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**A letter written by  
Rev. Henry Venn –  
To Miss Hudson**

My dear Miss Hudson, *Kippax,*  
*March 7, 1763*

**I**n my last letter, I endeavoured to lay before you, as considerations peculiarly suited to your present distressed state, the manner in which a most gracious God has been used to deal with His most beloved children, and the manner also in which they expressed their feeling of His afflicting hand. I shall now point out some of those views and purposes for which believers in Christ Jesus are often touched in the most sensible part, and much acquainted with grief,

**F**irstly: The first reason is, to wean them from all expectations of happiness from any other quarter than God himself. No words are strong enough to paint the proneness there is, in the very heirs of salvation, to set up resting-places here upon earth. And though they are delivered from the base and sordid love of money, or the poor gratifications which can be gleaned from the honours and pleasures of the world, still they are apt to make Christian friends and relations, idols; and so the strength of their affections, which should centre and settle all in God, is by this means very much weakened and divided. Though we discern not this ourselves, nor suspect it, our

Divine Physician fully sees the growth of the distemper; and, in love, we are separated from our idols. Disappointments meet us at every turn: where we expected we should be particularly favoured with helps and advantages for godly living, we behold ourselves left destitute; so that we have no more a place of refuge upon earth, no more a dear counsellor or friend who is as our own soul. By this means we are compelled, as Noah's dove was, by the wide watery waste, which did not afford a single resting place, to fly to the Ark, and to take shelter there. Our gracious Father, with a loving jealousy over us, thus secures our whole love to Himself, and appears altogether glorious in our eyes; as the fountain of living waters, when the cisterns are broken which we were hewing out for ourselves.

**S**econdly: It pleases God to afflict very heavily those who are his dear children by faith in Christ, that they may more value the choice they have made. When they see the most innocent, nay, the most laudable, satisfactions they could possibly propose to themselves from any creature-comfort, all shivered in pieces, as it were in a moment, and water of gall spring up from that very person or thing from which they promised themselves abundance of joy; in such a situation, how infinitely desirable a connexion with Jehovah, never to have an end – a union

with Him, which is as far above all the changes of this mortal life as heaven is higher than the earth! This must be apprehended as the chief of all blessings – a portion of itself sufficient. Then the souls of the faithful are taught experimentally to say –“Vanity of vanities! all is vanity,” but Christ and His love! “Lord, to whom shall we go?” from whence expect refreshment and consolation, but from Thyself alone? “All my fresh springs shall be in Thee!”

**T**hirdly: The dear children of God are afflicted in the most sensible part, in answer to their own prayers. As our Redeemer said to Zebedee’s children, “Ye know not what ye ask! Are ye able to be baptised with the baptism that I am baptised with?” so may it be said of all believers. They all pray that they may be delivered from every accursed thing, and be formed and fashioned according to the will of God in all things. This prayer they put up in integrity of their souls. It is accepted of God; and He answers it. He brings them into various troubles, that these may work in them patience, and patience experience, and experience hope. He thwarts their own will, where it most vehemently sought to be gratified; and so, at length, moulds them into that self-denying spirit, which is the proper state of a sinner before a God infinitely wise and holy.

**F**orthly: The dear children of God are afflicted in the most sensible

manner, that they may know more deeply the evil of sin. Of this evil we have, at best, but very slight conceptions. But when we feel the chastening and correction, knowing, at the same time, it is not the stroke of an enemy, nor the wound of a cruel one, but the very medicine to heal our disease; then we are led to confess, sin must be exceeding sinful, since God never willingly grieves nor afflicts the children of men; since He rebukes for sin, and scourges us for our offences; that, being chastened of the Lord, we may not be condemned with the world; that we go on our way weeping for a season, and in heaviness, if need be, in order that we may return again with joy, and bring our sheaves with us.

**L**astly: All the dear children of God are some time or other grievously afflicted, that they may be conformed to the image of their Saviour. How sorely afflicted and distressed inwardly was your dear brother, before he entered into glory! And there is not a Scripture saint mentioned, but drank, in some degree, of the cup which Jesus drank of, and was baptised with His baptism of sufferings; so that, were any of the faithful to want chastening, it would be almost sufficient to bring their title to Christ in question.

**T**he God of all grace help my dear friend to ponder these things in her heart, and make them of force, to support her mind from utterly failing!

Be of good cheer! For, though afflicted and distressed, remember, your warfare is accomplished, your iniquity is pardoned; you have received double for all your sins-in the abundance of the gift of grace, and of justification unto eternal life, by being brought into the bonds of the everlasting covenant.

**M**y dear wife remembers you in your affliction, as well as I do myself, daily before the Throne of Grace.

From your sincere friend and pastor in Christ.  
H. Venn

## **THE TRINITY IN SALVATION by John Bunyan**

**V**erily, sirs, it is necessary that you know these things distinctly - to wit, the grace of the Father, the grace of the Son, and the grace of the Holy Ghost; for it is not the grace of one, but of all these three, that saveth him that shall be saved indeed.

**T**he Father's grace saveth no man without the grace of the Son; neither doth the Father and the Son saveth any without the grace of the Spirit; for as the Father loves, the Son must die, and the Spirit must sanctify, or no soul must be saved.

**S**ome think that the love of the Father, without the blood of the

Son, will save them, but they are deceived; for "without the shedding of blood is no remission."

**S**ome think that the love of the Father and the blood of the Son will do, without the holiness of the Spirit of God; but they are deceived also; for "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His"; and again, "holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." There is a third sort, that think that the holiness of the Spirit is sufficient of itself; but they (if they had it) are deceived also; for it must be the grace of the Father, the grace of the Son, and the grace of the Spirit, jointly, that must save them.

**B**ut yet, as these three do put forth grace jointly and truly in the salvation of a sinner, so they put it forth after a diverse manner. The Father designs us for heaven, the Son redeems from sin and death, and the Spirit makes us meet for heaven; not by electing - that is the work of the Father; not by dying, that is the work of the Son; but by His revealing Christ and applying Christ to our souls, by shedding the love of God abroad in our hearts, by sanctifying of our souls, and taking possession of us as an earnest of our possession of heaven.

## **News of the Fellowship**

In November our oldest member, Mrs Polly Williams died at the age of 97. She had spent the last couple of years of her life at Cefn Hengoed Nursing Home. "Hailing" from Morryston she moved to Peniel Green road and became a member of the church before the days of the Rev. Luther Rees. Her husband died leaving her to bring up her ten year old son David. David's daughter Tracey fondly remembers staying with her grandmother on a Saturday night in order to be ready for the Lord's Day and Sunday school. Polly also delighted to be at the prayer meeting being in her seat by 6:30pm. As an older generation passes away let us pray that God will raise up another generation to serve him.

The Sunday school Christmas party was held on Saturday the 16<sup>th</sup> December with the children being treated to the customary games and food. We are thankful to God for the commitment and diligence of the Sunday school teachers.

Our open Sunday school followed the next day. An excellent afternoon congregation gathered including many parents to hear the children read and sing of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Rev. C. Jones presented clearly the coming of the wise men to worship the Lord Jesus. The challenge was issued to us to be wise and to similarly seek the Lord.

Our annual Christmas lunch was once again held at Llandarcy. The Rev. H. Clement followed up his illustration of last year by referring this time to the apparent disappearance of the robins. He traced this to the removal of a neighbour's hedge which effectively took away their protection and their place to stand. Mr Clement applied this to the present spiritual situation where in many churches the hedge of truth was removed thereby undermining that foundation upon which men can stand and truth where they can hide. Churches ought to be places where souls can be fed. We are thankful to Mr E. Williams for organising our afternoon.

On Thursday December 21<sup>st</sup> the Rev. D. P. Morris preached to us on the titles of the Lord Jesus Christ emphasising his eternal deity and

substitutionary atonement. His ministry was much appreciated. He has now taken up a role within the Protestant Truth Society. We wish him God's richest blessing in this work.

Thankfully, the following members have returned home after spells in hospital; Mr Jim Cumming, Mrs Mary Turner, Mr Betty Rowlands, Mrs May Williams and Mrs Marjorie Norris

## Diary

### Lord's Days:

#### March

4th	–	Rev. R. B. Higham	–	Communion - p.m
11th	–	Pastor		
18th	–	Pastor	–	Communion - a.m
25th	–	Pastor		

#### April

1st	–	Pastor	–	Communion - p.m
8th	–	Pastor		
15th	–	Rev. S. Holland		<i>(Westhoughton)</i>
22nd	–	Pastor	–	Communion - a.m
29th	–	Pastor		

#### May

6th	–	Pastor	–	Communion - p.m
13th	–	Pastor		
20th	–	Pastor	–	Communion - a.m
27th	–	Rev. J. Brooks		<i>(Ramsey)</i>

### Forthcoming:

April 6th, 7pm– Good Friday evening preaching service  
Rev. W. Hughes, Heath, Cardiff

## **New Hymn Book, New Worship, New Downgrade**

Mr. N. Pfeiffer gave the following address in November 2006.

There is no doubt that the hymn book 'Christian Hymns' has played an important role in Welsh evangelical life for the last thirty years or so. Its use gave us a kind of consensus in worship. Having the same hymn book we expressed the same truths in sung praise. Most, if not all, of the evangelical and reformed churches used it. We sang from it at the Aberystwyth conference.

I was personally persuaded of the Doctrines of Grace in the mid-eighties. I rejoiced to find a hymn book that accorded with this position and was led to the people who used it. It is my contention however, that the newly revised hymn book has damaged what unity existed. It is also a symptom of a decline and will contribute to further decline. To many our approach to the new hymn book is the very thing that is damaging unity. We are viewed as 'nit pickers'. At a conference the main preacher in an animated manner stated "how ridiculous to divide over a hymn book". In response to this disquiet I would respond with two questions. Firstly, who is separating and secondly, is what we sing of little consequence?

Taking up the second question I would state that saying that a hymn book is of little consequence is to say that what we offer to God is of little consequence. We read in Ecclesiastes 5:1 "Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil." We also read in Psalm 50:23 "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God."

It is apparent that in some quarters this new hymn book is gaining acceptance without critical evaluation. The compilers of it are trusted implicitly. Church leaders are followed blindly. Where is the spirit of discernment? I say again that the hymn book is a symptom of a decline that has been occurring over recent years. We might say it is evidence of a 'new modernism'. It's not doctrine that is apparently being attacked by the devil but practice. Many of the changes that we are witnessing are being dictated by the world and not by scripture.

Firstly then our title refers to a 'New Hymn Book'. The new hymn book is a revision of the old 'Christian Hymns' hymn book produced in 1977 under the guidance of Paul Cook and Graham Harrison, both noted ministers. This hymn book was slightly revised in 1985. The new edition was published in 2004. This project began some years before with churches being canvassed. Questionnaires were sent out to deduce what hymns were being sung by the

churches. Supplements were also sent for. In the opinion of many this was a false step. Rather than majoring on principle the editors were taking their lead from what was being sung at the time. I agree with Mr John Thackway who states that this would have been safer in the past when churches sang sounder hymns than the songs and hymns that are being sung at the present time. It is obvious that there has been a decline in worship.

As this process reached its climax many of us became disturbed by the possibility of the inclusion of new style worship songs by the likes of Graham Kendrick. Consequently I drew up a petition with the following wording:

“As men who have used and appreciated *Christian Hymns*, we wish to record our dismay at the proposed changes to the hymn book. We are particularly concerned about the inclusion of songs by Graham Kendrick, a known charismatic and ecumenist, and a section containing choruses. We do not believe that such represents our reformed ethos, but rather reflects a general decline in the state of the church. We cannot comment on the other changes, but in the light of our main concern, have fears in this quarter also. As the hymn book stands with its revision, we could not use it or encourage others to do so. We pray then, that at this belated stage, the board will revise their revision.”

Men of the stature of Alun McNabb, Paul Bassett, Omri Jenkins, John

Woollam, Mark Stocker, David Hay, Vernon Higham, Dewi Higham, Brian Higham, Hubert Clement, Dafydd Morris and many more signed. It was however too late, ‘The horse had already bolted’. The new hymn book was completed.

In terms of the actual hymns the precise figures are as follows. Old Christian Hymns had 901 hymns, new Christian Hymns 942. 186 Hymns have been removed and 227 new ones added. The division of the contents is the same apart from a new section of choruses added. Some poor hymns have been justifiably removed and some good ones added. There are however a number of removals that ‘raise the eyebrows’. These would include, for example, 189 “Thou Son of God and son of man” (J. Ryland), 195 “Who is this with joy approaching” (W. V. Higham), 207 “Go to dark Gethsemane” (J. Montgomery), 539 “Fountain of never ceasing grace” (A. Toplady), 596 “Dear Jesus, come my soul doth groan” (W. Williams) and others.

Furthermore old Christian Hymns had 18 metrical psalms. 7 of these have been removed and replaced by more hymn based psalms. These are in effect, looser renditions. We would argue that metrical psalms are better in that they are closer to the original words of scripture. We are commanded to sing psalms (Psalm 95:2).

The new Christian Hymns has 227 new pieces with a higher proportion from

living authors. This is significant. In the preface of the old book the compilers state that they had to draw on the past as “the general quality of hymn writing in the present century (20th) has not been of a high order”. One is left wondering, what has changed? Has God visited His church? Are these now days of spiritual blessing and revival? The answer is obvious. The decline continues. Many hymns then have been chosen from a period of spiritual backsliding. These new pieces reflect that declension.

We also noticed that some hymns have been modernised with, for example, the removing of ‘Thees’ and ‘Thous’ where it does not effect the rhyming scheme. This of course will fit in with modern Bible versions but is not appreciated by those who by conviction adhere to the Authorised Version. We can tell which way the ‘wind is blowing’.

Secondly we maintain that the hymn book has embraced what we term as ‘New Worship’. It has embraced and thereby endorsed songs/hymns once considered to be alien to our evangelical and reformed constituency. To be more specific it includes songs from the charismatic ‘stable’. Many of these compositions have weakened theology and are set to tunes in the charismatic idiom. You don’t have to be a musician to immediately be aware of the difference between these new hymns and their tunes and the tunes used down through many generations. Many of the new tunes possess a sentimental and dream like quality. Is it

merely a question of taste? Many think so. We would aver however, that the new compositions are of a different type, a different genre. The whole ethos is different. They have been born out of a different approach to worship. This is something that even the compilers acknowledge in their preface, “The last quarter of a century has seen many changes in worship style and practices, not least in the sung praise of God. Consequently we have included quite a number of more modern compositions”. So we have the adoption of a new style of worship.

The most striking example of this sad concession to a new climate is found in the inclusion of worship songs by Graham Kendrick. He has 11 songs/hymns in new Christian Hymns. I cite one of his hymns, 637 (supposedly based on Philippians 3:7-11):

*All I once held dear, built my life upon,  
all this world reveres and wars to own,  
all I once thought gain I have counted  
loss, spent and worthless now  
compared to this.*

*Knowing You, Jesus, knowing You.  
There is no greater thing.  
You're my all, You're the best, You're  
my joy,  
my righteousness; and I love You, Lord.*

The next verses are similar.

Again this does not mean that there were no poor hymns in the old book, but it’s a matter of direction. A revision

should strengthen, should make a hymn book better. Most of the hymns removed are better than this one by Kendrick. Think of what we have lost to make room for such compositions as these. Our godly forefathers would never have been comfortable with the brand of worship song cited above. They would have probably considered it to have been carnal. I wonder what Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones would have thought? Could you imagine him preaching on some text in Philippians 3 and then giving out the above hymn to close?

It is also interesting to compare the number of hymns Graham Kendrick has with some other authors. As mentioned before Kendrick has 11 compositions, one more than Augustus Montague Toplady (who has 10), one more than W. Vernon Higham (again 10), the same number as Frances Ridley Havergal and almost a fifth of Isaac Watts hymns (59). This is quite staggering and reveals again the emphasis of the revision.

Our concern in this quarter is also heightened when we dig a little deeper into Graham Kendrick's background. He was a founder member, along with Roger Forster, of the Ichthus Christian Fellowship. Faith Forster, Roger Forster's wife is also a leader offering "Christian Ministry and Leadership". In various recorded interviews Graham Kendrick affirms that "my role as worship leader is a response to the culture in which we live". He goes on, "there are different models for worship

leading" and, "worship leaders are likely to have a prophetic gifting together with musical gifting which facilitates the flow of worship". Again he states, "perhaps one advantage larger churches like Ichthus have is we can have not only all age celebrations which are middle of the road in style but also youth churches which are very experimental with video and lights and multimedia techniques to express worship". He believes it is also possible to express worship through heavy metal music as long as the lyrics are Christian. In incorporating his compositions in the book the compilers are inadvertently supporting him and encouraging his 'ministry'. To say the least, the inclusion of his songs is misguided. He is part of the departure from the faith rather than being a legitimate promoter of it. Of course some of the authors of hymns on old Christian Hymns are of a dubious background but this shouldn't support the addition of more and the use of hymns that are obviously so different from the ones commonly accepted. Their inclusion sends out the wrong signal.

Thirdly and finally our title refers to 'New Downgrade'.

In what we've said it is apparent that new Christian Hymns hymn book is a concession to a new spiritual climate, it will also contribute to further decline. Whilst on the one hand we are reticent to claim the word 'downgrade' for this because of its association with the heroic stand of C. H Spurgeon, there are

nonetheless parallels. Spurgeon was concerned about the departure from the sound Doctrine in the Baptist denomination (Union) of England and Wales. Men were denying biblical truth. Often they would use evangelical terms to mean something different. A different approach in many quarters was being taken to the gospel. In a sermon preached on the Lord's Day morning October 30th 1887 Spurgeon declared, "The truth which would convince men of sin is not preached". This new approach of the gospel also went hand in hand with a new approach to worship and evangelism. In an article by S. M. Houghton tracing the origins of the Bible League he wrote "It needs to be added that Spurgeon's protest was raised not only on doctrinal grounds, but also because of the foolish, nonsensical and fatuous introduction into church life of the jollities of the secular world including comic songs, humorous recitations, dramatic performances, in short what Archibald G. Brown rightly termed the devil's mission of amusements".

Such developments went hand in hand with the doctrinal heresies which characterised the downgrade. So we see new doctrine and a new approach, new evangelism and new worship. This is something that we've witnessed in our own day. How long will it be before this new climate will affect the actual presentation and content of the gospel? Not long, in fact it is already with us. Let me read you part of an article contained in the EMW magazine:

"People have changed, so the style of mission needs to be helpful to the people of this present day. The message is still that of 'Christ and Him crucified' but we will need to think through the style of mission. For example, outside of our Sunday services, I think it is better not to ask unsaved people to sing our hymns, but to come and hear our message in a warm and welcoming atmosphere. Instead, a good musical group can serve the purpose of musically pointing people to the Lord. We will need to think through our vocabulary - many words and phrases that we love are complete gobbledegook to non-Christians. And even if they use our vocabulary, they may not use our dictionary, and mean something different from us. We need to carefully choose the person who is to preach so that the message is clear, non-condemning but true to the claims of Jesus Christ. I have found that a good, clear testimony that is shared through an extended interview can be very powerful, and have genuine appeal for a non-Christian to come and hear".

Conclusion: No hymn book is perfect. Some poor hymns have been removed from the old book and some better ones added. Nonetheless the revision has moved decidedly in the direction of embracing 'new style worship' characteristic of the charismatic movement. It is not as bad as 'Praise' thankfully, yet for that reason poses a more subtle danger. It may serve as a 'Trojan Horse'. For those wishing to adhere to conservative, biblical worship the choices are limited.

## REVIVAL AT BULFORD

[The following extract is taken from a booklet about Bulford Chapel, which celebrated its 200th Anniversary last year, written by the former pastor Peter Beale. It describes a revival that took place in 1860, through the words of the minister at that time, John Protheroe.]

Times of refreshing have come from the presence of the Lord. For some time past, a few of our pious friends have been preciousy impressed with the conviction that God was about to visit us in mercy and they have not been disappointed.

The first indications of the great work became visible about the end of November last (1860) and were observed in the quiet stillness which pervaded the Congregation - in the earnest and deep anxiety of the members to see among them a general awakening - in the extraordinary spirit of prayer which was poured out upon the people, and their faith in the efficacy of prayer - and in some mysterious influence, almost irresistible, which I felt on my own mind, by which, for some time before the Revival broke out', I was all but impelled to preach to my people from certain subjects preparatory to the coming blessing.

The fields at length became white for the harvest and a voice was heard to say, 'Thrust in thy sickle and reap, for the time is come for thee to reap.' Souls have been gathered into the garner - the number of members already added to the Church, since the Revival began, has more than doubled the former number of Church members - nearly trebled it.

The awakening at Bulford has been very general - among young and old - among persons of every character, who have displayed a determination to become personally interested in the privileges and blessings of the kingdom of heaven, and an ardent desire to become recognised subjects of it.

And when on the Sabbath or on week evenings the regular service is over - a service perhaps of more than two hours duration, and sometimes three - a great number of them linger about, as if unwilling to leave, and

then return to pray, and continue till late supplicating God's throne for the conversion of ungodly relatives and friends, or that of the whole village.

I have seldom had a meeting without having at its close some inquirers after salvation. Even as many as fifteen persons one night remained after the service to converse with me about the concerns of their souls.

A happy change has come over the Village, and everywhere around its influence is felt. The Police-Officer, located in our neighbourhood, referring to this happy change, one day remarked that, in his walks through Bulford, instead of trifling conversation he could now hear only the voice of prayer and praise ascending to God, from the cottages of the poor which may now be styled 'Bethels'. And the young people, instead of frequenting as formerly they did the public houses, now abstain altogether from intoxicating drinks and derive their chief delight from the service of God. The fields too, present a very different aspect from what they ever had before. Here and there, during the dinner hour you may see and hear groups of persons, while resting, speaking of the things touching the King, and, perhaps, one of their number reading to the rest some religious book. Oh what hath God wrought!

The present revival at Bulford is distinguished more by deep inward solemnity than by any external manifestation: there is no hysterical prostration - no outward extravagance - no religious bustle. A deep sense of their previous guilty and perilous condition as sinners - an impression that they may at any time unexpectedly be called out of the world, together with strong faith in the efficacy of prayer - a calm and happy frame of mind - and a constant walk - are among some of the principal characteristics by which the converts, whether young or old, are distinguished.

We had long been praying for this revival - crying long, but believingly and patiently, 'from beneath the altar'. It is now come. The Lord has come into his Temple. He blesses his people with peace. The voice had long been heard crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord. And now in the the wilderness - in a desert - the desert of the heart - a highway for our God has been made straight, while many a heart has lifted up its gate for the King of glory to come in.

## EPILOGUE

### God's Great Gift

'Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift'. 2 Cor. 9:15.

We live in a world where everything seems to have a price tag on it, apart from the air we breathe! So whenever something is offered free by some firm or supermarket, there will be no shortage of eager customers. So it comes with some surprise that when the world is offered the greatest gift of all time, that is the Lord Jesus Christ and the message of salvation, it is generally ignored or shunned or even mocked at. Indeed the very proclamation of the gospel causes some people to openly oppose it, and in some places with much vigour. It may also cause you some surprise when I say that ironically, some people before they become followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, were once great haters of the gospel and its message of salvation. The classic example of course is the Apostle Paul himself. If ever there was a great gospel hater, and a Christ hater, it was Saul of Tarsus. We read in Acts 9:1 'And Saul yet breathing out threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord'. So it was when Paul himself witnessed the power of the risen Lord on the road to Damascus, that this proud, pious Jew fell down to earth and surrendered his life to the Saviour. Suddenly, he realised that He whom he once so violently opposed was indeed the unspeakable gift from God.

I expect that the word 'surrender' is not a popular expression for many people today, for at heart we are all proud creatures, and it goes against the grain to admit our great need of God in our lives. But surely, the cross of Christ really declares that no man is good enough to stand in the presence of a holy, righteous God, simply as he is. Sin is of course at the root of all this and the great hindrance and obstacle to believing. Our sinful nature builds high walls against the hearing of the gospel and we declare above its doorway:

I am the master of my fate  
I am the captain of my soul.

The prophet Isaiah declares 'Your sins have hid His face from you'. So sin acts like a kind of barrier between us and God.

Our country was once a great nation, a nation where God was acknowledged in her national life and laws that preserved the sanctity of the Lord's Day and the morality of society. But today, all this has gone and the Christian faith has been literally driven into a corner by the masses, and by the radio and by those in authority. Indeed in some areas, Christians are beginning to feel the 'pinch' of persecution. Recently the Christian Unions of a number of universities have been excluded from meeting on the college campuses because they will not conform to the liberal views of our age.

Our towns and cities like Swansea and Cardiff may look pleasant with their fine buildings and parks etc. but after dark, it is a totally different story. Violence, binge drinking, and immorality are widespread, and the clubs, pubs and bars are packed to overflowing. Can God's love reach such depth of degradation? Yes, because He is God. Throughout Wales, chapels are closing week by week, and children no longer attend Sunday School, and consequently never hear of God's amazing gift. The name of Jesus Christ is only on their lips as a blasphemy, because of ignorance. Can God bring a nation back to where she was? Yes, of course He can. He has done it before in the history of our nation. He is a great God and He can do the impossible. And who knows that a different story may one day be written about this little land of Wales. You may ask, 'God is great, but how did He change our nation in the past?' Well people began to cry one by one and to turn to God. They were sickened by the sinful state around them and at the same time, God raised godly men to preach this unspeakable gift again. The greatest thing a person can do in his life is to surrender to the Saviour who gave His life to pay the penalty for his/her sins. It is true that so often we desire to come back to God but one sin, yes even one can be a hindrance. As a schoolboy, I can remember a time when I couldn't swim. At the school swimming baths, I didn't want those who were watching on the side of the pool, to know that I couldn't swim. So I carefully did all the strokes and observed all the rules - all, except one. I insisted on keeping one toe on the bottom of the pool. So I knew nothing of the true joy and

exhilaration of swimming freely. One toe seemed so trivial, but it hindered and held back the true purpose of what I really wanted to do. However eventually the water won, and I surrendered to it and gave myself fully to the water. Only those who have done the same, can appreciate the thrill of feeling the water holding one's body up and all resistance to it has ceased. It is the same with becoming a true believer. Once we have by faith surrendered to the Lord Jesus Christ, we can truly say:

‘All that thrills my soul is Jesus  
He is more than life to me.’

The water in that swimming pool which I regarded with fear and suspicion, had now become my friend. It is something like that in the Christian faith. Once we confess our sin, and cry to God for mercy and forgiveness, He is faithful to forgive and make us His child. So the one whom we once so much resisted and treated with suspicion, has now become our greatest friend and lover and Saviour. Do you possess this greatest of all gifts?

Let not conscience make you linger  
Nor of fitness fondly dream,  
All the fitness He requireth,  
Is to feel your need of Him.  
This He gives you  
‘Tis the Spirit's rising beam!

Rev. R. B. Higham