

CONTENTS

Ezekiel 34:7-16 A Contemporary Application	2
News of the Fellowship	4
Diary	8
The Story of a Revival	9
Elijah and the Ravens	16
William Wilberforce	20
The A.V. - An Open Letter	26
Epilogue	27

Ezekiel 34:7-16

A Contemporary Application

Ezekiel was called of God to minister to the Israelite exiles in Babylon towards the end of the 6th century B.C. during the most turbulent of times for the people of God. The passage in hand is set against the back-cloth of the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple. It opens with a reference to the failure of the civil and religious leaders in Israel. They had not sought the good of the flock. Rather than feeding the flock, they had fed themselves (v2). They had fleeced the flock (v3). These shepherds will be brought to account (v10) for their dereliction of duty. Such a failure of duty had resulted in the scattering of the flock (v5). They had been taken away into foreign lands. In a similar vein Jeremiah, Ezekiel's contemporary in Jerusalem, had cited the mismanagement of the flock by the false dealings of 'the prophet' and 'the priest' (Jer. 613). They had failed to correctly diagnose and remedy the condition of the land by 'saying Peace, peace; when there is no peace' (Jer. 614).

The Lord however will yet reveal his mercy and bring back his scattered ones. The flock will be delivered from the mouth of those who prey on them (v10). There is an emphasis in these verses on what the Lord will do; for example, in verse 11 we read, 'Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out.' Again in verse 12 the Lord as a faithful shepherd will seek out the sheep 'and will deliver them out of places where they have been scattered in the

cloudy and dark day.' The shepherding imagery continues in verse 16 with the Lord promising to deal tenderly with his sheep, remedying their various conditions.

Obviously our 'first port of call' in understanding this passage is the return of the Israelite exiles after their captivity. Seventy years would be fulfilled. During this time the people would be humbled, chastened and would seek the Lord. Then the Lord would bring back his scattered sheep. This took place providentially through the decree of king Cyrus, under the leadership of Nehemiah and Ezra, and subsequently encouraged by the ministry of Haggai and Zechariah. The building of the walls of Jerusalem was in itself a wonder of grace, with the enemies of Zion acknowledging 'that this work was wrought of our God'. Thus the Lord would again provide for his people a 'good fold' and a 'fat pasture' (v14).

But we also view this scripture in the light of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. The shepherd motif finds its fulfilment in Christ who is the Good Shepherd. He gives himself for the sheep (John 10:11). By his redeeming work souls are gathered into the fold of grace and find rich pasture. He came to 'seek and to save that which was lost' (Luke 19:10, Ezek. 34:11). This is realised in our experience when we are effectually called by the Gospel and the Spirit. By grace then we are able to take up the words of Psalm 23 and sing, 'The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want'. How wonderful to have a loving shepherd who leads us, guides us, feeds

us, protects us, who gives us rest and deliverance, and who chastens us in love. We have grace now and glory hereafter.

I also suggest that this passage is of special relevance to our times. Just as Ezekiel was addressing a particular time in the history of Israel, so we might see this portion addressing a particular time. There appear to be parallels between Ezekiel's day and our own. Might not we say that the shepherds have failed. They have failed to feed the flocks on the lush green pastures of sound doctrine. Some have marginalised preaching by the introduction of various programmes. Some have begun to change their worship, borrowing at times the very worst from the contemporary worship scene; songs shorn of biblical theology, sung to tunes that lack majesty and weight. Often such developments in churches are spurred by the desire to keep the young people. Some ministers have to weigh up what direction they will go in. Some folk will have to be sacrificed as the 'new ways' are adopted. Sadly, it is often the older and more spiritual members who are sacrificed. They are often viewed as belonging to the past; we must move on with the times. Being spiritual and humble, they are not so soon scattered. They hang on often to the grief of their souls. They fear offending and upsetting other members. They seek to respect their minister and go along with him as far as they are able. They know that love 'beareth all things' (1 Cor. 13:7). But in their minds a line is drawn. Where this line is drawn will often differ from believer to believer.

Some are remarkably tolerant. The line has to do with what is of primary importance and secondary. Because the changes are gradual, it is difficult often to discern when the line is crossed. The sheep realize that the church is lurching in a certain direction, but it takes a while for the new spirit to be manifest. Eventually, however, their hearts are broken. They see that it is a 'cloudy and dark day' (v12). The storm has broken. The faithful flock is scattered. Believers in our day are becoming dislocated from fellowships that they have spent a lifetime in. Even founding members are constrained to leave the churches they once helped to found. Some sadly are worshipping in their own homes. If the dispersed ones are few and the bulk of the flock kept, these casualties can be borne, so the shepherds reason. These dear ones are not 'brought again', neither are they 'sought' (v4). There is a sad neglect.

Seeing then something of the state of things as it relates to a scattered flock, can not we see something of a hope that such might be gathered again? Is not the Lord himself shepherd of these dear friends? Will he not seek out 'his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered' (v12)? Surely the Lord is not unmindful of their need to feed in 'a good pasture' (v14) and to be brought into 'a good fold'. He will feed them again with the word of truth ministered by faithful under-shepherds and bring them into safe and secure 'church folds'. Verse 16 is particularly poignant here. The Lord 'will seek that which was lost'. There are many who are lost. We think afresh of the unconverted. But there are

also those who are lost to the fellowship of God's people, who are no longer under the preached word. Then there are those who have been 'driven away'. William Greenhill at this point refers to David who was driven away firstly by Saul, then by Absalom. Again some of the Lord's people have been driven away by new spiritual regimens. Sadly some ministers have been driven away by churches who have caught the new spirit. The Lord promises again to bring such back. The Lord will also 'bind up that which was broken'. How many there are who have been broken by sin, by backsliding, by the harshness of others, by neglect. The Lord will 'strengthen that which was sick'. The Lord's people need to be patiently and tenderly ministered to. What diseases they contract; what conditions they fall prey to.

In the light of this approach to this passage, let us pray that there might be a returning to the Lord and the 'old paths' where the 'good way' is. May the true sheep indeed be gathered by the shepherd. Moreover, may the Lord provide good folds where the sheep will be safe, secure and protected; and fat pasture where they might be fed soundly on the doctrines of the word of God.

Rev. Neil Pfeiffer

News of the Fellowship

On Friday the 31st of August Peniel Green church held its annual historical trip, once again located round and about the city of Bristol. We were to

look mainly at the life of George Muller the great man who set up the famous Muller's homes and William Wilberforce, seeing that it is the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade.

We set off from Llansamlet about 9.00 a.m., arriving in the Wesley theological college around 11a.m. First Mr. Malcolm Coulson gave a us talk on the life and work of William Wilberforce. He was born on the 24th of August 1759 in Hull into a rich family. His father was a merchant and therefore able to give William a good education at Cambridge. Wilberforce was a Christian and achieved much during his life in the service to God in politics. He is most famous for being a key part of the abolition of the Slave Trade. He retired from his political work in 1825 and died on the 29th of July 1833 shortly after the act to free all slaves passed in the House of Commons. He was given a privileged burial spot near to his friend Pitt in the Westminster Abbey.

After we had listened to Mr Coulson we sat down to a very good lunch at the college. We then moved on to Muller's house in Bristol. We had a warm welcome and we were split into two groups. One group had a talk in Muller's study and the other in the museum. In the museum we were told about Muller's work and past life and then in the study we found out a bit about the genealogy and what became of some of the first orphans.

George Muller was an ordinary man but what makes him stand out is his great faith and the love he had for God. He was indeed a giant of prayer and he received £1,500,000 totally in answer to prayer. George was born in Kroppenstaedt, a Prussian village, on the 27th September 1805. The son of a Tax Collector, he did not become a Christian until he was twenty years of age. George was in fact a terrible man before his conversion. He later said that he had committed nearly every sin that ever was. It was even said that when his mother lay home dying he was seen wandering the streets in a drunken state. When he was training to be a Lutheran clergyman although being a great student he continued stealing and took advantage of his father's generosity. He is much like the Prodigal son. Yet he was converted and he left his terrible ways for a life totally dedicated to God.

His life changed when he attended a prayer meeting and he realised how sinful he actually was. Earlier, before this prayer meeting, he had been on a pleasure trip in Switzerland by forging false documents in order to do so.

When he came to England in 1829 he met a certain Scotsman who helped him much in his life. His name was Henry Craik and he showed George the importance of putting your life in the hands of God and to pray. George was often penniless yet God preserved him for he had a job for him to do.

George later was called to Bristol and he moved there with his wife Mary in order to work and preach for God. Before starting the orphanages he set up the Scriptural Knowledge institute, which worked mainly with young people. He also preached at a chapel named Bethesda. In 1835 the cholera epidemic caused many children to become homeless therefore he began thinking of the idea of an orphanage. He started by setting up small orphanages in Bristol for girls at Wilson Street. He prayed for funds and his prayer was answered again and again. He then expanded his vision by buying a rural estate outside Bristol known as Ashley Down. This cost him more than £100,000. All this, and workers, were all provided by prayer.

He built many buildings at Ashley Down and the orphanages became very successful. Charles Dickens once visited the home urged by rumours of starvation, when left he was more than satisfied. In 1870 Muller opened the fifth and final orphanage at Ashley Down and his work continued there for many years. He died an old man in 1898 and his work saved the lives and souls of many. He is still an inspiration to us all even today. He was indeed the 'robber of the cruel streets'.

We had an insight to the great life and work of this man and I felt that it was very interesting and a blessing to us all. After spending a few hours in Muller's house we moved on to Cribb's Causeway. It was gigantic but I think

everybody enjoyed their shopping trip and we arrived safely back at Peniel Green later that night.

I feel the day went well and it was a blessing to hear about these great men's lives. It was also very nice to meet up with old friends and meet new ones. (Nathan Munday)

On Saturday 1st September Catherine Coulson's mother Jean Johnson entered into her eternal rest after a long illness. She had been a member here for a while before moving to Cardiff. The Rev. Vernon Higham conducted the funeral highlighting the hope of the believer from 2 Peter 1 "For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly unto the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ". The service was very well attended.

It is also with sadness that we report the death of Mr. Charles French and we express our sympathy to Mrs. Jean French. The Rev. R. B. Higham took the funeral in the absence of the pastor.

It was good to have Pastor Lorifice with us at an after Church fellowship on the Lord's Day, 23rd September. The Rev. Pfeiffer and his family had recently spent an enjoyable holiday in Sicily staying in the apartment above the Church building in Rubera. Mr. Lorifice shared something of the work in Scicily, beginning with the Waldensians in Italy and ending with the present state of the church. He asked us to pray that God would

provide a pastor for the Church in Rubera, that God would bless the reformed conferences held and that wisdom would be given in the whole area of the translation and dissemination of sound, Biblical literature.

Sunday School visitation took place at the beginning of September with a good number of new children from the area starting to attend.

The Pastor was given an excellent opportunity to preach the Gospel to the family of Mr. Peter Evans on the occasion of his mother's funeral service (Monday 1st October). Bessie Evans had attended Peniel in the past when she was able. We convey afresh our sympathies to the family.

Mr Andrew Boorman entered into the presence of the Lord on Saturday 6th October after a brief illness at the age of 40. Pastor was asked by the family to conduct the funeral service. A simple service was held at the family home with the main service at Tabernacle Chapel, Penclawdd. A large congregation heard a message based on the words of Joshua 21:45 "There failed not ought of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass". These words, it was maintained, can be applied to the church and to every individual believer. Our God has promised us a full salvation resulting in the entrance into the heavenly promised land. All things will "come to pass". Mr. David Williams from

Neath prayed and Mr Brian Jones read her and her husband Des on their the scriptures. Movingly we sang a diamond wedding anniversary. hymn that Andrew had written.

*Why is my faith so weak and faint?
When God has promised every saint
That comes to Him in Jesus' name,
Fires to subdue and floods to tame.*

*O gracious Spirit, give to me
The eye of faith that I may see,
When Satan thrusts me to the ground,
The heavenly hosts encamped around.*

*And though I tread a weary road,
And though I feel the tempter's goad,
May Jesus Christ my refuge be
And I, by faith, blest Zion see.*

*Encouraged thus, Lord, may I rise
And press toward the heavenly prize;
Serve Thee until I hear at last
'Come, faithful child, thy toils are past'.*

*Now hasten on that longed-for day,
When sinful flesh is stripped away,
My feeble faith is turned to sight
And Christ appears in glories bright.*

We continue to remember those who are ill and recovering from treatment. Mrs. Angela Daniel is making steady progress after her operation. She has appreciated the prayers and visits of God's people. Mrs. Betty Rowlands has had a spell of ill health and we pray that God would strengthen her that she might be able to return to public worship. We remember Mrs. Margaret Williams continually and congratulate

The annual young people's bonfire party took place on a Tuesday evening with the usual fire, fireworks and hospitality provided by Mr. And Mrs. M. Munday. Mr Munday spoke to the young people about the soldiers who were commissioned to apprehend Elijah (2 Kings 1). The first two captains with their accompanying fifty men were consumed by fire; the third captain took heed of the 'evidence' of the power of God and accordingly humbled himself before Elijah (v.13). We ought to take note of the evidence of the truth of the Christian faith and humble ourselves before the Lord.

We warmly welcome friends from Margam Road Evangelical Church to our services and pray that the Lord would be pleased to revive the work there in that well populated and needy area. Pray especially for the service held every Lord's day afternoon at 3.15pm and the prayer meeting every Thursday at 2.30pm.

We are very thankful for Mr Howell Green's faithful ministry in the adult afternoon Sunday School class. He has served the Lord in it for many years. The class is now in abeyance as we undertake the work at Margam Road.

Diary

Lord's Days:

December

2nd	–	Pastor	–	Communion - p.m
9th	–	Pastor		
16th	–	Pastor	–	Communion -a.m
23th	–	Pastor	–	After Church Fellowship
30th	–	Pastor		

January

6th	–	Pastor	–	Communion - p.m
13th	–	Pastor		
20th	–	Pastor	–	Communion - a.m
27th	–	Pastor		

February

3rd	–	Pastor	–	Communion - p.m
10th	–	Rev. H. Clement (Tonypany)		
17th	–	Pastor	–	Communion - a.m
24th	–	Pastor		

Dates to note:

Lord's Day Afternoon 16th December, Open Sunday School, 3.15pm

Friday 21st December, Christmas Carol/Preaching Service, 7.30pm
Rev. C. Rees (Narberth)

Christmas Day, Morning Service, 10.00am

Thursday 27th December, Prayer Meeting (instead of Wednesday 26th)

THE STORY OF A REVIVAL

Walter C. Brehaut

The Island of Guernsey, the second largest of the Channel Islands, is roughly in the form of a triangle. At its north-western angle is the parish of Saint Pierre-du-Bois (St. Peter-in-the-Wood). At the extreme north-west tip of the parish is a locality called L'Érée, or Les Sablons (the sands). Although the name of the parish suggests plenty of trees, this particular district is flat, marshy, and composed mainly of sand dunes. In winter the fields are often flooded and when the westerly gales, to which it is subject, sweep up the Channel, the sand from the dunes bites into the faces of passers-by. It is a bleak place in the winter, but very pleasant in the summer months. The coastal scenery is very beautiful and the sight of the Atlantic breakers rolling in on the rocky coast is a sight not easily forgotten. A good coastal road circles this tip and is lined with groups of quaint low cottages mostly inhabited by fishermen. At the time of our story this part of the Island was still greatly unspoiled by the erection of modern bungalows.

It was in this north-west tip of our Island that it pleased the lord to move by His Spirit, and to awaken men and women to a sense of their lost estate. How did the Good News of Salvation come to be preached in this unlikely spot?

It happened in this wise. During the winter of 1923-24, a Christian young lady, with the help of friends, undertook to visit the cottages along the coast for the purpose of distributing Christian literature. These monthly visits were greatly appreciated by many and the

tracts, both in English and in French, were read eagerly. In very rare cases were the tracts ever refused.

One Sunday afternoon, some children to whom tracts were given, pointed out to the distributors a greenhouse attached to a smithy, where they said some men were spending the afternoon together. Tracts in hand the friends made their way to the greenhouse and found themselves amidst a number of men who were gambling with cards. Only one or two resented the intrusion, but the others stopped their play and expressed a desire to accept the tracts which were offered.

From that time the visits of these workers were eagerly expected; in fact a demand that the visits should be made more frequently was made. As our Christian friends became more acquainted with the individuals who frequented the gambling den, the claims of the Lord Jesus Christ were placed before them and great interest was shown.

When the warmer weather came, the gamblers, many of whom were regular frequenters of the low public house which had become the curse of the neighbourhood, moved their quarters from the greenhouse to the open-air. They did not, however, escape the eyes of the distributors who visited them in their haunts continually, spoke to them, sang to them, and provided them with the Word of Life.

As the summer came on, open-air meetings were held on the dunes every Sunday evening, and little by little, one by one, the gamblers, many of them fine young fellows, were drawn to hear the Gospel, and were, as they admitted

themselves, much moved. The effect of the Gospel, faithfully preached, was such that the gambling stopped and many of the gamblers vowed that never would they gamble again.

But soon the weather grew too cold for the holding of the open-air meeting, and these had to be abandoned, much to the regret of many in the neighbourhood and especially of the young men. It must be stated that no sign of true conversion had yet been seen. Cards in many cases had been given up; but the public house was still regularly frequented and some of these young men were in the grip of the drink fiend, and it was seen that nothing but the grace of God through conversion could change these hearts and lives. Oh! the folly of those who think that a drunkard can be reformed just by making him sign a pledge card! Nothing short of a divine miracle can do it!

When the open-air services were discontinued a disused fisherman's cottage was fitted up by some of these young men, in order that the meetings might be held during the winter. The one room, which had served as kitchen and bedroom, was cleaned up, the walls whitewashed and wooden forms were placed. There was no room for a pulpit, but a small bedside table about the size of an ordinary dinner plate and a chair were placed for the preacher, whoever he may be.

It is sad to say that many Christians belonging to the neighbourhood churches looked on in dismay, and rather than help in giving these needy people the Word of Life, set out to hamper the holding of meetings in this cottage. The housing authorities were approached and an

attempt was made to stop the preaching of the Gospel in this house. The opposition was welcomed by the workers and showed that since the Devil was opposing through these people, it must be God's work in which they were engaged and so they took courage. How the opposition fired the few Christians to earnest prayer! How the promises were pleaded! And how the Lord answered prayer!

The licence to hold meetings was obtained at the eleventh hour, and the lord was honoured and glorified in the fact that the house was opened for the Gospel on the very day which the workers had fixed.

The first meeting held was not very encouraging as far as numbers went, there being only seven or eight including the speaker. But it was an earnest of greater blessing, considering the fact that those present were gamblers and drunkards, one of whom had declared that they would never get him to go in.

The work of evangelisation fell to one man in particular. After much prayer and meditation, a party of Christians felt that it was the will of the Lord to use the parish schoolmaster as an instrument for conveying the message to this part of the Island. It is only fair to say that he, the writer of this record, had looked upon the activities which preceded with little interest and much dubiousness. He took no part in any of the preparations either material or spiritual; in fact he had never felt free to have Christian fellowship with those concerned, who were of Brethren persuasion. His sympathies were more particularly with the Evangelical party in the Church of England. When

approached, he at first refused, but upon being pressed, he with much diffidence and some forebodings assented. He received no particular call from the Lord, and was not visited by any special mark of power, in fact he felt rather cold about the whole matter. The fact that he was going to preach to a notorious gang of young men, many of whom had been pupils of his school in his unregenerate days, and who might now take advantage of him, did not lend attraction to the task.

Leaning upon the Lord, however, and trusting in His power, he sallied forth to preach Christ and Christ crucified, not only as a Saviour from the guilt of sin, but also as a Saviour from the power of sin.

It might interest the reader to know that only half of the long cottage was occupied. A wooden partition separated it from the other half which was tenanted by a young couple. The speaker had often to cope with the cries of a baby or the loud conversation on the other side. Later on this part was vacated, the partition demolished and a much needed addition to the room was made.

The reader may appreciate the position of the preacher who launched out into this work. The parish schoolmaster, one of the most respected individuals of the community by virtue of his office, looked up to by everyone, to descend to preaching to down-and-outs, not in a fashionable church or chapel, but in a tumble-down cottage by the sea. How could such a man of education descend to such depths? One day he was actually accosted by a colleague in the profession and was asked: "Have you not lowered

your dignity as a schoolmaster in acting in this way?"

A ready answer was not forthcoming but later on he thought that a suitable rejoinder might have been: "Did not my Lord lower His dignity, when He left glory to come to such a sinful world as this to save sinners!" Added to the drawbacks was the fact that the schoolmaster was 'A prophet in his own country'. He was known to all those to whom he was to minister, having been born and bred in the parish, and was withal of lowly birth. He was already suffering from prejudice with regard to his position as headmaster of the school of which he had been a pupil, and this new venture could not but increase the feeling. The writer gives these details to prove to the reader that the task imposed upon him was not self-sought; in fact he was forced into it against his will. Had he followed the natural inclination he might have moved in the higher religious and social circles of the parish and by doing so have over-ridden much of the prejudices which attached to him because of his lowly birth and the fact that he had attained the position he now held.

From the moment that the schoolmaster evangelist began to preach he saw that the gospel was gripping the audience. The depravity of the human heart, the blackness of sin, the wrath of God were dwelt upon in unvarnished terms. Sinners literally trembled under the Word as they were convicted of their sin; but hearts melted when the love of Christ was set forth.

The preaching was not orthodox and would certainly not have been countenanced in respectable places of

worship. There was no excitement as obtains in modern evangelistic campaigns. There was no organisation and certainly nothing whatever to attract the senses – a disused cottage, bare whitewashed walls, uncomfortably hard forms, fitful lighting, no musical instrument to lead the singing, a hard cold cement floor, a draughty doorway, poor ventilation. The congregation turned up in their working clothes often, or if not, in clean jerseys. Collars and ties were conspicuous by their absence. The singing of well-known hymns would certainly have shocked the respectably religious, used to well-trained choirs; but there was melody in the heart. The speaker spoke as a man to men, as one of themselves, and the attention paid to his words was often pathetic to behold. He spoke as a sinner to sinners, as a dying man to dying men.

Sometimes scripture text cards were brought and hung from the walls. On one occasion the speaker took his place at the table. He felt absolutely empty not knowing what to say. As he glanced upwards towards the low ceiling, he was faced with one of these texts which had been pinned to the large beam. The words: 'Fear not, I will help thee' met his gaze. It was an answer to his ardent prayer for help. This card has been pinned in the pulpit of our present Gospel Hall.

For a week or two, two meetings were held during the week, besides the afternoon and evening services on Sunday.

The preacher, however, still very dubious as to his call to this work, felt that a continuous mission, night after night,

should be held. He told the friends who had pressed him into this work, that he would preach every evening for a week. If at the end of the week there were no conversions, then it would be plain that he was not the Lord's instrument for this work and he would withdraw. The room was packed every night and the Gospel was listened to most eagerly. There were as many people standing outside as there were inside, consequently the door and the two windows were left open the whole time to enable those who stood in the yard to hear what was said. It was November then, and the nights were cold, but those hardy folk cared nothing for this – many of them were used to the rigours of a fisherman's life or to working in the open fields in all weathers. Besides, there was a greater attraction drawing them, the Spirit of God was at work in the locality convicting men of sin.

The most remarkable feature of the mission was the talks which the missionary had with young men and women after the service. There were no appeals for instant 'decision', hand raising, coming to the front, or staying behind after the service such as obtains in the evangelistic movements of modern days. The writer had a strong aversion to these tactics then, and has a stronger aversion to them now. The conversion of a soul is the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit. The approaches for conversation were spontaneous. It was a regular thing for young men who were under conviction to walk with the evangelist part of the way to his home in order to seek guidance.

As the week drew to a close, no conversions had been noted, and the missionary felt that he would have to hand

over the work to someone else. He must confess that that did not trouble him much. But on the Thursday evening two young men walked with him towards his house. They were under deep conviction of sin. At a certain point, the trio stopped as they talked on the way of salvation, the light dawned into these darkened souls. On this cold, moonlit night, the bells of heaven rang as these two sheep were ushered into the fold of grace. One of them was delivered at the same time from his love of drink. This was a remarkable work of grace as the young man was on the verge of delirium tremens.

Conversions generally were so rare that the missionary must confess that he went home in a state of doubt as to the reality of these two conversions. He asked the Lord to forgive him for his unbelief and on his way to school the next day he asked the Lord to give him some sign that these conversions were real. The first thing he heard on reaching school was that these two young men had been to tell their friends the good news that very evening. They had already confessed Christ, a sure sign of regeneration.

It may be stated that the missionary felt great responsibility in undertaking this work. It had been his lot for some years, ever since his conversion in 1916, to preach the Gospel in different places of worship in the Island. Never once had he offered himself for preaching, and yet it had befallen him to preach among Wesleyans, Baptists (French and English), Presbyterians, Primitive Methodists, Churchmen, and in mission halls. He has now been preaching for forty years, but never once has he offered himself to preach, but has gone, when

asked, as far as was in his power and circumstances permitted.

One of his themes, and not a very popular one, had been the deadness of the Churches and the lack of conversions. For his outspokenness on these matters, doors had been shut in his face and he had become a marked man, a disturber of the peace.

To undertake evangelisation in this part of the Island placed him under the public eye and the questions were going round as to whether there would be any conversions under his preaching. He was able to lay this matter before the Lord, pointing out that His honour depended, to the public eye, upon conversions. The meetings continued and on the morrow of the first two conversions, two others were saved. So the blessing continued night after night and the mission extended to three weeks.

It should be pointed out that the conversions did not take place directly under the preaching nor yet at the meetings. The Lord met sinners in their beds at night, at their work or along the road. But the joy on the faces of the convert as the missionary arrived each evening told its tale. They were not forced to confess, they did it willingly, joyfully to all their friends.

It is just that a note of praise to the Lord be raised for sustaining the preacher during these three weeks and after. Never during this time did his strength fail him, although he had to do his duties at school in the day and preach every evening, never reaching home till about half past ten or eleven o'clock and sometimes after, spending this time in

talking to groups or individuals. The journey, a matter of three miles, was done either walking or cycling. There is no doubt that the Holy Spirit was much at work in those days.

The conversations in the cottages, on the seashore, in the fields, yea even in the public house, and certainly among religionists were centred upon the happenings at "La Rocque", the name of the house. It means "The Rock", a very apt name indeed! The blessing continued throughout the winter. Conversions continued and interest in the Word was most keen, the new converts being most eager to learn more and more.

It was most uplifting and encouraging to see the people gathered in very good time choosing hymns and singing them before the service began.

Volumes might be written of the conversations which took place during this winter, spiritual conversations both with saved and unsaved being the rule.

This record would not be complete without reference to at least two notable conversions. Of the people most averse to these meetings was the Blacksmith near whose smithy the gamblers used to meet. Some of the new converts invaded his workshop and tried to persuade him to accompany them to the meetings. He flatly refused, and in very forcible language declared that we were all a pack of madmen.

One evening as the preacher was speaking, he saw a strange face furtively looking through the window. On making inquiries later he was told that this was the notorious blacksmith, who had mixed with the crown outside in order to hear.

A few evenings after the missionary saw him inside seated by his wife looking very sheepish and uncomfortable. The preacher presumed that he had probably been pressed by his wife to attend the service. One evening he joined himself to some of the men who were chatting to the speaker and even accompanied him part of the way home. He was deeply concerned about his soul. His smithy became the centre for conversation and little groups were often seen discussing spiritual things. His concern grew until he became near to distraction. One cold stormy November morning he left his house for the smithy. It was not yet day. His mind was so filled with conviction that it was only when he came to the gate that he found that he had forgotten his cap. He returned for it and started to walk to his shop about two miles distant. It was still dark, and as he was praying and looking at the clouds fleeting across the moon, suddenly by faith he saw Christ crucified for him. The light shone into his soul, and instead of proceeding to his work, he was knocking on people's doors telling them the good news. The preacher knew nothing of this until the evening. He was met by some of the young men who told him of the smith's conversion. One look at him from the doorway as he entered was enough to prove the reality of the change. He sat there with the joy of salvation radiating from his face.

Another young man, a habitual drunkard was persuaded to attend the meetings. His face bore unmistakeable marks of the effects of strong drink. Every penny he could spare was spent at the public house and he had no respectable clothes to his back. No one would sit near him at the

meetings but he sat alone and drank in the Word. One evening the missionary accosted him and walked part of the way with him. He also was concerned about his state as a sinner. One day it was voiced that he was saved. The drinking ceased and it was a joy to see him enter the house one Sunday afternoon a few weeks after in a brand new suit, new shoes, and a new jersey.

Sometime afterwards he arrived with a parcel under his arm. On unwrapping it he presented us with a framed picture of 'The Gospel Ship'. Each part of the ship and its rigging had an appropriate text of Scripture printed on it. This was hung in the room. Some years later when we moved from the cottage to our present Gospel Hall, the picture found an honoured place on its walls.

This young man courted and married a very fine Christian girl. He became an ideal, loving husband, and they lived happily together. But the years of dissipation had told on his frame and he succumbed to tuberculosis sometime after. It was a joy to visit him on his deathbed and to see the joy and peace with which he anticipated his removal. The wolf had indeed been turned into a lamb, by Divine Grace.

'Did the converts stand?' may well be asked. They could not be counted by great numbers as today, no record of their numbers was made. Where did they go after this? Some joined themselves to existing churches, but some remained with us when a few years after it was necessary to vacate the cottage and the work was transferred to the present Gospel Hall at Le Planel.

It is regretted that no steps were taken at the time to gather the converts into a Christian Church or assembly. The writer must confess that he had, at that time, but a hazy view of Church formation, and was a bitter opponent of baptism by immersion for believers. He now sees his mistake and although rather late would be pleased to carry on the work which was then only begun. He feels that it is essential for converts to confess their faith at the outset, it is scriptural. They must be united together for worship, fellowship, prayer, and to remember the Lord in the ordinance of the Lord's Supper. They should be under the care of a God-sent under-shepherd or pastor. In this we failed. Nevertheless these converts when met with still remember with joy those experiences and though the flames may be burning low the fire is not extinguished. Some have died giving a good testimony of the hope that was in them. Some are attached to various churches.

The missionary feels that he must pay high tribute to the noble way in which a band of Christians supported him by their prayers, their presence, and their loyalty. Never once did they question any step taken by the evangelist; but believing him to be God's chosen vessel, they looked upon every step of the way as ordained by the Lord.

Praise should also be given to the Lord for the way in which He furnished the message at short notice at times. To speak to the same people always, on at least three evenings a week with two special missions of three weeks and two weeks each is difficult, but the Lord provided the matter as it was needed. It

might be a matter of interest that the meetings were always in French; but much use was made of the Guernsey 'patois' or dialect when it was deemed expedient to make some point clearer. English was also used.

Much to the surprise of the speaker not a single word of abuse or derision was heard from anyone, although he had feared this. He has to confess that the opposition came from religionists, but like our Lord 'The common people heard him gladly'.

It may be asked: 'Why write about this so many years after?' Just recently, 1957, my thoughts have gone back to these happy days of which I had kept no record. I had even forgotten the dates. On phoning a Christian brother who helped me much during those blessed days, he discovered amongst some old papers, a dilapidated exercise book in which I had written much of the foregoing, over thirty years ago. I had quite forgotten about this and did I not recognise my own handwriting I could not believe that I had written it.

Added to this, I paid a visit, recently, to a fisherman in that vicinity. In the course of conversation he asked me whether I could furnish him with a hymn book such as we used in the cottage years ago.

'I love to sing those hymns,' said he. 'Those were happy days, we seemed to be in heaven. But things have gone very low. Oh, for such days again!'

These words fired me with a desire for a return to such days.

The spiritual situation is indeed sad, even in the most evangelical and orthodox

circles. Too long have we lived upon the laurels and memories of such men as Luther, Calvin, the Reformers, the Puritans, the Wesleys, Whitefield, Romaine, Grimshaw, Philpot, Gadsby, Kershaw, Warburton. But we cannot thrive on the experiences of their day. Our generation is in dire need of a God-sent revival. Causes of truth have vanished and those that remain are in a low, sickly, dying condition. Have we not need to confess as the disciples of old: 'We have toiled all night and caught nothing'? Have we not need to cry with the psalmist: 'Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee?' (Psalm 85.6)?

May the Lord grant it in our day. Revival, true revival, is not man-made, man-organised. Man cannot produce revival at will. Such a visitation is in the hands of a Sovereign God, who ordains the place, the time, and the instruments, that man may not glory, but say again with the psalmist (Psalm 115.1), 'Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto they name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake',

ELIJAH AND THE RAVENS

1 Kings xvii.

*From "Bishop Hall's Contemplations"
by Joseph Hall (1574-1656)*

Who should be matched with Moses in the hill of Tabor but Elijah? Surely next after Moses there was never any prophet of the Old Testament more glorious than he.

None more glorious, none more obscure. The other prophets are not mentioned

without the name of their parent, for the mutual honour both of the father and the son ; Elijah, as if he had been a son of the earth, comes forth with the bare mention of the place of his birth. Meanness of descent is no block in God's way to the most honourable vocations. It matters not whose son he be whom God will grace with his service. In the greatest honours that human nature is capable of God forgets our parents : as, when we shall be raised up to a glorious life, there shall be no respect had to the loins whence we came, so it is proportionally in these spiritual advancements.

These times were fit for an Elijah; an Elijah was fit for them. The eminentest prophet is reserved for the corruptest age. Israel had never such a king as Ahab for impiety, never so miraculous a prophet as Elijah: this Elijah is addressed to this Ahab. The God of spirits knows how to proportion men to the occasions; and to raise up to himself such witnesses as may be most able to convince the world: a mild Moses was for the low estate of afflicted Israel; mild of spirit, but mighty in wonders; mild of spirit, because he had to do with a persecuted, and yet a techy and perverse people; mighty in wonders, because he had to do with a Pharaoh : a grave and holy Samuel was for the quiet consistence of Israel: a fiery spirited Elijah was for the desperatest declination of Israel : and if in the late times of the depraved condition of his Church God have raised up some spirits that have been more warm and stirring than those of common mould, we cannot censure the choice when we see the service.

The first word that we hear from Elijah is

an oath, and a threat to Ahab, to Israel; As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word. He comes in like a tempest who went out in a whirlwind. Doubtless he had spoken fair and peaceable invitations to Israel, though we hear them not: this was but the storm which followed his repulse, their obstinacy. After many solicitations and warnings Israel is stricken by the same tongue that had prayed for it. Elijah dares avouch these judgments to their head, to Ahab.

I do not so much wonder at the boldness of Elijah as at his power; yea, who sees his power can no whit wonder at his boldness. How could he be but bold to the face of a man who was thus powerful with God ? As if God had lent him the keys of heaven, to shut it up and open it at pleasure, he can say, There shall be neither dew nor rain these years, but according to my word. O God, how far it hath pleased thee to communicate thyself to a weak man ! What angel could ever say thus ? Thy hand, O Lord, is not shortened. Why art thou not thus marvellous in the ministers of thy gospel?

Is it for that their miracles were ours ? Is it for that thou wouldest have us live by faith, not by sense ? Is it for that our task is spiritual, and therefore more abstracted from bodily helps ? We cannot command the sun with Joshua, nor the thunder with Samuel, nor the rain with Elijah : it shall content us if we can fix the Sun of Righteousness in the soul; if we can thunder out the judgments of God against sin ; if we can water the earthen hearts of

men with the former and latter rain of heavenly doctrine.

Elijah's mantle cannot make him forget his flesh. While he knows himself a prophet, he remembers to be a man; he doth not therefore arrogate his power as his own, but publisheth it as his Master's. This restraint must be according to his word; and that word was from an higher mouth than his. He spake from Him by whom he swore, whose word was sure as his life; and therefore he durst say, As the Lord liveth, there shall be no ram. Man only can denounce what God will execute; which when it is once revealed can no more fail than the Almighty himself.

He that had this interest and power in heaven, what needed he flee from an earthly pursuit? Could his prayers restrain the clouds and not hold the hands of flesh and blood? Yet behold, Elijah must flee from Ahab, and hide him by the brook Cherith. The wisdom of God doth not think fit so to make a beaten path of miracles as that he will not walk beside it. He will have our own endeavours concur to our preservation. Elijah wanted neither courage of heart nor strength of hand, and yet he must trust to his feet for safety. How much more lawful is it for our impotence to flee from persecution! Even that God sends him to hide his head who could as easily have protected as nourished him. He that wilfully stands still to latch dangers tempteth God instead of trusting him.

The prophet must be gone; not without order taken for his purveyance. O the strange caterers for Elijah; / have commanded the ravens to feed thee thure.

I know not whether had been more miraculous, to preserve him without meat, or to provide meat by such mouths. The raven, a devouring and ravenous fowl, that uses to snatch away meat from others, brings it to him. He that could have fed Elijah by angels will feed him by ravens. There was then in Israel an hospitable Obadiah, that kept a secret table in two several caves for an hundred prophets of God. There were seven thousand faithful Israelites, in spite of the devil, who had never bowed knee to Baal. Doubtless, any of these would have had a trencher ready for Elijah, and have thought himself happy to have defrauded his own maw for so noble a prophet. God rather chooses to make use of the most unlikely fowls of the air than their bounty, that he might give both to his prophet and us a pregnant proof of his absolute command over all his creatures, and win our trust in all extremities. Who can make question of the provisions of God, when he sees the very ravens shall forget their own hunger, and purvey for Elijah? O God, thou, that providest meat for the fowls of the air, wilt make the fowls of the air provide meat for man, rather than his dependence on thee shall be disappointed. O let not our faith be wanting to thee; thy care can never be wanting to us.

Elijah might have lived for the time with bread and water, neither had his fare been worse than his fellows in the caves of Obadiah; but the munificence of God will have his meals better furnished; the ravens shall bring him both bread and flesh twice in the day. It is not for a persecuted prophet to long after delicates. God gives order for

competency, not for wantonness. Not out of the dainty compositions in Jezebel's kitchen, not out of the pleasant wines in her cellar, would God provide for Elijah; but the ravens shall bring him plain and homely victuals, and the river shall afford him drink. If we have wherewith to sustain nature, though not to pamper it, we owe thanks to the Giver. Those of God's family may not be curious, not disdainful. Ill doth it become a servant of the Highest to be a slave to his palate. Doubtless, one bit from the mouth of the raven was more pleasing to Elijah than a whole tableful of Ahab. Nothing is more comfortable to God's children than to see the sensible demonstrations of the divine care and providence.

The brook Cherith cannot last always. That stream shall not, for Elijah's sake, be exempted from the universal exsiccation; yea, the prophet himself feels the smart of this drought which he had denounced. It is no unusual thing with God to suffer his own dear children to be enwrapped in the common calamities of offenders. He makes difference in the use and issue of their stripes, not in the infliction. The corn is cut down with the weeds, but to a better purpose.

When the brook fails, God hath a Zarephath for Elijah: instead of the ravens, a widow shall there feed him; yea, herself by him. Who can enough wonder at the pitch of this selective providence of the Almighty! Zarephath was a town of Sidon, and therefore without the pale of the Church. Poverty was the best of this widow: she was a pagan by birth, heathenishly superstitious by institution. Many widows were in

Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; but unto none of them was Ettas sent, save unto this Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. He that first fed the prophet by the mouth of unclean fowls will now feed him by the hand of an heathenish hostess. His only command sanctifies those creatures which by a general charge were legally impure.

There were other birds besides ravens, other widows besides this Sareptan; none but the ravens, none but the Sareptan, shall nourish Elijah. God's choice is not led in the string of human reasons. His holy will is the guide and the ground of all his elections. It is not in him that wills, nor in him that runs, but in God that shows mercy.

Quotes

It is a rare piece of Christian wisdom to turn those passions of the soul which most predominate into spiritual channels, to turn natural anger into spiritual zeal, natural mirth into holy cheerfulness, and natural fear into a holy dread and awe of God. **John Flavel**

He who fears God can never find a place dark enough to offend.

William Jenkyn

As the embankment keeps out the water, so the fear of the Lord keeps out uncleanness. **Thomas Watson**

The best way never to fall is ever to fear. **William Jenkyn**

William Wilberforce

This year marks the Bicentenary of the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act. Although it would be another 30 years before slaves gained their final freedom - when slavery was abolished throughout the British Empire - the Bicentenary gives the opportunity to remember the millions who suffered and to pay tribute to the courage and moral conviction of all those – black and white – who campaigned for abolition.

But there is one name that stands out in the accomplishment of this and that name is William Wilberforce.

In “The Tale of Two Cities”, Charles Dickens wrote about the eighteenth century in England and France as “the best of times and the worst of times.” For the wealthy, life was very good. The evening entertainment in the clubs of England included theatre, gambling and women. Servants for the wealthy were plentiful. Yet, on the other hand, times for others were tough. The Industrial Revolution had just begun. Children were burdened in enforced labour, often working 15 to 16 hour days under unsafe conditions. Some worked in the new textile mills, others as chimney sweeps. Only 25 percent of children made it to adulthood. For stealing a scarf, children were executed. Public hanging was entertainment of the day for which people paid money to get the best seats.

But the biggest evil of the day, that of slavery in the plantations of the West Indies, was the unseen evil. Eleven million human beings had been captured

and taken from Africa to the West Indies to work in slavery and bondage. Britain had the biggest portion of the slave trade. Their sufferings were horrific and many Africans did not even survive to voyage either dying from sickness or were thrown overboard alive so that ship owners could collect insurance.

This was the world into which William Wilberforce was born on 24th August 1759 in Hull to Robert and Elizabeth Wilberforce. The Wilberforces belonged to a very old, honourable and wealthy Yorkshire family and as the only son William was set to inherit a fortune. At the age of eight he commenced two years at Hull Grammar School, where he showed much promise. But within a year, death claimed his older sister Elizabeth and also his father, to whom he had been close. Elizabeth was pregnant at the time of her husband's death, and she subsequently became very ill.

So William was sent to live with his Uncle William and Aunt Hannah in London. They had no children of their own, and heaped love upon their nephew. More importantly though the couple were much influenced by George Whitefield, and John Newton was a regular visitor to their home, even preaching for them there. Young William began to be affected by this evangelical environment, and this change was reflected in letters home to Yorkshire. This was not good news to his mother or his grandfather who said, "If Billy turns Methodist, he shan't have a sixpence of mine". Therefore Mrs Wilberforce came to take Billy home, in

her own words 'to rescue him' and to teach him to 'cherish the love of pleasure'.

Back in Hull, the family purged William's mind of all thoughts of what they called "enthusiasm" by subjecting him to a succession of visits to the theatre, balls, dinners and card-parties. He was sent to Pocklington Grammar Scholl near York, where he read much, he loved the classics, but lived mainly in idleness and pleasure. Attending many social events where his fine singing voice was in great demand.

William entered St John's College, Cambridge in October 1776 with an unhealthy mix of religious scepticism, few moral principles and a fortune which he had inherited from his Uncle William. He gambled, drank and danced. He was told that he didn't need to work hard because he was so wealthy, but he did continue to read much. He mourned over these lost college years for the greater part of his life. However, he had better company for his final two years, when his amiability and hospitality made him a favourite — there was always a Yorkshire pie in his rooms of which all could partake!

He was also ambitious and, having struck up a friendship with William Pitt (the Prime Minister to be) at Cambridge, began to see himself as a Member of Parliament. At the grand old age of 21 he was elected as MP for Hull, having spent over £8000 in the campaign that's about £1 million in today's currency (mostly spent on buying electors vote, something which was prevalent in those days).

For several years he frequented London clubs, associating with the aristocracy and indulging in the common pastime of card playing. However on day when he was banker in a game, he won £600 from some who could ill afford it, and this caused him to abandon this amusement for ever.

His friendship with Pitt grew, and for a time Pitt lived at Wilberforce's Wimbledon villa. On a shooting foray at Kingston Lacy in the summer of 1783, Wilberforce, with his weak eyesight, nearly shot Pitt — and was later teased about it. They later took a trip to France and met Marie Antoinette and Louis XVI. In the autumn of 1784 Wilberforce commenced a continental tour for a year. His first choice of travelling companion was unable to go, but an unexpected meeting with Isaac Milner, who had been his teacher at the Hull Grammar School, led Wilberforce to invite him, and he accepted. Even before they departed it became apparent that Milner had very decidedly evangelical views. On this account, Wilberforce regretted the invitation he had given, but was too proud to withdraw it.

Their discussions revealed that Milner had a good understanding of Christian doctrine and was able to back up his statements from the Bible. This meant Wilberforce was hard pressed to answer Milner's arguments. On the return journey they used the time to read together Philip Doddridge's *The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul*, which deeply affected Wilberforce. He put all his doubts, objections, and

difficulties to Milner, and slowly his mind was changed, but not his heart.

But by the time they returned home in October 1785, Wilberforce was under conviction of sin. He longed for peace with God and knew it could only come through Christ: saying 'True, Lord, I am wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked. What infinite love, that Christ should die to save such a sinner, and how necessary is it he should save us altogether, that we may appear before God with nothing of our own!'

He made a secret visit to John Newton, in fact he was so nervous he walked twice around the square before he dared to knock on the door, Newton told him he had not ceased to pray for him, and helped him to see that he could serve Christ in politics. He later prayed: 'Oh my God, for the sake of thy beloved Son, our propitiation, through whom we may have access to the throne of grace, give me a new heart'. By Easter 1786 he had experienced the completion of his "great change" which he regarded as the sign of true conversion.

William Wilberforce was viewed as an enigma by some of his contemporaries: a popular but small and sickly man whose single-handed energy and determination helped to eventually overcome the powerful pro-slavery lobby in Parliament and compel the abolition of the slave trade. James Boswell (1740–1795), Samuel Johnson's official biographer (who had been present at the dinner when it had first been suggested that he take up the slave's cause), later witnessed Wilberforce's eloquence in the

House of Commons, and noted: "I saw what seemed a mere shrimp mount upon the table; but as I listened, he grew, and grew, until the shrimp became a whale."

In 1792 Wilberforce shared a house with his cousin Henry Thornton in Clapham, and before long a group of influential, mainly evangelical, Anglicans were meeting to promote the cause of Abolition and Christian teaching at home and overseas. This 'circle' was later called the Clapham Sect. They secured John Venn as Rector of Holy Trinity — an able evangelical preacher who helped found the Church Missionary Society.

Wilberforce, concerned for the souls of his friends in the higher and middle classes, frequently engaged them in serious conversation — seeking to devise what he called 'launchers' or openings to witness to the gospel.

To make his own beliefs clear and to challenge their largely nominal Christianity with the true gospel, he published *Practical Christianity* in 1797. To those relying on their good works for salvation he declared, 'Christianity is a scheme for "justifying the ungodly" by Christ's dying for them "when yet sinners" [and] for making the fruits of holiness the effects, not the cause, of our being justified and reconciled'.

Copies were sent to his contacts and, through an intermediary, to the royal household. John Newton exclaimed, 'Such a book by such a man, and at such a time!' It will 'be read by persons in higher circles — who will neither hear

what we can say, nor read what we may write’.

The following year he met Barbara Ann Spooner, of Elmdon Hall, Warwickshire. On 23 April he wrote: ‘I believe her to be a real Christian, affectionate, sensible, rational in habits, moderate in desires and pursuits; capable of bearing prosperity without intoxication, and adversity without repining. If I have been precipitate, forgive me, O God’.

Six weeks later they married on 30 May 1797. She was 20, he 38. She bore him six children and his family gave him the greatest pleasure, so at the end he could say, ‘What more could any man wish at the close of his life, than to be attended by his own children, and his own wife, and all treating him with such uniform kindness and affection’.

He established a pattern of morning and evening family prayers, attended also by his 14 servants. In the morning, he read sequentially a portion of the Scriptures, generally of the New Testament, explaining it eloquently — and ‘always with affectionate earnestness and an extraordinary knowledge of God’s word’.

Henry Martyn (the missionary and translator of the New Testament in to Urdu and Persian) observed on a visit in 1804, ‘At evening worship Mr Wilberforce expounded sacred Scripture with plainness, and prayed in the midst of his large household’. Nine years later Wilberforce notes, ‘We have heard of excellent Martyn’s death in Persia, on his

way to the Mediterranean homewards. It is a mysterious Providence’.

Wilberforce was one of the most regular of MPs in his attendance in the House of Commons, and served on many parliamentary committees. He was a persistent campaigner for parliamentary reform and constantly attacked the system under which members were elected, which had become corrupt. And, as time went on, he came to be regarded as keeper of the nation’s conscience, to the extent that a speech was expected from him on almost every motion. On one occasion, Richard Sheridan (the playwright and MP for Stafford), on hearing a rumour that Wilberforce was retiring from politics, stopped him and protested “Though you and I have not much agreed in our votes in the House of Commons, yet I thought the independent part you acted would render your retirement a public loss.”

Although most remembered for his work towards the abolition of slavery, Wilberforce was also concerned with other matters of social reform. He wrote in his personal journals, “God Almighty has set before me two great objects, the suppression of the Slave Trade and the Reformation of Manners.” (Manners = Morality in the English of that time). It was at the suggestion of Wilberforce, together with Bishop Porteus and other churchmen, that the Archbishop of Canterbury requested King George III to issue his Proclamation for the Discouragement of Vice in 1787, which he saw as a remedy for what he saw as the rising tide of immorality and vice.

A Society for the Reformation of Manners was founded to oppose profanation of the Sabbath; swearing and drunkenness; licentious publications; and unlicensed places of public entertainment. Positively, he promoted education amongst the poor, helped found and support the British and Foreign Bible Society, and regularly gave away between a quarter and a third of his income both privately and to charitable causes.

When Wilberforce's friends assembled at Battersea Rise after the second reading of the Bill for Abolition of slavery had passed the Commons by a huge majority, Wilberforce turned to Thornton and said, "Well, Henry! What shall we abolish now?" Thornton solemnly replied, "The Lottery, I think." Eventually owing to the efforts of this group the Lottery did go, but Wilberforce's "reformation of manners" embraced far more than that. One has only to contrast the picture of eighteenth-century society as given at the beginning of this essay with the sobriety and high moral standards of early Victorian England to realize that a great transformation had taken place, and had taken place within an even shorter period than is usually recognized.

In 1829, Francis Place, who was no friend to Evangelical religion, wrote: "I am certain I risk nothing when I assert that more good has been done to the people in the last thirty years than in the three preceding centuries; that during this period they have become wiser, better, more frugal, more honest, more respectable, more virtuous than they

ever were before." For this transformation John Wesley was partly responsible, and Wilberforce and his friends built on Wesley's foundations, bringing their influence to bear in circles which the Methodists could never hope to reach.

He was also involved in other campaigns:

He succeeded in suggesting additional clauses to the British East India Company's Charter enabling the company to employ religious teachers with the aim of 'introducing Christian light into India'.

Wilberforce was also a founding member of the Church Missionary Society, as well as the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (now the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals). He also gave his support to local projects and was treasurer to a nearby charity school while he was living in Wimbledon.

In 1824, Wilberforce suffered a serious illness which led to his resignation of his parliamentary seat and he moved to a small estate in Mill Hill, north of London, in 1826. This resulted in his health improving somewhat. In his retirement he continued his passionate support for the anti-slavery cause, to which he had given his life. He also maintained an active correspondence with his extensive circle of friends.

By 1833 his health had begun to decline. He suffered a severe attack of influenza and never fully recovered. On 26 July

1833, he heard and rejoiced at the news that the bill for the abolition of slavery had finally passed its third reading in the Commons. On the following day, he grew much weaker and died early on the morning of 29 July. One month later, Parliament passed the Slavery Abolition Act which gave all slaves in the British Empire their freedom.

William Wilberforce was buried in Westminster Abbey on 3 August 1833. The funeral was attended by many members from both Houses of Parliament, as well as many members of the public. The pall bearers included the Lord Chancellor and the Duke of Gloucester.

A statue to the memory of Wilberforce was erected in Westminster Abbey in 1840, bearing the epitaph:

"To the memory of William Wilberforce (born in Hull, August 24th 1759, died in London, July 29th 1833); for nearly half a century a member of the House of Commons, and, for six parliaments during that period, one of the two representatives for Yorkshire. In an age and country fertile in great and good men, he was among the foremost of those who fixed the character of their times; because to high and various talents, to warm benevolence, and to universal candour, he added the abiding eloquence of a Christian life. Eminent as he was in every department of public labour, and a leader in every work of charity, whether to relieve the temporal or the spiritual wants of his fellow-men, his name will ever be specially identified with those exertions which, by the

blessing of God, removed from England the guilt of the African slave trade, and prepared the way for the abolition of slavery in every colony of the empire: in the prosecution of these objects he relied, not in vain, on God; but in the progress he was called to endure great obloquy and great opposition: he outlived, however, all enmity; and in the evening of his days, withdrew from public life and public observation to the bosom of his family. Yet he died not unnoticed or forgotten by his country: the Peers and Commons of England, with the Lord Chancellor and the Speaker at their head, in solemn procession from their respective houses, carried him to his fitting place among the mighty dead around, here to repose: till, through the merits of Jesus Christ, his only redeemer and saviour, (whom, in his life and in his writings he had desired to glorify,) he shall rise in the resurrection of the just."

William Wilberforce was an extraordinary man and a wonderful Christian. Oh that God would raise up men of his ilk today especially in the realms of government. We also can learn much from his examples of: True conversion, Sacrificial Spirit, Perseverance, and Evangelism.

The A.V. - An Open Letter

Dear Friends

As you will know, the A.V. New Testament is a translation of a Greek Text compiled by Erasmus and other scholars from Scripture copies used in the Eastern churches throughout the Byzantine period of church history and which, in the providence of God, became available at the time of the Reformation. The Greek Text then produced is known as the Reformation Text, the Received Text (Textus Receptus) - also the Majority Text because the majority of Scripture copies support it. This Reformation Text is the text from which the King James Version of 1611 I was translated.

In the 19th century a new Greek text of the New Testament was produced by two bishops, Dr. Westcott and Dr. Hort. They compiled this new New Testament text, not from Mss. like those available at the time of the Reformation, but from three well preserved copies found in the Vatican, in a monastery at the base of Mount Sinai and in the library in Alexandria. They alleged that these three Greek Scriptures were older than those available to Erasmus and that, therefore, they were more accurate representatives of the original autographs enabling these two bishops to produce a New Testament far superior to that of the A.V.

They went further than that! They criticised the A.V. for its having been translated from a totally unreliable Greek text. Bishop Hort is reported to have referred to the Reformation Text as "that vile Textus Receptus. This hostile view of the A.V. is still held by modernist Bible

critics and by many of those who are responsible for producing modern versions of the Bible. For example, the New English Bible, of 1961 declarers in its Introduction :- " The Revised Version, which appeared in 1881, marked a new departure especially in that it abandoned the so called Received Text which had reigned ever since printed editions of the New Testament began, but which the advance of textual criticism had antiquated. The Revisers no longer followed (like their predecessors) the text of the majority of manuscripts, which, being for the most part of late date, had been exposed not only to the accidental corruptions of long- continued copying, but also in part to deliberate correction and 'improvement'. Instead they followed a very small group of manuscripts, the earliest, and in their judgement the best, of those which had survived ."

Now those of us who continue to read and revere the A.V. Bible do so, not because we are obsessed with its language, but because we absolutely disagree with the position of modernist translators - that the A.V. is full of "accidental corruptions" and "deliberate correction and improvement". Such scurrilous attacks upon the Word which God has used throughout the centuries to save and sanctify His people are surely born of a wisdom which is earthly. sensual and devilish. It is our Christian duty to oppose it.

Those who, like Westcott and Hort and producers of modern versions, regard the Reformation text as unreliable do so because they fail to trace the providential hand of God preserving it down through the ages. So their opinion is that only the

original autographs are inspired. Whereas the Westminster Confession asserts of the Scriptures that they were "immediately inspired by God and by His singular care and providence kept pure in all ages". Dr. John Owen states "that every letter and tittle of the word of God remains in the copies preserved by his merciful providence for the use of his church".

When our blessed Lord and Saviour quoted, commended, and preached the Old Testament Scriptures as the infallible, inerrant, inspired words of God He did not qualify His teaching by telling His hearers that it was only the original autographs that He was extolling and commending, and that the copies of Moses and the Prophets which they possessed were unreliable because of much copying. He assumed in His teaching the verbal inspiration and the providential preservation of the words of the Old Testament Without reservation or qualification He told them to search their Scriptures (copies) because these were they which testified of Him and in them they would find eternal life.

The scholarly and godly 19th. century Dean John Burgon (1813-1888) who successfully defended the A.V. and the

Majority Text against the criticisms of his day wrote and proved that it is not that God preserved text which is corrupt and unreliable but rather the one compiled by bishops Westcot and Hort . Concerning the three codeces from which their text was derived he wrote :- "They are three of the most scandalously corrupt copies extant. They exhibit the most shamefully mutilated texts which are anywhere to be met with and have become, by whatever process (for their history is wholly unknown) the depositories of the largest amount of fabricated readiness ancient blunders, and intentional perversions of of Truth - which are discoverable in any known copies of the Word of God" ('The Revision Revised' - Dean J.W.Burgon).

The scholarly and exhaustive case presented by Burgon and other apologists is one which some of us find overwhelmingly correct. We offer this brief account of it in order to show that we have convictions concerning the A.V. which are neither triviality nor bibliority, but to us, of the utmost importance since they concern the veracity and the authority of the Word of God.

Yours sincerely
Rev. H. Clement

EPILOGUE

'If I had not come' *John 15:22*

Do you ever look back and remember some event in your life, which if it had not taken place would have changed the whole course of your life?

Some time ago, I read a book called 'Revolving Doors', and I believe a film was made of it. The book basically showed events in a woman's life, but then we are given flashbacks of a parallel life that she might have lived had she made a different choice in her life. We are shown in the book the possibility of two lives in one person, one ending happily and the other unhappily. All of us can trace decisions

that we made in our own lives and mused on the possibility: “What if I had not taken that particular course of action, what would have been the outcome?”

We can widen this on a much larger scale. The history of our nation would have been so different if the wind that blew up the English Channel one day in 1558, and which scattered the invading Spanish Armada, had blown from a different direction. Britain would probably have become a Roman Catholic nation under Spanish domination. If Mitchell had died before he completed his plans for the Spitfire, the Battle of Britain would have been lost and the outcome does not bare thinking about. Well the possibilities are endless.

Surely the most frightening ‘If’ of all comes from the lips of our Lord Jesus Christ when he said, “What if I had not come?” In its context, Christ is showing the Jews how much guiltier they are now than before he had come with the gospel message. For they are now in greater condemnation than they were before Christ came with the gospel message. This obviously applies to all who have heard the preaching of the gospel during their lives, but have either rejected it or refuse to act upon it. They too are like the Jews in greater condemnation, than if they had not heard the ‘Good News’ of the Gospel.

Let us imagine if Christ had not come into this world it would have been even worse and more sinful than it is now. Can you conceive of the world where mankind would have no consciousness of a loving, righteous God, and a redeemer who has atoned for our sins? Can you imagine a world without Christian love, mercy, kindness, and compassion? Can you imagine a world where there had never been great preachers, reformers, and hymn writers? Can you imagine a world without chapels or churches to worship in? In such a world there would have been no Handel’s ‘Messiah’, no Mendelssohn’s ‘Elijah’, and no Haydn’s ‘Creation’. It would have been a world without any great religious artists and Michelangelo’s great ‘Last Judgement’ would never have been painted. Imagine however a world without a Bible and without salvation, and without a Saviour.

But praise be to God, the Lord Jesus Christ did come into this sad and sinful world, to bring Heaven within our grasp through Christ’s atoning death on Calvary’s cross. Just as we read about the women in the book ‘Revolving Doors’ an offer is also made to us of an alternative to the life that we were born into. But this life is one that is offered to us by God. The Bible refers to it as the new life in Christ Jesus.

At this time of the year we remember particularly that Christ did come into this world as the Apostle John writes: “The word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us and we beheld his glory...” for this we are eternally thankful.

Rev. R..B. Higham.