your own name and righteousness, God has not accepted you, neither has He heard your prayers nor listened to your cries, nor had respect unto your religious observances, for He saith, “*Yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear*” (Isaiah 1:15). If the Spirit of God has convinced you of your natural unacceptableness with God, you must have been brought into a very sad state indeed; for not to be accepted of God, and to be aware of it, is cause for intense sorrow. But now be sure, thou that believest in Jesus, that thou art accepted of God: notwithstanding thine infirmities and sins thou art “*accepted in the Beloved*” (Ephesians 1:6), by Him who hath said, “I will accept you with your sweet savour” (Ezekiel 20:41). And now, being thus accepted as to your persons, your petitions shall come up with acceptance before the Lord. As for your prayers, God heareth them; as for your tears, He putteth them into His bottle; as for your works, He counteth them to be fruits of His Spirit and accepts them. Yea, now that thou art accepted in Christ, all that thou art and all that thou hast, and all thou dost – the whole of thee is acceptable to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Thrice happy am I to have to talk upon such a subject as this. Come ye who are willing now to believe in Jesus, this is the acceptable year of the Lord; God is reconciled, man is favoured, blessings abound. Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation. Let sin be confessed and the confession shall be accepted, and you shall find forgiveness. Let transgression be repented of, the repentance shall be accepted, and you shall hear a voice saying, ‘Go and sin no more; thy sins, which are many, are forgiven thee’. Hail! thou that art graciously accepted, blessed art thou among women! And thou too, my brother, remember the words of Solomon, “*Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a*

merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works” (Ecclesiastes 9:7). Come to Jesus by faith, for though you come with a limping walk, and your faith is feeble, yet shall you be accepted. Come ye who have broken hearts and sorrowing spirits, come ye that are downcast and dare not look up, this is no common time, the Lord Jesus has made it a red-letter year for you; for He proclaims a year of grace and acceptance. Behold in this *Anno Domini*, or year of our Lord, we have a choice year of grace set apart for us. Who will not come to our gracious Prince, receive His mercy, and live?

C. H. Spurgeon (1834 – 1892)

from *Metropolitan Tabernacle Sermons, 1877, Vol. 23, No.1369*

“My soul! Pause over the subject of the jubilee trumpet; for surely much of the gospel was proclaimed by it ... although the jubilee trumpet was never heard but once in fifty years, yet so sweet and so distinguishing was the sound, that no poor captive, among the servants in the camp of Israel, was at a moment’s loss to understand its gracious meaning. Say, my soul, is not the gospel sound, when first heard by the ear of faith, precisely the same? When pardon was first proclaimed to thee by the blood of Christ, and the day of His atonement so manifested to thy spiritual senses, that the captivity of sin and Satan lost their powers upon thee, was not this indeed the jubilee trumpet, and the acceptable year of the Lord? ... Oh! cause me to know the joyful sound, and daily to walk in the light of Thy countenance. Cause me, by the sweet influences of Thy spirit, to live in the constant expectation of the year of the everlasting jubilee, when the trumpet of the archangel shall finally sound, and all Thy redeemed shall then return to Zion, with songs of everlasting joy upon their heads; when they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. Hallelujah!

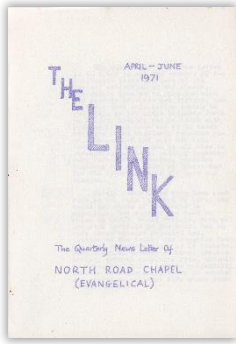
Robert Hawker (1753 – 1827)

from *The Poor Man’s Morning and Evening Portions*

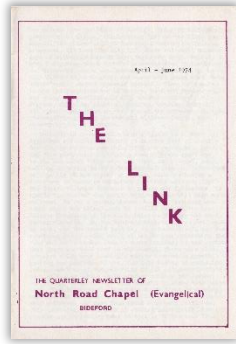
A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF *THE LINK*

The minutes of a Deacons' Meeting on Monday 13th April 1970 include this comment: "The question of printing a brochure containing assembly news of interest, especially for the elderly and shut-in, was considered, and Mr Lovering, Mr B. Molland and Mr Mitchell, with Mr H. Molland agreed to confer together, and provide something for the next meeting for approval." This is followed by a further remark from the meeting of Saturday 5th December: "The question of the church newsletter was then gone into, Mr Mitchell producing a few rough copies for inspection and approval. All were in favour of going ahead with this as per Mr Mitchell's copy". Again, on Tuesday 12th January 1971: "Some time was spent considering detail as to the assembly brochure proposed quarterly as a newsletter, and to commence for April – June quarter. The contents were agreed, and also that the first copy should be sent by post, which Mr Molland agreed to do."

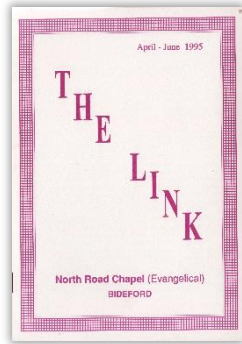
Such were the relatively humble beginnings of *The Link* magazine. The Mr Mitchell referred to (in attendance at the Chapel at that time), being proprietor of the Jamaica Press at Hartland, printed the first edition. It consisted of three A4-size sheets, folded and stapled to give twelve A5 sides. The front cover was hand-drawn, and the contents typed: an introduction by Mr Molland (editor), six pages of announcements and information, a list of the names of church officers, and an itinerary of visiting preachers. It was produced on a 'Ditto Machine' or spirit duplicator, with characteristic aniline purple ink. This format continued until the end of 1973, although the editor's piece became more devotional in nature and more extensive. In 1974, production transferred to Bridgeland Business Bureau Ltd in Bideford. Newer photocopying methods enabled the internal pages to be printed in black and white. A redesigned cover was added, but the purple print having by now become familiar, it was decided to retain a similar shade of mauve for the new version, which has been the 'house colour' ever since.



1971 – 1973



1974 – 1992



1992 – 2010

Changing cover styles on *The Link* magazine

The title chosen for the magazine reflected its original intention. As described in the very opening words:

“The purpose of this news letter is to bring to all the members of our fellowship plans and news of the various activities of the church. Especially have we in mind our sick and shut-in brethren and sisters, and we trust that this letter coming to you will, as its title suggests, serve as a link, keeping you in touch with your spiritual home and us in touch with you as we regularly remember you in prayer ... that we may all ‘link’ together in happy fellowship to hold forth the Word of Life.”

The congregation of the time comprised many elderly people confined to their homes, and it was envisaged that a quarterly publication would keep everyone, including the house-bound, apprised of church life. However, its popularity and readership soon began to extend beyond the local members, the short ‘devotional’ article it contained becoming appreciated and requested further afield.

Thus through the first decade of *The Link*’s production, a gradual but definite change could be seen. The space devoted to practical matters (rotas and itineraries, announcements and information) reduced; while

the pages given over to content of a spiritual nature increased in number. From 1974 onwards, short excerpts and quotations from historical Christian authors began to appear, including Thomas Brooks, C. H. Spurgeon and John Bunyan. Another significant influence for good in those early days was *The Wicket Gate* magazine, which had commenced circulation in 1967, under the auspices of Inverness Baptist Church, edited by Mr W. J. Seaton. He permitted numerous portions to be reprinted in *The Link*, and became a firm friend of the congregation in Bideford. Over the course of seven editions of *The Link* in 1978-9, a series of articles upon 'The Christian Sabbath' was kindly supplied by Mr J. Thackway – who has a long association with the North Devon area, and the fellowship. Dealing with larger subjects by instalments, typically as the 'lead' article in the magazine, became an established practice for *The Link* from 1986 onwards.

Throughout the 1980s, the size of the publication itself, and the readership was steadily increasing. Certain articles provoked considerable attention, with requests for additional copies sometimes exhausting the quantities printed per quarter. In response to this demand, some articles of particular interest were republished separately in booklet form. Indeed, a large part of the literature circulated by North Road Chapel today first began as content in *The Link* magazine. For example, two articles in 1985 entitled 'The Extent of the Atonement' formed the basis of Mr Molland's book 'Salvation – The Gift of God or the Choice of Man'. Three of the serialised subjects have been compiled as books, and most recently, a short article entitled 'The Christian and Climate Change' has been similarly treated.

While the burden of the work lay principally upon the Editor, able assistance was given by other members of the church in preparation of the magazine, including Mr W. Bennett and Mr J. Goodwin. Mr L. Gee was also a great asset to the congregation, and upon becoming secretary in 1981 took on responsibility for editing and typing the magazine – a tenure that was cut short by his sudden death in 1989. Support of other

kinds came from further afield. During the 1990s, contact was made with Mr W. F. Bell of Georgia, USA, who had begun publishing the *Free Grace Broadcaster* in 1970 (production later moving to Mount Zion Baptist Church, Pensacola, Florida). He gave permission for several of his own works to be used in *The Link*. A providential connection was also made with Mr C. H. Shofstahl, proprietor of the Pilgrim Brethren Press, Ohio. His bi-monthly publication *Pilgrim Pathway* also became a source of sound material. A deep debt of gratitude is owed to these brethren, who now rest from their labours and enjoy their eternal reward. Another very helpful contact from the Americas was Mr J. Vander Eyk of British Columbia, who supplied many works by Philip Mauro (1859-1952), then unobtainable in the UK, which have proved a rich vein of Biblical truth, frequently cited in these pages.

By the mid-1990s, *The Link* had attained its now-familiar form, with card covers and 20 internal pages. Production had moved to Polypress Ltd in North Road, Bideford (just a few yards away from the Chapel itself). This establishment, housed in a Dickensian warren of outbuildings, was run by Mr K. Walters, who printed all the church's literature, single-handedly, for two decades. Upon his ultimate retirement in 2010, opportunity was taken for a modest re-design of the magazine's appearance, and publication has since been in the care of Mr A. Parker of The Print Edge, Bideford – to whom we continue to be most grateful.

Mr Molland faithfully edited *The Link* throughout his life and ministry. During the 1990s, invaluable aid was given by Mrs R. Abbott who laboured tirelessly in the work of typing, proof-reading and mailing, until her home-call in 2003. Mr Molland's own health began to deteriorate in 2005, necessitating a reduction in his duties. He still reviewed every copy before printing, until failing eyesight prevented him, and then liked to have it read aloud in order to pass comment. He was 'received into everlasting habitations' in October 2012, aged 92. Mr R. J. Steward first contributed to *The Link* in 2004 (Q1), and took on the editorship, together with the ministry of North Road Chapel, in

2006. He continues in this capacity to the present time. While it is necessary for one individual to edit or compile a publication, *The Link* has been, from its inception, the ‘organ of the church’; its content reflects the preaching, practice and united opinion within the fellowship. Its production and distribution involve many of the members in contributing (practically and financially), proof-reading, packing and posting. To all these, both past and present, true thankfulness is expressed.

Readership of *The Link* has varied considerably over its history. It has always been provided free of charge, and has never been advertised or promoted. Only a few dozen copies were originally printed, for the benefit of the congregation. In the purposes of God, its circulation steadily increased, reaching a maximum in the late 1990s, when in excess of 1,200 copies per quarter were being sent to nearly one thousand addresses worldwide. The addition of a return address to the envelopes in 2004, the general decline in print media, data protection regulations in 2019, and (sadly) a lack of reading by modern Christians, have greatly reduced these numbers, to approximately 250 regular recipients today. It is hoped that the online versions of the magazine may reach many more people in the process of time.

What is the purpose of *The Link*? It is not the output of a society, seeking to advocate a cause, or solicit support. It does not champion an organisation or denomination. It is not part of the ‘Christian news media’, notifying of, or reacting to, contemporary events. It is simply an extension of the ministry of North Road Chapel, desiring to be ‘for good, to edification’ (cf Romans 15:2), and to ‘link’ our readers with “*whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report*” (Philippians 4:8). And as long as it still proves to be “*a word in season to him that is weary*” (Isaiah 50:4), for so long may the Lord be pleased to continue and prosper it.

R. J. Steward

SO GREAT A CLOUD OF WITNESSES

“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us. Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith...” (Hebrews 12:1-2)

In marking the Fiftieth Anniversary of *The Link* magazine’s commencement, there is much cause for thankfulness to God. It is not simply the case that a periodical has remained in publication for five decades, but that the little flock – whose production and ministry it is – has also been preserved throughout this time. No doubt the sphere of Christian literature and church history can supply many other examples, more illustrious and much longer-lived; but another reason for our gratitude arises from the fact that the substance and doctrinal stance of the church, and its magazine, is also largely unaltered from the time of its inception. Despite the changeful nature of the past fifty years, and the general deterioration witnessed throughout Christendom, there has been a Divine preservation of Truth amongst us, and in the mercies of God, we are not consumed (cf Lamentations 3:22).

However, taking a still longer view, it is remarkable to consider how that the relatively small, remote and insignificant town of Bideford has been blessed with a succession of godly men and women throughout its history. Many faithful servants of the Lord have laboured here, and left a written record behind them for the blessing of future generations. It is at once humbling, encouraging and challenging to think that *The Link* should form a part and continuation of that witness. Contained in the following pages is a small sample of the writings of seven men, some familiar, some less so, for whom Bideford was the scene of their endeavours. Conscious of their legacy, and inspired by their example, we desire to continuing running the race that lies yet before us; looking ever unto Jesus, the Author of all authors, and perfecter of faith’s works.

AN EXHORTATION TO SAINTS ALREADY IN THE WAY William Bartlet (1610-1682)

Made parish 'lecturer' in Bideford in 1641, Bartlet was of a Puritan disposition, and forcibly promoted to Rector by the Parliamentary authorities in 1648. He lived through the turbulent times of Civil War and plague in the town, but was promptly ejected at the Restoration. Preaching privately thereafter, he endured arrests and imprisonment, but notwithstanding, established a Dissenting congregation in Bideford. This excerpt is taken from the conclusion of his work A Model of the Primitive Congregational Way – which deals at length with the doctrine of Biblical independency, and local church autonomy.

1. Labour after peace. Though others make war against you, yet do you study to be quiet. Commit your name and cause to Him who is your King and Husband, and hath all power in heaven and earth given unto Him to defend you, and offend and subdue those that rise up against you. Believe it, there is not a 'weapon formed against you that shall prosper, not a word that is spoken in judgement against you, but you shall condemn' (cf Isaiah 54:17). Wherefore, go on in the work you are called to, and fear not them whose breath is in their nostrils, those that only can kill the body, but 'fear Him that hath power to destroy both body and soul in hell fire' (cf Matthew 10:28). Wherefore, if they curse you, bless them; and if they persecute you, pray for them; and then happy shall you be, and great will be your reward in heaven (cf Matthew 5:44, Romans 12:17, 18).

2. Strive after purity. 'Tis not enough for you to follow peace with all men, but holiness also (cf Hebrews 12:14). You are called unto holiness, unto sanctification (cf 1 Thessalonians 4:3); this is the beauty of Zion, the honour of religion, the excellency of the Gospel. This commends the ways of Zion to those that pass by, and invites them to come and walk in them. Yea, it stops the mouth of those that bear evil will to Zion, and pit themselves against her. Oh, that the churches of the saints were more bold, that they were more like to their Head and Husband, the Lord Jesus Christ, that they could live more in the Spirit, and after the Spirit, and that they might not give occasion to the

adversary to blaspheme. What makes many not only speak evil of, but to avoid and stand off from the ways of Zion, but only the scandalous walking of many that have submitted themselves outwardly to the order of the Gospel? And therefore, let me be the Lord's Remembrancer to all such, that they follow after holiness, and labour to adorn the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by walking up to the light of that truth He hath made known unto them, and convinced them of, and in so doing, how shall they glorify God, and win, or leave without excuse, such that oppose themselves?

3. Lastly, persevere and hold fast to the end in the practise of what Christ hath made known to you, to be His very mind and will in the right way of worship: take heed of drawing back (cf Hebrews 10:38-39), remember that counsel of the Apostle to the church of the Colossians: *"As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him, rooted and built up in Him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ"* (Colossians 2:6-8). As we have been espoused to Christ, as chaste virgins, and not defiled with the pollutions of antichrist, so let us take heed we be not as Eve, 'beguiled by the subtilty of the serpent, and corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ' (cf 2 Corinthians 11:2-3). The promise is to those that overcome, and are faithful unto death (cf Revelation 2:10). Persecutions should not discourage, but rather encourage us, in regard that our sufferings for Christ shall turn to us for a testimony, as Christ Himself saith (cf Luke 21:13). Our Lord and Master Himself is gone before us, and given us an example to follow; and He hath promised that if we suffer with Him, we shall reign with Him (cf 2 Timothy 2:12) but if we deny Him, He will deny us; and what are all our sorrows and sufferings to that crown of glory He hath purchased, and is gone before to prepare for us; especially considering that there are no sufferings we are called unto for His sake, but we shall have strength from Him to go through them, and to be more than conquerors, in and over them all (cf Romans 8:37).

MANY MADE RIGHTEOUS BY THE OBEDIENCE OF ONE James Hervey (1714 – 1758)

Between the years 1739 and 1743, Hervey was Curate at St Mary's Church, Bideford. Beloved of his congregation, he was ill-liked by the ecclesiastical establishment for his evangelical persuasions, formed after studying with the Wesleys and others at Oxford. He later came to espouse the doctrines of grace, which created enmity with his former Methodist companions, but found him such friends as Cennick, Gill and Romaine. This excerpt comes from two discourses preached at Bideford, which, because of His bold declaration therein of justification by faith alone (contrary to the prevailing opinions of either Anglicanism or Methodism) became popularly known as his 'Recantation Sermons'.

Surely, then, this precious doctrine is worthy of all acceptance; surely we have reason to receive it with all imaginable thankfulness! But lest it should, after all, seem to us an idle tale, rather than glad tidings of great joy, let me give some directions that may dispose us to rely on, and prepare us to receive, the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

First, bring a child-like mind to the consideration of it. Lay aside prepossessions, and meekly receive the ingrafted word with teachable simplicity. Let us sit at the feet of Jesus, and, like very little children, learn heavenly wisdom from His gospel. If we are conceited of our abilities, and lean to our own understanding, God may punish our pride by leaving us in the dark; for He 'hides these things from the wise and prudent and reveals them unto babes'. You must acknowledge your natural ignorance, and implore the teachings of His blessed Spirit; for this is His peculiar office, to 'convince the world of righteousness'; that is, to convince the world of the fulness of the Redeemer's righteousness, of its unsearchable riches, and of its absolute sufficiency to justify His people.

Secondly, if you would not be offended at this doctrine, **get a deep sense of 'your own unrighteousness'**. It is the want of this conviction that indisposes men for a reliance on Christ: so long as they fancy themselves 'rich and increased in goods', they will never be

concerned to seek the fine gold of their Saviour's obedience. And, indeed, He came 'not to call the righteous'; His gospel is of such a nature that the self-justiciary will discern no comeliness in it; it will feed the hungry and 'poor in spirit' with good things; but the rich, and those that are 'righteous in their own eyes' it will send empty away.

Labour therefore to see your own vileness, and then the merits of a Saviour will be precious. Be sensible of your own nakedness, and then the robe of a Redeemer's righteousness will be prized indeed. Consider yourselves as insolvent wretched bankrupts, who have nothing, who can do nothing that is spiritually good; and then the perfect obedience and the full satisfaction of your divine Surety will be 'as health to your soul and as marrow to your bones'.

Thirdly, pray for faith. It is faith that unites to Jesus Christ. By faith you are implanted into Him. Faith is the hand that lays hold on the Saviour's merits: 'By faith ye are saved', says the apostle. This appears to the soul, the great salvation purchased by our dear Redeemer; therefore, beseech God to beget in you this lovely, and lively faith whereby you may lay hold on Christ, cleave most inseparably to Christ, and, renouncing every other refuge, lay the whole stress of your souls solely on Christ, as a shipwrecked mariner relinquishes all his sinking cargo, and clings only to the planks that may float him safe to shore. Seek this blessing to yourselves brethren; and if ever I forget to join my best supplication to yours, 'let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth'. My 'heart's desire and prayer to God' shall always be, that you may 'believe to the saving of your souls'. And a holy conversation will be a sign unto you that your faith is real. A life of sincere holiness can spring from nothing but from this divine head, **Christ Jesus**. 'By this shall all men know that ye are His disciples, if ye live by His Spirit, and walk even as He walked'. By this likewise, your own consciences may be assured that God hath given you an interest in His dear Son, and sent Him to bless you – if He has 'turned you from your iniquities, and created you anew unto good works'.

O EARTH! EARTH! EARTH! HEAR THE WORD OF THE LORD Samuel Lavington (1726 – 1807)

Born in Exeter and educated at Uffculme and Bridgewater, Lavington was acquainted with such worthies as Watts, Doddridge and Whitfield, and had opportunity to enter the established church. Instead, aged 26, he took on the pastorate of the Dissenting congregation in Bideford formed by Bartlet a century before. He faithfully served in this capacity for 55 years until his death. The United Reformed Church in Bideford (built 1856) bears his name, but little other resemblance to the man and his theology. Several of his sermons were published, this excerpt coming from a longer address dated 28th February 1794, at a time when much of the western world was embroiled in the French Revolutionary Wars. It resonates strongly with the international crisis of the present day.

“O Earth! Earth! Earth! hear the word of the Lord.” (Jeremiah 22:29)
What, then! Are all the inhabitants of the earth dead or deaf? As if they were more stupid than the ground they trod on, the blessed God, wearied out by their provoking inattention to His repeated calls, turns from them, and addresses Himself to the Earth, as if that would hear Him, when they would not. “*God hath spoken once, twice have I heard this, that power belongeth unto God*” (Psalm 62:11). Awful and angry have been the messages that we have lately received from Him; and some specimens He hath given of what He can do when His wrath is kindled but a little: what then would become of us, if He should be provoked to stir up all His wrath? ... However, the design of this discourse is to call off your attention from second causes, to that word of the Lord, by which the world was at first spoken into being, and by which all the inhabitants and occurrences of the world are ruled, and over-ruled to subserve the purposes of His own glory: “*O Earth! Earth! Earth! hear the word of the Lord*”. These words have a peculiar solemnity in them and seem to imply:

1. That mankind in general is careless and inattentive to the word of the Lord. How often do we hear God complaining of the Jews? “*My people would not hearken to My voice and Israel would none of Me ... I spake unto thee in thy prosperity, and thou saidst, I will not hear*” (Psalm 81:11,

Jeremiah 22:21). And again, “*As for the word which thou hast spoken to us in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken unto thee*” (Jeremiah 44:16). What perverseness and impiety! They not only **did not**, but they **would not** hear. ... It is the voice of God in His Providence that is so little attended to. We hear the voice of war from abroad; we hear the cries of the unemployed and almost starving poor at home; we hear the wide-spreading whispers of discontent; but we hear not the voice of the Lord. We feel the smart of the rod, but we hear not the lessons it was sent to teach us. In some, this is owing to their not thinking at all; and in others, to their thinking wrong.

There are many who ‘care for none of these things’. Let the world go how it will, what is it to them? Their farm and their merchandise engross all their thoughts and care. Neither mercies nor judgments affect them; for ‘they consider not the works of the Lord, nor regard the operation of His hands’ (cf Psalm 28:5) ... But there are others equally inattentive to the word of the Lord, but from quite different principles. They take notice of every event, and are unusually, unnecessarily, perhaps unjustifiably eager for News. They criticise every article they read or hear; pass their censures freely on persons and proceedings: ‘such a thing was wrong; such an expedition was ill-planned or ill-executed; the nation will be ruined, if such a thing be not done; we shall be undone, if such an one be not employed’ – forgetting all the while that the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth: that it is He who raiseth up one, and pulleth down another; that it is He who ‘maketh peace and createth evil’; that afflictions spring not out of the dust, nor troubles rise out of the ground; but that they all come and go at God’s order and disposal. They will not be persuaded that victories or defeats are the effects of a divine interposition; and laugh at the notion of sin’s being the cause of public disgrace and danger, because they fancy they can easily and fully account for it another way. ... when God, as it were, conceals Himself behind His own instruments, or hides His hand in His bosom, and clouds and darkness are round about Him, we are apt to forget the great Governor of the world, who directs and regulates all the secret springs; and to

ascribe all the glory of success, and throw all the blame of a disappointment, on second causes; on those whom the Lord of Hosts hath thought proper to employ as His instruments, to accomplish the designs of His wrath and mercy.

This, therefore, is the first thing implied in the expression of the text, “*O Earth! Earth! Earth! Hear the word of the Lord*” – as if He had said, ‘How shall I make these thoughtless creatures attend? They are so stupid that they cannot, or so perverse that they will not, hear what I say’.

2. It implies also the importance of the message. Its being three times repeated gives weight to what follows, and disposes the hearers to receive it with reverence and submission – “*O Earth! Earth! Earth!*” When the Lord speaks, ‘let the whole world be silent and attentive’; “*He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches*”; ‘Unto you, O men! He calls; and His voice is to the sons of men’. And infinitely important is the message He delivers: His word determines our duty and felicity. The same messenger that brings us tidings from the army or the fleet brings us also intelligence from heaven – intelligence infinitely more important than that with which we are so much affected...

3. It carries with it an earnestness and importunity as if their not hearing the word of the Lord might be attended with the utmost danger: “*O Earth! Earth! Earth! Hear the word of the Lord*” – The time of your visitation is almost over; the things which belong to your peace will be soon hid from your eyes. If this warning, like all the former, be slighted; and you again turn a deaf ear to His counsels and reproofs, you shall no more hear His word, but you shall feel His hand: and if lesser judgments will not do, He will multiply His strokes: and whereas before He whipped you with rods, He will soon chastise you with scorpions: to ‘fightings without’ He will add ‘fears within’; and bring upon you poverty, pestilence and desolation, all at once. He may make us ‘an hissing and a byword’; so that all that see it may shake their heads and say, ‘Lo, these are the men that made not God their trust’. Weary of

expecting fruit from barren souls, He may cut us down as cumberers of the ground; and cut us off from being a people; and our name shall be no more had in remembrance among the nations.

If God had spoken such terrible things only once, one would have thought it should have thrown the whole world into agonies of grief and consternation – at least those to whom these words were more immediately addressed – and we never could have believed it possible that God should repeat those awful words a second and a third time, and His stupid creatures take no notice of it. But, alas! The event has shown it to be both possible and common. The shaking of the earth, nay, the ruins of a dissolving world, would leave such sinners as it found them – amazed, perhaps, and terrified; but still unchanged; with the same vicious inclinations as ever. ...

I have now faithfully set before you your sin, your danger, and your duty. You wonder and complain [about your circumstances]: you here see the cause of it. You are eagerly waiting and wishing for peace: you now see the way to hasten it. Cease to do evil, and learn to do well, and your prospects will soon brighten. Do you put away your sins, and God will lay aside His rod. You may think that ‘it signifies nothing what such an inconsiderable number as we do’; but you are mistaken. Do you not remember what God said, in answer to Abraham’s intercession for Sodom? *“I will not destroy it for ten’s sake”* (Genesis 18:32). Do you not remember what Christ said to the angel of the church in Sardis? *“Thou hast a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white: for they are worthy”* (Revelation 3:4). Whether you shall live to see the end of this uncommon shaking of the nations ... is more than I can promise ... but, be that as it may, this I may venture to assure you: that if sincere and serious in the work of the day, your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord. ‘Wash ye, make ye clean, put away the evil of your doings’, and never more return to folly; and then, depend upon it, whatever becomes of your country, it shall go well with you.

GOD HATH HELPED US HITHERTO
John Kent (1766 – 1843)

Kent was born in Bideford to a poor but pious family of shipwrights, who belonged to the Congregational church, under Lavington. The demands of employment prompted relocation to Devonport in his early years. He authored some 250 hymns and sacred poems, despite being afflicted with blindness in later life. A secular commentator writes: "The simplicity and force of Kent's hymns' expression of Calvinism has limited their adoption outside a narrow segment of Christian churches". We are thankful to belong to that segment.

1. Now to grace, as debtors we,
Spared another year to see,
Mercies past would still review:
God hath helped us hitherto.

5. Oft by Zion's foes annoyed,
Oft cast down but not destroyed;
Still to grace the praise is due:
God hath helped us hitherto.

2. When the slaves of sin we lay,
Thou in love didst us survey;
This we now recall to view:
God hath helped us hitherto.

6. Wake, my soul, thy God to praise,
Raise thy Ebenezer, raise;
Write thereon (thy fears forego)
God hath helped me hitherto.

3. In temptation's hottest day,
On the mount or through the sea,
We have found Thy promise true:
God hath helped us hitherto.

7. When our sins deserved Thy rod
Thee we found a peaceful God;
Lord, Thy visits now renew,
Thou hast helped us hitherto.

4. In the depths of fear and sin,
Thou hast Israel's refuge been;
Walls of flame when foes pursue:
God hath helped us hitherto.

8. Tossed with tempests we have been,
In the deep Thy footsteps seen;
Sorrows, sins, temptations through,
God hath helped us hitherto.

9. God of love, forgive the sin;
We have long ungrateful been;
Now Thy name and love to praise,
'Stones of Help', and songs we raise.

THOUGHTS UPON ROMANS VII

William Hake (1795 – 1890)

This godly man was a close acquaintance of those nonconformists in the South West whose movement away from the established church became known as Brethrenism. However, in 1839 Hake and his family removed to the North Devon coast, there to establish a home, a school and a fellowship. Such was the growth of their congregation over the following years that by 1858 they began to lease a building in Bideford and became a settled church. Afflicted with poor health, Hake retired to Barnstaple in 1861 and the assembly was continued by his sons George and Henry. Such were the beginnings of North Road Chapel, which in the gracious providence of God, is preserved to the present day. The following short excerpt is from one of only two known writings of Hake's, this being published posthumously in The Witness, 1892. The original seems not to have been prepared for print by the author (perhaps being taken from shorthand, or other personal notes) so for ease of reading, is presented in an adapted and re-punctuated form here.

There is a fault too common among the people of God, namely, while they put off the things of the old man, anger, wrath, and the like, they forget that they have also to put on the new man (cf Colossians 3:1-17). That which is to be 'put off' is sin that breaks out, and is to God's dishonour and our dishonour (cf Ephesians 4:22); that which we are commanded to 'put on' is **Christ** (cf Romans 13:14). It is heavenly; it is perfection of obedience to Christ; and the prayerful endeavour to accomplish this will always be accompanied with deeper knowledge and deeper abhorrence of indwelling sin ...

When we have our body of glory, it will be no marvel to any that the apostle cried out, in days when he was in his body of humiliation, "*who shall deliver me from this body of death?*" (v.24). Not that he was wretched and miserable through yielding to the law in his members (for he had said immediately before, "*I delight in the law of God after the inward man*" v.22); but because of his quick apprehension of sin, and of the lust of the flesh in him, and his deep abhorrence thereof, he cries out, "*O wretched man that I am!*" (v.24). [But he is in no doubt] as to deliverance, or who is his deliverer, for he immediately adds, "*I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord*" (v.25).

As we ourselves ‘dwell in Christ’ ... as we ‘walk in the light as God is in the light’, we shall see more and more clearly whatever is contrary to the word and example of Christ. We shall hate everything that is of the flesh, as did the apostle. So shall we also, through the Spirit that dwells in us, abhor sin that dwells in us; and in this body of humiliation, shall ‘groan’ as did the apostle, being burdened; and the thought of foolishness, of pride, covetousness, self-will, or any other branch of unbelief, will cause us to cry out, “*O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?*” with joyful confidence in our deliverer, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Nevertheless, we have now a power which is almighty, working in us ‘both to will and to do’ those things that please God (cf Philippians 2:13). But for this power, the law in our members would not only be ‘bringing’ us into bondage (cf v.23), but we should be **brought** into and under the yoke. But we war, and conquer, and walk at liberty; and our delight is in the law of God. The more holy our life, the more we are conformed to Christ, the better we will understand what is, alas, but little understood, namely: the commandments of our Lord and Master. The more obedient we are to them in regard to word and deed, the stronger will be our exclamation against every thought and every imagination that is contrary to the perfection of Christ.

Lastly – happy are we, if taught by the Spirit our **need** of, and also the **power** of, the intercession of our Great High Priest at God’s right hand; through which God can be well-pleased with us and our aims (which should be the highest aims of Christian life). Thus God will give us the testimony which He gave to Enoch, who ‘walked with God’, that ‘he pleased God’ (Genesis 5:24, Hebrews 11:5). If we also walk with God, we shall have the assurance from God that we please Him. ... We have need to know, (by the teaching of the Holy Spirit through the word) more of Jesus Christ Himself – of His sufferings and His glory, of His ways and words – if we would have a ready rule in our hearts by which to judge rightly of our ways; whether they be indeed such as please God (cf John 8:29, 1 Peter 2:21, 1 John 2:6).

THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES

Henry Soltau (1805 – 1875)

Being called by grace in 1837, Soltau forsook his legal profession and the Anglican church, and at great personal cost, joined with the early Brethren movement in Plymouth. When, later, contention arose there, he found refuge in Northam with William Hake, who provided him with both fellowship and employment in 1851. In the decade that followed, these two men were instrumental in commencing the meeting at North Road, with members of Soltau's family being amongst the first baptisms. After a period of further relocation and declining health, Soltau ultimately returned to North Devon in 1870, ending his days in company with Hake and Robert Cleaver Chapman at Barnstaple. The following extract is taken from one of his published sermons.

You will observe that the Lord alludes in Luke 17 to the days of Noah and Lot; and to the days of Noah in Matthew 24. The chapter in Luke should be read carefully, especially the latter part. The Pharisees asked the Lord a question about the kingdom of God, and the Lord, after answering them, turns to His disciples, and instructs them definitely as to His own coming by-and-by to this earth. In that instruction He uses this sentence: "*as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all*" (Luke 17:26-29). Let us look, therefore, into the days of Noah as described in the book of Genesis, seeing there is an analogy drawn between those days and the days preceding the coming of the Son of man.

Previous to doing so, let me ask, why is any record given in the Scripture about the days that preceded the flood? Why is the history of a past world recorded at all? True, the record is but short; yet it contains in a small compass a good deal of information. Why has God thought fit to hand this down to us? There are two reasons, I believe. In the first place,

the Lord would have us to know that the people who are living at this end of the world are the same in character as those who lived before the deluge. Man is an unchanged and unaltered being; no education, no discipline, nothing that can be done for him, can improve him. God has shewn us this, not only in the dispensation before the flood, but in the history of the Jews. God chose a people, separated them off, hedged them in, became their instructor, protected them, and preserved them; and how did they turn out? They killed His blessed Son. In the days before the flood God left men very much to themselves. He shows there what man becomes when left to himself. When placed under proper teaching and proper rules, as Israel was, he is still the same. And when under a testimony of grace, as in the gospel, his history will end in manifesting the same evil propensities as before the deluge. Man is incorrigible. That word of the Lord Jesus Christ is proved true: "*Ye must be born again*" (John 3:7). Man cannot be improved as regards God's judgment of him; he must be created anew.

Another reason for this history before the flood is, to warn us of coming judgment. In Genesis 4 and 6 we read what was the state of mankind before the flood, and by observing the moral declension of man as there recorded, and comparing it with what we see around us at the present time, we shall perceive the same evils prevailing now as caused God to sweep the earth with the deluge, and, therefore, may expect similar actings of God in our day ... Do you think the state of human society is anything better now than it was before the flood? I believe that you will find in these latter days the same worldliness, the same wickedness, the same corruption, the same evils, the same licentiousness, the same violence as characterized the antediluvians. In fact, the world is making advances fast towards the same state of things.

Let us turn to the description of the last days given by the inspiration of God in 2 Timothy 3:1 "*In the last days perilous times shall come*". Perilous to whom? Perilous to God's children; perilous, because of the mingling of truth and error; perilous, not on account of open persecution, but

because of subtle reasonings and delusive appearances; errors affecting to be truth; bitter called sweet; lies circulated under the pretence of honouring God; therefore, most perilous. Are the last days getting better? They are perilous. Are they days of improvement? They are the most perilous of any days. Some people will tell you that the world is improving; God says perilous times are coming, and that there shall come ‘scoffers in the last days, walking after their own lusts’ (cf 2 Peter 3:3). Who is to be believed – God, or people’s thoughts? Who is true? ‘Let God be true, and every man a liar’ (cf Romans 3:4). God’s Word is true; and therefore, I charge you to look into God’s word for the answer to the smooth things that you hear. ...

Wherever God’s Word is denied or wilfully perverted, it is blasphemy against God. And we see this token now. Not, as heretofore, amongst the [humanists and revolutionaries] of the day, but amongst the bishops and deans of the Church of England, and professors of the universities. God’s Word is questioned or set aside, the atonement denied, the grand truths of the gospel characterized as puerilities, the Bible treated as a book written for a bygone ignorant age, and unworthy of credit in this advanced nineteenth century (sic). Neology has crept into dissenting pulpits also. The denial of eternal punishment and of eternal existence has spread wide and far. A smattering of Greek and Hebrew is sufficient to delude souls willing to be deceived. A sickly sentimentality, which robs God of His great attributes of righteousness, justice, and truth, is paraded, and attracts the weak-minded. Any novelty is hailed, and received by itching ears; and what with the geology, the astronomy, and science of the day, blasphemy of every shade is more or less mixed up with the creeds of men.

Let us stand for the truth of God, for the truth once delivered to the saints, and contend for it. No new doctrine, no progress – “*once delivered*” – not to be added to, not to be controverted, not to be suspected or opposed – complete. Christ, the wisdom of God, and the power of God (cf Jude 3, 1 Corinthians 1:24).

GIRD UP THE LOINS OF YOUR MIND **W. H. Molland (1920 – 2012)**

Mr and Mrs Molland joined in membership at North Road Chapel in 1944. Becoming an elder in 1950 and correspondent in 1971, he was instrumental in commencing The Link at that time. He faithfully edited the magazine for 35 years alongside his pastoral duties, until prevented by failing health. Remaining closely involved with its production thereafter, he was ultimately called home in 2012. It was his practice to prepare a full script for every sermon he preached, and these have formed the basis of the serialised lead article for much of the publication's history. The following is a brief testimony given by Mr Molland at a meeting in December 1980:

“This pulpit (North Road) was the very first pulpit I ever set foot in. At the age of 16, my uncle, the late William Molland, thought it time I made a start. He was preaching at Bideford, and I came with him that Sunday evening from Lapford. Not knowing a soul in this place, I gave out the hymns, opened in prayer, and read the Scriptures. Little did I think as I came up these steps all those years ago that God had destined me for the ministry here; but within eight years of that Sunday evening, I was farming at Abbotsham, and a member of this local assembly of God's people. And what a chain of events led up to that! Strange happenings in the extreme. If Flavel had not written The Mystery of Providence then I should have to set about it. Then some 20 years ago I began to be concerned over my theological position, and for ten years I groped, until the light began to dawn; and the partial truth of Arminianism was swept aside, as God the Holy Spirit revealed more fully the doctrine of Holy Scripture. Thus has His Word been ministered over the past ten years, with the result that this assembly – small though it may be – stands solidly united in the Truth. We are greatly humbled as we look back over it all, and to our risen, glorified Head be all the glory.”

The sermon reproduced here was first preached at a New Year Prayer Meeting – Thursday 3rd January 1985.

We now approach another milestone in [our] history . . . and we embark now upon a further lap of life's journey. As time passes, I feel that certain parts of God's Word take on greater relevance, and this verse I believe to be one of such a nature: *“Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ”* (1 Peter 1:13).

It commences, you will notice, with “***Gird up the loins of your mind***”. The age in which we live is one of great laxity in doctrinal belief, and gross carelessness in church practice. Multitudes of those who profess to be Christians live just as worldlings, and the vast majority of churches and chapels engage in practices and enterprises which would cause their founders to break their hearts. The Word of God speaks of such a falling away. Paul writes to Timothy of those who have “*a form of godliness, but [deny] the power thereof: from such turn away*” – have nothing to do with them. There are those “*ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth*” (2 Timothy 3:5-7) – they have no firm conviction. “*For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.*” (2 Timothy 4:3-4). “*Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived. But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of...*” (2 Timothy 3:13-14). Peter is simply emphasising the same truth: “*Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ*” (1 Peter 1:13). He is speaking of the end time; the revelation of Jesus Christ. ‘And in such a day’, says Peter, ‘when evil is rampant in the world, and truth is disparaged in the Church: gird up the loins of your mind!’

The word ‘gird’ must be put into its Eastern setting to be rightly understood. It has reference to the dressing-gown-like attire worn at that period in the East. A man, as he commenced work, would pull his long garment up and tighten his girdle. It is the equivalent to a person ‘taking off his jacket’ and ‘rolling up his sleeves’ – an attitude of earnestness and of application to the task. ‘Now’, says the Spirit of God, ‘you are in a world where wickedness abounds; perilous times are upon you’; and as for the Church, it is much like the Temple of the Lord in Eli’s day: “*And it came to pass at that time, when Eli was laid down in his place, and his eyes began to wax dim, that he could not see; and ere the lamp*

of God went out in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was..." (1 Samuel 3:2). The old priest had lost his vision; he might have been in his place, but he was lying down. The lamp of testimony was burning very dim. Beloved! This is the situation in which we find ourselves today – *"Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind"*. Be not spiritually slovenly; roll up your sleeves; for the position is to be faced with diligence. Do not lie around! Apply yourself, be assiduous, industrious, and get up!

But note, it is the **mind** which is addressed. Do not lend your ear to fables; prove all things. Think things out; use your grey matter, and diligently ponder the doctrine until you arrive at a point of firm conviction. And then *"hold fast that which is good"* (1 Thessalonians 5:21). Do not deviate from truth, *"continue ... in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of"* (2 Timothy 3:14). Keep your head, and listen to the words of the Lord Himself: *"Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, He is in the desert; go not forth: behold, He is in the secret chambers; believe it not"* (Matthew 24:23-26).

How many say this in our day: 'Look here! You want to come and see what happens in our gatherings: we get a full house, we have miracles, tongues, great signs and wonders!' Go not after them! Do not believe any, unless they are four-square upon the Scriptures. *"I have told you"*, says Christ. So be discerning; you have been created with a brain – use it; gird it up! Let holy determination be seen, no shilly-shallying, no questioning, no hesitancy; being set on course, press on! Do not be moved from the old paths. Never mind if others call us old-fashioned or narrow-minded. We are in good company as we take our stand with Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezra, Nehemiah, Paul, John; yea and with countless thousands more *"of whom the world was not worthy"* (Hebrews 11:38).

But more – “**be sober**”. When a man ceases to be sober, he makes a fool of himself. His mind is befuddled; he becomes unsteady on his feet and he rambles. “*Be sober*”, says the Scripture. Keep your mind clear; centre it on truth or you will stagger and waver; you will ramble from the paths of holiness. Multitudes of so-called Christians today fill their minds with the filth of this world, its entertainments and so-called pleasure. A Christian is not to do this. The mind of a Christian is the most vital part of his personality; he must both guard it and feed it. “*Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do...*” (Philippians 4:8-9). No Christian should be visiting the world’s picture houses or drama shows, or watching these things on television or video. Sex and violence dominate in today’s so-called entertainment. Never must it be allowed into the mind of a Christian. Keep ‘ear gate’ and ‘eye gate’ firmly closed against such incursions; do not allow the mind to think on these things (cf 2 Corinthians 10:5). Vast numbers of professed believers will also follow any kind of tom-foolery within the church. Brethren and sisters: be sober, and keep your wits about you. Never be moved from true Biblical faith.

“**Hope to the end**” – never must we despair; never must we doubt. We have a sure and certain hope, even though things look hopeless. Those who love and hold to the truth, do not despair, for ultimate success is sure! Though all desert us, (as did the churches of Asia the Apostle Paul), we care not; for victory and triumph is assured to those who remain steadfast and unmoveable. “*Hope to the end*”, says Peter, “*for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ*”. Wonderful was the grace brought to us at the first advent of Jesus Christ. It was the grace of God that brought salvation, reconciliation, justification and sanctification. Yes beloved! But there is more grace to

be lavished upon us yet: “... *an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time*” (1 Peter 1:4-5). The end of our salvation, the ultimate of God’s grace, is **glorification**: this will be revealed in the last time. “*Hope to the end*” is the word to us. The sovereign, unmerited grace of God toward us – in election, regeneration and ultimate glorification – demands holy living. Brethren and sisters, as we enter upon this New Year, tighten your girdle. The world may look upon us as fools, and the professing church may dub us Calvinists, or Puritanical, but what of it? We shall be proved right in the end; the theories of men and their systems of Christendom will all vanish as a vapour. There is One coming, before Whom all will stand, and He will vindicate His truth. Further, He will honour the faith of the faithful and reward His loyal followers. Therefore “*gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ*”.

“The whole paragraph [Hebrews 12:1-2] is figurative; and, in accordance with the principal figure – that which represents the ... Christians as racers – the ancient worthies whose actions are recorded in Scripture are represented as spectators; their deeds, and sufferings, and triumphs, as recorded in Scripture, being calculated to have the same influence on the minds of [believers], as the interested countenances and encouraging plaudits had on the minds of the Grecian combatants. The solitary Christian, in the exercise of the faith, finds that, under the influence of that divine principle, he is not solitary. The inspired history is converted, as it were into a glorious amphitheatre, from which, while he treads the arena, or courses along the stadium, a countless host of venerable countenances beam encouragement, and ten thousand times ten thousand friendly voices seem to proclaim: ‘So run that ye may obtain: we once struggled as you now struggle, and you shall conquer as we have conquered. Onward! Onward!’”

John Brown of Edinburgh (1784 – 1858)

THE BOOKS THAT SHOULD BE WRITTEN

“And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written.” (John 21:25)

Arriving at this significant anniversary in the production of *The Link* magazine, it is salutary to pause and consider the accumulated quantity of material that has been published in the past fifty years. Two hundred editions, amounting to over one million words, occupying (as our long-term subscribers will attest) a sizeable amount of physical space when collected together. Multiply this by the many hundreds of replicate copies that have been printed and distributed to recipients around the world and the grand total is larger still. It becomes difficult to imagine how much room would be required to house it all. But what is this, in comparison to all the Christian literature published in the last two millennia? Individual works have been produced whose length exceeds the total content of 200 *Link* magazines; some titles have had print-runs numbering in the tens of thousands, and been ‘in print’ for several hundred years. *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs*, and John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress* are reckoned amongst the most-sold books of all time, amounting to hundreds of millions over the past five centuries. And what of the Bible itself – the world’s ‘best seller’? Estimates put the total number of copies ever made in the region of five billion.

Suppose that every single page, of every publication just listed, had been carefully preserved, none ever being lost or destroyed; and recall that only one-third of this planet’s surface is comprised of land, of which a very small part is habitable, and an even tinier fraction available for the storage of literature, or creation of libraries. Suddenly the inspired statement of John’s – surprising enough to first-century readers, and frequently dismissed as hyperbole or exaggeration since – begins to come into focus. *“The world itself could not contain the books”*.

Numerous commentaries have been written upon the Gospel of John, but few give much attention or credence to the remarkable statement with which it concludes. There is some evidence to support the idea that chapter 21 forms an ‘appendix’ to the main part of John’s Gospel (which seems to reach a natural conclusion at the end of chapter 20), and may have been added at a later date – possibly prompted by the death of the Apostle Peter. From the time of its first writing until the present, there have been many sceptics busily casting doubt upon its genuineness and authenticity. Principal among their criticisms might have been these: “why have we not heard this account before? Why is it not reported by any of the other Gospel writers?”. Pre-empting such aspersions, the inspired author makes a pertinent point: “*there are also many other things which Jesus did*”, of which this last chapter is but one.

It is essential to realise that the Gospel record, though declared and corroborated by a four-fold testimony, is **not** comprehensive. The criteria for an apostle – those official “*eyewitnesses of His majesty*” (2 Peter 1:16) – were: to “*have companied with us [the disciples] all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that He was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of His resurrection*” (Acts 1:21-22). The time-period specified excludes all that pertained to the Saviour’s mortal life from His incarnation to the commencement of His public ministry. Divine providence has drawn a veil over those thirty years, other than that which the first two chapters of Matthew and Luke reveal. But that many remarkable circumstances attended the Lord’s earthly life cannot be doubted. What volumes of unknown truth are contained in that briefest of remarks: “*And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man*” (Luke 2:52)?

One might imagine that, the span of the Lord’s public life and work being relatively modest – approximately three years – and four inspired historians being moved to document it, a complete and detailed record

would be easily achievable. But this is not so. The breadth and extent of Christ's labours upon earth defied the limited strength of the disciples to sustain physically, or understand spiritually, at the time – much less to record in full detail. Numerous verses in the Gospel accounts allude to far more activity beyond the scope of those writings: "*And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people*" (Matthew 4:23), "*And it came to pass, when Jesus had made an end of commanding His twelve disciples, He departed thence to teach and to preach in their cities*" (Matthew 11:1). Other events occurred, unseen and unreported by human observers: "*When Jesus heard of it, He departed thence by ship into a desert place apart*" (Matthew 14:13), "*When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take Him by force, to make Him a king, He departed again into a mountain Himself alone*" (John 6:15).

By reason of weakness of the flesh, the disciples forfeited certain experiences of the Lord. Take, for example, the matter of His prayers. On that night of all nights in Gethsemane, Peter, James and John were overcome by fatigue, and found to be sleeping rather than watching and praying. The little that they **did** witness, before tiredness deprived them of sight and sound, has afforded us Matthew 26:36-46, Mark 14:32-42, Luke 22:39-46, and John 17. How much more might have been reported, had they continued awake? Or what could have been recorded of another occasion when "*He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God*" (Luke 6:12)? Perhaps only eternity will supply the answer.

Is there a deficiency, then, in the Scriptures? Has human frailty prevented a proper record of the Saviour from being made? No indeed – for God is sovereign over all these circumstances. The Holy Spirit brought back to the apostles' remembrance exactly those details that were to comprise a part of the written Word of God (cf John 14:26). The Biblical account is not imperfect by reason of brevity, nor too

onerous by reason of length. As the apostle explains: “*And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name*” (John 20:30-31). Enough is written to impart life and immortality to the heart of the believing reader. More than this could not be asked or desired.

To confine the “*many other things which Jesus did*” to the three years of His public ministry, or even the 33 years of His earthly life, is to misunderstand the true force of our text. The Gospel that concludes with this great statement commences thus: “*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*” (John 1:1-3). So far back must the works of Christ, the Incarnate Word, be traced. When He said: “*My Father worketh hitherto, and I work*” (John 5:17), He embraced all time and history, and ‘eternity past’. There is no division to be made between the works of the Father and the Son, because they are all of one, and all Divine (cf John 5:20, 36; 10:32, 37-38, 14:10-12). Given this fuller definition of ‘the things that Jesus did’, it becomes apparent that the whole of the Scriptures from Genesis onward ‘testify of Him’ (cf John 5:39). This includes works of creation, sustenance, sovereignty, providence, goodness and mercy, as well as His more particular operations in grace and salvation. Reflecting upon the vastness of these things, one is obliged to conclude with Job: “*Lo, these are parts of His ways: but how little a portion is heard of Him?*” (Job 26:14).

In the early days of the New Testament church, it became evident that the work of salvation and message of the Gospel was destined to reach far more persons than those of Jewish descent. Some were surprised at this development, and its global implications. But the Apostle James, remarking upon these facts, reminded his hearers: “*Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world*” (Acts 15:18). As John

penned the inspired words of his Gospel record ‘according to the wisdom given unto him’, he knew some of the ‘many things’ that the Lord Jesus had done. As his long life waxed towards its conclusion, he began to see more and more – sinners called by grace from distant countries, Christ’s Calvary work applied to the hearts of ‘strangers and foreigners’ by faith, churches being formed in remote parts of the world. Well might he have exclaimed: “*What hath God wrought?*” Then, one Lord’s Day on the Isle of Patmos a yet greater Revelation was granted unto him. Conveyed in vision to the end of time, he was privileged to glimpse the whole Church of Christ, universal, united, justified, glorified: “*And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth ... and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing*” (Revelation 5:9-12). Here at last was a true sense of the ‘many other things’ that Jesus Christ has done, is doing, and will do hereafter!

Reader – imagine if you will, that an attempt was made to document **all** the works of Christ, ‘from everlasting, to everlasting’. The counsels of Deity from an eternity past, every work of creation in all its original perfection, every act of ‘upholding by the word of His power’, every activity of the Old Covenant era, every mysterious facet of His incarnation, every moment that He lived and breathed upon earth, every precept of righteousness fulfilled, every jot and tittle of the Law obeyed, every sin He bore in His body to the tree, every suffering endured on sin’s account, every pang of three-fold death that rent His being, every detail of His resurrection in the power of endless life, every glorious aspect of His ascension to where He was before, every application of His saving power to every elect soul of all time, every deed of intercession

which He ever liveth to make, every testimony to salvation of every true child of God, every work of preserving grace extended toward them, every unbelieving sinner righteously condemned, every saint justified and brought safe home to glory – **these** are the things that He has done! Well did the hymnwriter describe the Saviour thus: “Fountain of never-ceasing grace, Thy saints’ **exhaustless theme**”. If all were to be committed to paper and ink, and compiled into books, it becomes entirely reasonable to conclude: *if they should be written every one ... even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written*”.

The world cannot contain the truth concerning Jesus Christ. Some might argue that, from a purely geographical or geometrical perspective, this is to state too much. But regarded spiritually, it is absolutely the case. A finite vessel cannot contain an infinite substance. The works of the Saviour transcend time and space, and concern that which is eternal, illimitable, without beginning or end. His judgements are unsearchable, His ways past finding out (cf Romans 11:33); the knowledge of Him surpasses knowledge (cf Ephesians 3:19); the testimony of His deeds defies confinement. Neither heaven, nor the heaven of heavens, is sufficient to contain God. The world itself would not provide an adequate library to house the record of the Son.

The world is also **spiritually unfit** to contain the truth pertaining to the Lord Jesus. To speak in theoretical terms about the capacity of the world to store the full record of the Saviour is almost a technicality. Such a plan could never be put into operation, because of the inveterate opposition which the world has toward the things of God. Christ Himself testified: “*My word hath no place in you ... Why do ye not understand my speech? Even because ye cannot hear My word*” (John 8:37, 43). Humanity’s reaction to the Lord’s person, and to the record concerning Him, is one and the same: “*ye have not His word abiding in you: for whom He hath sent, Him ye believe not*” (John 5:38). “*He that cometh from heaven is above all. And what He hath seen and heard, that He*

testifieth; and no man receiveth His testimony” (John 3:31-32). Neither will they, until that heavenly record stands to their condemnation in the judgment of the Last Day.

A full and complete record of the works of Christ can never, and will never be compiled on this side of eternity. The world itself could not hold it, nor bear it. One might then conclude that any attempt of mortal man to enlarge upon such a topic is futile, and doomed to failure. The effort would only prove that truth: “*of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh*” (Ecclesiastes 12:12). But in rendering John 21:25 into English, the translators saw fit to supply the verb “*should*” within the text – and here, surely, is the most pertinent lesson of all. Here is a word to encourage the heart of every Christian author; to vindicate the past five decades of *The Link*’s publication, and inspire future years. For these are “*books that should be written*”; that ought, that must, yea, that demand to be written. As the Psalmist testified: “*My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the king: my tongue is the pen of a ready writer*” (Psalm 45:1), paraphrased thus by Wesley: “My heart is full of Christ and longs its glorious matter to declare!” What is any other theme, compared to this? What is the value of a book that treats of lesser things, by contrast with one that addresses the King of kings? Many have ‘taken in hand to set forth in order’ works of fiction and non-fiction, biography and autobiography, and their works will perish with them. But a ‘treatise made of all that Jesus began both to do and teach’ is of inestimable worth and eternal consequence. For Christ is an inexhaustible subject; and though believers were to spend their lives giving expression to it, and fill the world with the books thus written, their testimony will still be this:

“Unseen we love Thee, dear Thy name;
But when our eyes behold,
With joyful wonder we’ll exclaim:
The half hath not been told.”

R. J. Steward

EDITORIAL

One might not expect the Scriptures to have a great deal to say on the subject of Christian literature production, or distribution of the printed word. However, a verse in the Psalms (while making reference to the military practices of Israel) strikes an encouraging note: “*The Lord gave the word: great was the company of those that published it*” (Psalm 68:11). What can be said of this ‘Great Publishing Company’ that broadcasts the truth of God? Who does it comprise? And in what sense do they deserve the epithet of ‘great’?

The company consists of those who “*shew forth from day to day His salvation. Declare His glory among the heathen; His marvellous works among all nations*” (1 Chronicles 16:23-24); who “[bring] *good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, thy God reigneth!*” (Isaiah 52:7) – by whatever means – spoken, written, or practised. But theirs is not a numerical greatness. For all that has been said about the quantity of Christian literature ever produced, and the Bible’s leading place amongst printed books – what is that compared to the vast amount of secular literature and worldly publications? And when one considers the actual number of persons who through history have engaged to promulgate the truth of God in various forms, they appear as a tiny minority in comparison. Not without reason are the Lord’s people called a remnant.

Neither are they great in power. Reflecting upon those used in the inspired compilation of Holy Scripture – and they who in subsequent generations have translated and promoted it, or written concerning it – one frequently finds solitary figures in the midst of hostile crowds, maligned prophets, lone voices crying in the wilderness, prisoners, exiles, and martyrs, ‘being destitute, afflicted, tormented’. All proving the point: “*that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to*

confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in His presence” (1 Corinthians 1:26-29).

Nor do they enjoy great influence, or affluence. The apparent effects of their labours are minimal or invisible; as seed buried in the ground, or bread cast upon waters; causing many to ask in despair, ‘Lord, who hath believed our report?’ And the rewards of their labours are equally elusive. They cannot be reckoned up in financial terms, or in any currency of earth, for they are not to be sought or found in this world.

Is the title of ‘great’ inaccurate or undeserved in that case? Far from it. For those who deal with the Word of God hold ‘greatness’ in their very hands. *“I rejoice at Thy word, as one that findeth great spoil”* (Psalm 119:162) – it is nothing less than the Lord’s own Word, given by Him from heaven; the ‘lively oracles’ of God; words of eternal life, which alone can impart immortality. Those whose work is to publish that word have a great commission laid upon them, being *“allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel”* (1 Thessalonians 2:4). A greater work cannot be found upon earth, for those who thus engage themselves are an extension, or vital part, of the mighty works of God Himself, who *“hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God ... We then, as workers together with Him, beseech you also”* (2 Corinthians 5:19-20, 6:1). Great indeed are the consequences of these labours, transcending time itself and bearing upon eternity. None of those who presently ‘sow in tears’ yet know what it shall be to ‘reap in joy’ hereafter, save that it ‘hath great recompense of reward’. Thus inspired then,

“Ye servants of God, your Master proclaim!
And publish abroad His wonderful name.”

NOTICES

Digitisation of the back-catalogue of *The Link* has been completed and is accessible to our readers in a variety of ways:

Website. Past editions from April 1971 to the present can be viewed at www.northroadchapel.org/the-link

PDF Files. All 200 editions can be supplied, free of charge, as PDF files on a USB memory stick or data CD. Please apply to the usual address.

Hard Copies. For those preferring printed versions, we have a small reserve of most editions, which can be supplied by post, free of charge. Individual articles can also be sent in printed form, by application to the usual address.

Note: we continue to miss the July-September 1978 edition from our archive, and would be very grateful to any reader who can supply the absent copy.

The Church records its thankfulness to the Lord for His preserving mercies through the course of the past year, with all its attendant difficulties. Providentially, only 19 weeks of public gatherings were lost, during which time alternative means were found for continuation of the services. We look to God for future deliverance, confessing: "*Hitherto hath the Lord helped us*" (1 Samuel 7:12).

ANNUAL BIBLE CONVENTION

5th & 6th June 2021 D.V.

Saturday 3.00 pm & 5.30 pm Lord's Day 11.00 am & 6.30 pm

Preacher : Mr S. Ford (Snailbeach)

**Please advise the Church Officers if you plan to attend
Further information will be provided in advance of the meetings**

The Link Index

APRIL - JUNE 1971 to
JANUARY - MARCH 2021

NORTH ROAD CHAPEL

BIDEFORD

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NOTES FOR USE WITH THE INDEX

The following format is used for page number references throughout this index: YYYY(Q)PP – where “YYYY” denotes the year, “Q” denotes the Quarter (1 = January-March, 2 = April-June, 3 = July-September, 4 = October-December), and “PP” denotes the page number. For example, the reference “1990(2)13” indicates the year 1990, third quarter (July-September), page no. 13.

Where an article occupies multiple pages, the number of the first page of the range only is given.

Page numbers began to be used in *The Link* from January 1983. Prior to this date, the first page of content (typically the first facing page) is assumed to be page no. 2, and others are counted in sequence.

The index is accurate for the print editions of *The Link*. Owing to certain excisions that have been made in the electronic/pdf versions (see ‘General Notes’), pagination may not match exactly, in all cases. It is hoped that this index will still serve as a sufficient guide to content.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE INDEX

The 200 editions of *The Link* published thus far contain in excess of 15,000 quotations from Holy Scripture. In the interests of brevity and simplicity we have indexed only those verses which form the title text or ‘reading’ associated with an article, and those that are the subject or substance of an article – the latter being indicated by **bold** type.

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28 April 1971	F. A. Tatford	3-4 August 1996	F. J. Harris
26 April 1972	A. T. Matthews	2-3 August 1997	F. J. Harris
25 April 1973	G. R. King	6-7 June 1998	W. Hughes
24 April 1974	D. C. Potter	5-6 June 1999	J. Thackway
20 April 1975	P. Masters	3-4 June 2000	A. T. McNabb
28 April 1976	M. H. Watts	2-3 June 2001	W. J. Seaton
27 April 1977	G. Thomas	1-2 June 2002	D. Allen
26 April 1978	N. Richards	7-8 June 2003	A. Blaize
21-22 July 1979	R. A. Lamb	5-6 June 2004	G. Bidston
26-27 July 1980	K. Matrunola	4-5 June 2005	A. T. McNabb
25-26 Jul 1981	C. P. Hallihan	3-4 June 2006	T. Hill
24-25 July 1982	J. Thackway	2-3 June 2007	R. J. Steward
23-24 July 1983	K. Dix	7-8 June 2008	M. Harley
21-22 July 1984	S. Scott-Pearson	6-7 June 2009	D. Allen
20-21 July 1985	J. Roberts	5-6 June 2010	P. Mehrshahi
12-13 July 1986	P. Trumper	4-5 June 2011	A. T. McNabb
18-19 July 1987	J. Roberts	2-3 June 2012	W. J. Seaton
16-17 July 1988	K. Matrunola	1-2 June 2013	R. J. Steward
15-16 July 1989	W. J. Seaton	7-8 June 2014	R. J. Steward
21-22 July 1990	N. Porter	6-7 June 2015	P. Mehrshahi
20-21 July 1991	D. Millar	4 June 2016	G. Chewter
1 August 1992	W. H. Molland	3 June 2017	G. D. Buss
7 August 1993	G. Hawkins	2 June 2018	J. Munday
6-7 August 1994	A. T. McNabb	1 June 2019	P. Mehrshahi
5-6 August 1995	W. J. Seaton	6 June 2020	Virtual

HYMNS AND POETRY INDEX

Numerous poems and hymns have been quoted in *The Link* – either in full, or incorporated into articles. The following list includes all those for which at least one verse has been printed, commencing with the first line quoted.

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A Sovereign Protector I have	Toplady, A. W.	1976(2)4
All for Jesus	Sparrow-Simpson, W. J.	2018(1)15
All our sin was laid upon Him	Smith, J. D.	1999(1)4
Alleluia! Not as orphans are we left	Dix, W. C.	2011(1)12
And is it so? I shall be like Thy Son?	Darby, J. N.	2008(4)18
And round my heart still closely twine	Small, J. G.	2004(3)7
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Approved unto God	Anon	1994(2)14
Behold the Throne of Grace	Newton, J.	1975(3)2
Behold, He comes to one and all	Hoffmann, E. A.	1993(1)16, 2011(2)9
Beyond this fleeting, shadowy vale of tears	Taylor, F. M.	2005(3)17
Bless, bless the Conqueror slain!	Gandy, S. W.	2000(4)6
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Blest be the wisdom and the grace	Kent, J.	2005(4)7
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Christian walk carefully: danger is near!	Anon	1990(4)6, 2001(2)8
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My God I would not coldly offer Thee	Anon	2020(3)11
My hope is built on nothing less	Mote, E.	2004(1)15
My life is a wearisome journey	Anon	1989(1)13
My name from the palms of His hands	Toplady, A. W.	2005(3)6
Nature with open volume stands	Watts, I.	2016(4)19
Not a brief glance, I beg	Lyte, H. F.	1973(2)5
Not one shall be missed	Kent, J.	1998(4)9
O Breath of Life, come sweeping through us	Head, B. P.	1992(3)9
O God who didst from Adam's side	Conder, J.	1984(4)12
O Homeland! O Homeland! The veil is	Meyer, L. R.	2005(1)7
O how I fear Thee, living God	Faber, F. W.	2009(4)16
O my Lord, how great the wonders	Irons, J.	2001(1)5
O my Saviour, crucified!	Chapman, R. C.	2002(1)19
O teach us, Lord, to know and own	Deck, J. G.	2014(1)8
O that we now might grasp our Guide	Wesley, C.	2017(2)18
O the soul-thrilling rapture when I view	Crosby, F. J.	2002(1)10
O use me Lord, use even me	Havergal, F. R.	2004(3)20
O when, thou City of my God	F. B. P.	2006(3)22
O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness	Monsell, J. S. B.	2004(3)8
Oh joy! There sitteth in our flesh	Caswall, E.	2009(3)17
Oh, make Thy Church, dear Saviour	How, W. W.	2014(1)14
On such love, my soul, still ponder	Kent, J.	1995(1)10
On that bright and golden morning	Crosby, F. J.	1998(2)12
On the Resurrection morning	Baring-Gould, S.	1995(1)15
On Thee at the Creation	Wordsworth, C.	2019(1)8
One body we, one body who partake	Briggs, G. W.	2004(4)6
One family, we dwell in Him	Wesley, C.	2014(2)12
One in the tomb; one when He rose	Kent, J.	2004(3)5
One there is above all others	Newton, J / Nunn, M.	1980(2)3
Only 'good-night', beloved – not 'farewell'!	Doudney, S.	2013(1)13
Our God contracted to a span	Wesley, C.	1999(3)2, 2012(4)3
Our Lord is risen from the dead	Wesley, C.	1998(3)3, 2000(4)5
Pause my soul, adore and wonder	Anon	1974(3)7
Perhaps this year the Lord will come	Pitt, F. W.	1972(1)9
Prepare my heart to love Thee well	Berridge, J.	2016(2)22

Principalities and powers	Elliott, C.	1990(4)5
Say Christian, wouldst thou thrive	Hart, J.	2007(1)19
Shut in with Thee	Stewart, A.	2017(2)15
Since Jesus is mine, I'll not fear undressing	Sturton, Mrs	2013(1)15
So near to the Kingdom	Crosby, F. J.	1999(1)7
So shall no part of day or night	Bonar, H.	2018(3)9
So shall we faultless stand at last	Spitta, K. J. P.	1986(2)16
Someday the clouds will roll aside	Adams, G. B.	1975(4)8
Soul and body, reunited	Baring-Gould, S.	2004(4)5
Sovereign Ruler of the skies	Ryland, J.	1975(3)4
Sow in the morn thy seed	Montgomery, J	1980(4)6
Stand up, my soul	Watts, I.	1998(4)22
Still, still, with Thee, as to each	Stowe, H. B.	1989(1)10
Struggling o'er life's fitful waters	Crosby, F. J.	2007(4)8
Swiftly and surely comes the day	Nicholson, M. S.	1972(3)4
Take Christ on board	Sturm, J. C. R.	2020(4)12
The blood that on the cross did flow	Williams, R. / Lewis, J.	2007(2)16
The bride eyes not her garment	Rutherford S./Cousin, A.	2002(1)9, 2012(2)21
The eternal glories gleam afar	Small, J. G	2005(3)13
The Lord is King! Who then shall dare	Conder, J.	1979(3)3
The powers of hell agree	Watts, I.	1985(1)9
The powers of hell have done their worst	Pott, F. (trans)	2000(4)4
The Public-House Bar	Anon	1987(3)21
The sacrifice is o'er	Bonar, H.	2015(1)20, 2015(4)21
The sands of time are sinking	Rutherford S./Cousin, A.	2005(3)14
The shadow of Thy cross beneath	Russell, D.	2008(3)18
The thoughts of men are lies	Hart, J.	2003(2)14
The veil is rent! Lo! Jesus stands	Deck, J. G.	2015(1)9
The very dimness of my sight	Parker, J.	2017(2)13
Then kneeling down	Burno, R.	2020(1)11
Then shall I see and hear and know	Watts, I.	2020(2)5
There is a fountain filled with blood	Cowper, W.	1992(3)7
There is a land of pure delight	Watts, I.	1974(4)5, 2013(1)18
There is an hour when I must stand	Reed, A.	2016(1)20
These, these are they who in affliction's woes	O'Kane, T. C.	2005(1)6
They righteous are in what He's done	Barnard, S.	1994(4)4
Things don't just happen to the children of God	Reynolds Flower, A.	2004(4)20
This is the day the Lord hath made	Watts, I.	1978(1)9
'This same Jesus!' Oh! how sweetly	Havergal, F. R.	2011(2)10
Thou fountain of grace, which none	Kent, J.	2004(3)8
Through weakness like defeat	Gandy, S. W.	2021(1)18
Thy cross, not mine, O Christ	Bonar, H.	2019(3)18

Thy mercy my God	Stocker, J.	2018(1)13
Time, what an empty vapour 'tis	Watts, I.	2016(1)17
'Tis not enough to bend the knee	Burton, J.	1971(2)9
'Tis not that I did choose Thee	Conder, J.	1985(1)20
'Tis Thine to cleanse the heart	Hart, J.	1977(4)4
To spend one sacred day	Watts, I.	2013(4)22
'Twas a sheep, not a lamb that strayed away	Anon	2003(4)22
'Twas love Divine that sanctified	Styles, W. J.	2003(4)7
'Twill not be long – our journey here	Crosby, F. J.	2005(3)15
Under the shadow of Thy Throne	Watts, I.	1975(3)4
Unfurl the Christian standard	Havergal, F. R.	1992(4)13
Visit then this soul of mine	Wesley, C.	2005(1)20
We ask no bright shekinah cloud	Harris, J.	2020(1)19
We bear the burden of the day	Dix, W. C.	2005(4)13
We may trust Him fully	Havergal, F. R.	2018(3)14
We thank Thee for the day of rest	Unknown	1982(3)11
We're not of the world which fadeth away	Deck, J. G.	2001(4)14
We're warring till He comes	Marsh, F. E.	1992(2)11
What could wash away my stain?	Lowry, R.	2014(2)6
What from Christ that soul can sever	Kent, J.	2000(2)4, 2014(1)5
What mighty sum paid all my debt	Irons, J.	2012(3)20
What raised the wondrous thought	Wigram, W. V.	2000(3)7
What we in glory soon shall be	Sullivan, M. S.	2002(1)13
What will it be, that first	Suisted, J.	1975(1)5
When God revealed His gracious name	Watts, I.	2020(3)7
When Israel by Divine command	Newton, J.	2012(3)8
When Nations are to perish in their sins	Cowper, W.	1987(2)9, 2006(2)7
When we cannot see our way	Kelly, T.	2009(2)15
When we walk with the Lord	Sammis, J. H.	2001(4)4
Where high the heavenly temple stands	Bruce, M.	2001(1)7, 2008(4)10/13
Where is the blessedness I knew	Cowper, W.	2006(4)7
While Thee, all-infinite, I set	Lange, E.	2012(4)16
Who shall the Lord's elect condemn?	Watts, I.	1993(3)6
Why so offensive in men's eyes	Hart, J.	1989(3)15
With His seraph-train before Him	Mant, R.	2014(2)11
With joy we meditate the grace	Watts, I.	2000(2)4, 2019(3)20
With such a blessed hope in view	Boswell, R.	2011(2)9
Write it over every gate	Wooten, E.	1987(4)20
Yes, in Thy name, O Captain of Salvation	Cherry, E. G.	2013(1)7
Yet she on earth hath union	Stone, S. J.	2004(4)13
You must needs go home by the way of the cross	Pounds, J.	2016(3)6

MEMBERS' OBITUARIES & APPOINTMENTS

In some instances, due to the timing of events, obituaries are printed on separate enclosures, included with *The Link*. These are denoted with a page number 'X'. In the interests of confidentiality, only appointments of Church Officers now deceased, or still serving, are included.

OBITUARIES

Abbott, Mrs R. D.	2004(1)21	Molland, Mrs N. I.	2013(1)2
Bale, Mr	1977(2)12	Molland, Mr W. H.	2013(1)2
Bale, Mrs E.	1980(2)9	Nethercott, Mr C.	1980(3)12, 1980(4)13
Bennett, Mr W.	1988(3)21	Nethercott, Mrs G.	1998(2)20
Bennett, Mrs M.	1981(4)14	Poole, Mr P.	1986(2)22
Bridge, Mr F. W.	1985(3)22, 1985(4)26	Poole, Mrs B.	1980(3)14
Brignall, Mr F.	1982(4)18	Potter, Mr L.	1998(1)X
Buckley, Miss B.	1995(2)22	Potter, Mrs A.	1999(2)X
Crick, Mrs	1972(1)6	Prest, Mr J. F.	1977(2)12
Dunn, Mr J. H.	1977(3)9	Prest, Mrs J.	2001(2)22
Frayne, Mr R.	1978(3)8	Pursey, Mrs E.	1981(4)14
Garner, Mr G.	1974(4)6	Robertson, Mrs V.	2006(4)8
Garner, Mrs	1977(3)9	Round, Mr V.	2006(2)6
Gee, Mr L.	1989(4)19	Round, Mrs M.	2005(4)19
Gee, Mrs V.	1992(1)X	Sinner, Miss D.	1976(3)7
Haws, Mrs S.	2018(1)21	Smith, Mr E.	1979(4)11
Howells, Mrs	1980(4)12	Smith, Mrs E.	1991(3)25
Hyam, Mr P.	1985(4)26	Squire, Mr F.	1980(2)9
Hyam, Mrs R.	1986(2)22	Whitlock, Mr C.	1982(3)17
Lane, Mrs	1982(4)18	Whitlock, Mrs A.	1983(3)16
Molland, Mr B.	1989(4)19	Wort, Mrs M.	1991(3)X

APPOINTMENTS

Bennett, Mr W. (Elder)	1978(1)10	Molland, Mr W. H. (Secretary)	1971(2)4
Bridge, Mr F. W. (Deacon)	1977(3)8	Steward, Mr R. J. (Minister)	2006(3)19
Gee, Mr L. (Deacon)	1978(2)5	Wort, Mr D. C. (Deacon)	1989(1)21
Gee, Mr L. (Elder, Secretary)	1981(1)12	Wort, Mr D. C. (Treasurer)	1989(4)19

(Note that officers' appointments have been included in *The Link* only when deadlines for print permitted their inclusion, and are not comprehensive)

GENERAL NOTES

Scripture Quotations

The Authorised Version of the Bible is used throughout *The Link* magazine, in accordance with the Church's Declaration of Practice, as being the most accurate English translation, of the best original manuscripts, of the Holy Scriptures. Where original source material uses other versions, quotations from the Authorised Version are substituted. Where historical authors, who predate the publication and widespread use of the Authorised Version (earlier than the mid-Seventeenth Century) quote from older translations of the Bible in English, these have been retained where possible.

Chapter/Verse References

Formatting and typography styles in *The Link* vary considerably until about the year 2000. Standard practice is now as follows: Direct quotations of Bible verses are enclosed in speech marks, and printed in italicised text, “*thus*”. References are contained in round brackets. Bible book names are unabbreviated. Chapter and verse numbers are given in Arabic numerals, separated by a colon. Continuous verse ranges are indicated by a hyphen. Non-continuous ranges are separated by a comma. References from multiple Bible books are separated by a semi-colon. Thus, for example: (Genesis 1:1-3, 31; Job 9:8, 38:4). Where Bible verses are paraphrased, quoted indirectly, or otherwise alluded to in an article, the reference is prefixed with ‘cf’, abbreviation for Latin *conferatur*, meaning ‘compare’. This standard is applied retrospectively to source material that uses different referencing styles.

Capitalisation

Throughout *The Link* magazine, pronouns relating to Deity are capitalised, to indicate that God is being addressed. Such capitalisation is also added to Scripture quotations, though not occurring in the Authorised Version itself. This editorial decision has been made for the additional clarity it affords to such verses as: “*the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him*” (Colossians 3:10), or: “*He that believeth on the Son of*

God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made Him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son” (1 John 5:10).

A system of capitalisation is commonly used in the Authorised Version to denote the underlying Hebrew words translated as ‘Lord’ in English, namely ‘LORD’ for Jehovah, and ‘Lord’ for Adonai. This formatting style is not replicated in quotations within *The Link*, as its significance may not be apparent to the casual reader, and could be misconstrued as emphasis.

Punctuation

The punctuation marks used in the Authorised Version are usually retained when quotations are printed in *The Link*. However, in extended quotations, where intermediate verse numbers are omitted, the punctuation and capitalisation of the original may be changed to ensure readability and comprehension of the verses quoted.

Excisions

In the electronic / PDF editions of *The Link* made available online, those prior to 1992 are advertised as ‘Excerpts from *The Link*’. This is to reflect the fact that, in a number of instances, it has been necessary to remove parts of the original documents. Reasons for this include:

- (1.) Confidentiality of persons mentioned by name.
- (2.) Older articles not meeting the editorial standards currently applied.
- (3.) Topical articles addressing contemporary issues of their day, which do not stand the test of time or the scrutiny of hindsight.
- (4.) Older subject matter not reflecting the present doctrinal stand of North Road Chapel.

In the mercies of God, the church at North Road has been delivered from certain faulty doctrines and practices that were formerly held. Consequently, some earlier material is no longer considered appropriate for circulation. “*All things edify not*” (1 Corinthians 10:23).

Authors and Contributors

Over 300 different authors are to be found listed in the indices. In every instance, their contributions have been reprinted on the works’ own merits,

when read in isolation. The inclusion of a given author or source is not an indication that North Road Chapel would concur with the stance of that author in every detail; indeed, this is rarely the case.

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Editors of *The Link*

There have been two principal editors of *The Link*, contributing a large part of its content – Mr W. H. Molland (from inception), and Mr R. J. Steward (from October-December 2005 to the present) – who consequently are not listed in the index of authors separately, and indicated only by their initials in the Titled Articles Index. Many of the serialised articles are taken directly from Mr Molland's sermon scripts, prepared by him for print. Since 2005, the transcription and editing of these has been performed by Mr Steward.

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The expository ministry at North Road Chapel is recorded, and the following series are available: ('#' denotes the total number of sermons. * = Current series)

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THE LIFE OF ELIJAH	76		◇	◇	◇
THE BOOK OF HOSEA	50	◇	◇	◇	◇
THE BOOK OF JOEL	11	◇	◇	◇	◇
THE BOOK OF AMOS	29	◇	◇	◇	◇
THE BOOK OF OBADIAH	7	◇	◇	◇	◇
THE BOOK OF JONAH	9	◇	◇	◇	◇
THE BOOK OF MICAH	21	◇	◇	◇	◇
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THE BOOK OF HABAKKUK	11	◇	◇	◇	◇
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