

Why GOD?

A hand is shown from the bottom, pointing its index finger upwards towards a realistic image of the Earth. The Earth is centered in the frame, showing blue oceans, white clouds, and brown/green landmasses. The background is dark, with a subtle orange and yellow glow behind the Earth. The title 'Why GOD?' is written in large, white, bold, sans-serif font, with 'GOD' being significantly larger than 'Why' and having a black outline.

“
*Fate has
no eyes, but
the eyes of
the Lord are
upon every
square inch
of the earth*
”

Desmond
Ford

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Dedication

To Alan, Sherelle, Tuné and Mignon
Lightbearers

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Chapter One - What? Whence? Whither?

‘I, a stranger and afraid,
In a world I never made’.

Most of us have known the poet’s feelings. Only those who are thoughtless or drunk have not asked themselves such questions as: ‘Who am I?’ ‘Why am I here?’ ‘Does life have meaning?’ ‘How should I live?’ If we do not bother to ask these questions and travel through life without concern about such matters, we will pass away like the dust stirred by the winds. Is not the issue worthy of some time and mental involvement? If your answer is ‘yes’, then this book is for you.

A very popular solution is that of the atheist. Keep in mind that modern secularism is atheism. ‘You are a meaningless clot of coincidental molecules’. ‘You arrived here by the chance interaction of stuff’. ‘Life has no meaning’. ‘Decide for yourself on how to live’. ‘One approach is as good as another’.

For a diversion you could make the atheist very angry. Just say: ‘Well, if everything is here by chance that applies to your mind also. Therefore, thinking is only the same as itching. Why then do you trust your conclusions on atheism? You criticise those who hold Christian beliefs. But every accusation requires a standard. Where did you get your standard? On what grounds do you trust it, if all thinking is the result of the chance movements of molecules? Can you really have such beliefs as ‘right’ and ‘wrong’, based on your premises?’

The atheist can now try to divert you, if you hold to Christian ideas. He may say, ‘How can you believe in a good God when there is so much pain and suffering in the world? If there is a God he must be very cruel’. This is the chief argument of atheism, and it is a good one. But it is not good enough. Atheists never raise the much bigger problem than that of the problem of pain and evil. They never raise the problem of good. And life for most of us has considerably more good than evil, or else we would exit. All our senses minister joy unless we are ill. Why is every sight not ugly, every smell not a stench, every touch not a sting, every sound not a discord and every taste not bitter? To what do we attribute our good fortune?

Why is it that when we see a friend walking down the road on crutches we point him out. Yet we usually do not point out that same man if he walks normally? We comment when a mutual acquaintance goes to hospital, but there is no comment to the effect that the person is not in hospital. 'Good' is the rule for most of us, not evil. Health, for example, usually predominates over illness, unless our lifestyle or inheritance has permitted bodily afflictions.

Logicians long ago decided that the existence of pain and evil do not constitute a valid argument against God. Clearly, if God exists he could have made us all puppets, and so taken away the four-fifths of life's pain that comes from being human. God did not invent bayonets or bombs. Humans did. But how many of us would vote for a painless world at the cost of being puppets?

The existence of evil presupposes the existence of good. If we had no eyes, and there was no light, we would never know darkness. So the atheist's chief argument turns out to be a support for theism.

If the Christian answer to life's inevitable questions is based on a delusion, it has been difficult to kill. They could not kill it in the catacombs. They could not kill it by the guillotine of the French Revolution, or by the spying of Russia's secret police in Stalin's day. The Communists, like the pagans, have failed to stamp out this 'fable'. Why is it so resilient?

In our day, the world's most famous atheist has changed his mind and written a book to say so. Antony Flew inspired men like Richard Dawkins, but now he has turned about face. His book is called *There is a God*. The chief reason for the change, Flew says, is the discovery of the anthropic principle this last half-century. This principle, agreed upon by top physicists in all quarters of the globe, states that all the laws of the natural world could not have originated by chance, and that their purpose is to produce and support mankind. Francis Collins was the head of the Genome Project and guide to hundreds of scientists. He has stated that if certain natural laws diverged by as much as one millionth, or even one millionth of a millionth, there would be no universe and, therefore, no us.

Chandra Wickramasinghe, an associate of Fred Hoyle, has likened the chance arrival of our universe to the discovery of a special, unique, single grain of sand plucked out from among the trillions of sand particles of all the planets of creation. Mathematicians and scientists alike say that any

event transcending the likelihood of one in ten to the fiftieth is impossible. Of course, most of us would settle for one in ten to the second.

There are ten to the eightieth particles in the universe, but the chance arrival of our system is a countless number of times less likely than the arrival of one of those particles. This is why physicists like Paul Davies have told us that the evidence for design is overwhelming. Davies is not a professed Christian. Roger Penrose, one of the most respected of modern physicists, has written that one parameter alone—the original phase-space volume—demanded fine tuning to an accuracy of one part in ten billion multiplied by itself 123 times. See his *The Emperor's New Mind*, page 344.

Lee Stroebel in *The Case for a Creator* quotes Dr Robin Collins as saying:

If you were out in space and throwing a random dart towards earth it would be like hitting a bullseye that's one trillionth of a trillionth of an inch in diameter, which is less than the size of a single atom.
(p. 134)

We have learned more about the realities of the universe in the last half-century than in all preceding millenniums. One discovery that seemed to start both the scientific and philosophical ball rolling was the discovery that the universe was not eternal. It had a beginning; and, therefore, a Beginner. We now call that discovery the Big Bang (Fred Hoyle).

To illustrate the dead end of all atheism, let us choose to reject the Big Bang. Let us choose to believe that the universe had no beginning and is eternal. What then? Well then, what you are doing right now, and what you have done all your life, has been done an infinite number of times through an unceasing eternity.

Such is the philosophical conclusion, if we choose to believe that the universe is eternal, and that all possibilities and all happenings have happened repeatedly without end. If you can believe that, you can believe anything. This is known as the Law of Eternal Recurrence, and few people have ever managed to swallow it.

Years ago, a Russian Communist agitator gave a long speech to a group of peasants about the non-existence of God. When he finished, a peasant took his place, and raising his hand to heaven shouted: 'Christ is risen'. The crowds cheered, and the agitator left aggrieved.

In a book almost 2,000 years old, we are told that there were hundreds of people still alive in the days of Paul the Apostle, who had seen the risen Christ. See I Corinthians 15:6. We can believe this testimony because we have a prophecy from the risen Lord, affirming that his gospel would go to the end of the earth, beginning in the very place where he had been rejected and crucified. See Acts 1:8. How is it that neither the Jews nor the Romans could stamp out these witnesses who took the words of Christ to the edges of the known world? How did fishermen manage to overthrow long accepted systems of idolatry and destroy the deities of Greece and Rome?

So what? Here's the 'what'. If Christ is alive and interceding for us in the heavens above, then his gospel is true. All believers have had their sins forgiven (including past, present and future sins), and Christ's perfect righteousness has been imputed to them. They are without condemnation, reckoned as already seated in the heavenly places (Eph 2:6). They are joyful possessors now of eternal life and the verdict of the Last Judgment. Could there be anything better? Here is the answer to all our questioning, and the answer is glorious.

But there is more to Christ's gospel than these grand things. Christ has assured those of us who believe that God counts even the hairs of our head, and that he who attends the funeral of every sparrow is familiar with every threat to our existence. He also counts our tears and sighs. There is nothing that causes us grief and concern, nothing that disturbs our peace, regarding which he takes no immediate interest. He cares. He cares infinitely for every believer (Luke 12). In the same chapter, Christ tells his followers that their Heavenly Father knows all their needs and makes provision for them. See Luke 12:30. So Christ not only taught about God, but also illuminated the reality of divine providence. Only those who rejoice in this miraculous government of the world and its billions can find peace and rest amid tumult and pain. Therefore, much of this volume will demonstrate the truthfulness of Christ's teaching regarding divine sovereignty.

For such reasons as these, Mortimer Adler (best known for his *Great Books of the Western World*) has told us that the idea of God has more consequences than any other idea. So, while some may deny theism, none can say that it is trivial. Indeed, our eternal state for good or evil, as well as today's peace and joy, depends upon it.

If you believe in the gospel and the infinite love of God, you have everything to gain and nothing to lose. If you refuse to believe, you have everything to lose and nothing to gain.

It is no use saying, 'Well, I won't make up my mind yet'. Every decision we make rests upon our belief about the origin and meaning of the universe, either implicitly or explicitly. In the gamble of life we are forced to wager. One choice offers everything, and the other offers nothing. We can believe, if we so wish, that we are nothing but dirt, time and chance, or we can believe that we are the children of a loving heavenly father. We can choose between despair or joy.

But, you may say, there is so much trouble in the world, so much pain and so much sorrow. And you are right. These are realities confronted by every person. What shall we say about them if we hold to the Christian worldview?

The first thing we shall say is this: the teacher we most detest is the best teacher—pain. We may forget many things associated with our joys, but we do not forget the things associated with our sorrows. Pain IS the best teacher.

Second, all of us want more faith, but faith only grows in the midst of fiery trials. If life were an everlasting tea party, none of us would be worth knowing. We would never grow in faith and grace and goodness. This is what Scripture says, 'The Lord disciplines him whom he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives'. And in the same passage, 'For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant; later it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it' (Heb. 12:5-13).

Third, if the Christian were to be exempt from pain, the church would fall within a few weeks. Who would not join it in order to be saved from pain? Every atheist and hypocrite would become a church member.

Fourth, we endure many things in order to be able to sympathise with and counsel others. To whom do you go when in trouble? Some youngster? No, you often go to one whose white hairs testify of many trials endured and survived.

Last, but not least, it must be confessed that many, perhaps most, of our trials and sufferings are our own fault. We endure more sorrow from our sins than from God's darkest providences.

There is yet another question. How can God permit wicked men to do such dastardly things as they do? Why does he not prevent them? Well, he could, but he has chosen not to interfere with our free will. The cost of freedom is the certainty that many will pervert that great gift. There is another reason for God's non-interference. We live in the dispensation of grace. Men are now free to accept or reject the good news of grace, for the punishing of wickedness is for the last dispensation—Judgment Day. So, where is God when a terrible evil transpires? In the same place as when his beloved Son was crucified by evil men and devils.

Atheism teaches that nothing produces everything, non-life forms life, randomness leads to fine tuning, chaos brings information, unconsciousness turns to consciousness, and irrationality leads to rationality. Read that again. In other words, atheism asks us to be idiots.

We will find assurance of the reality of God and his love to the same extent that we participate in shedding that love abroad. Try to live one day as an atheist, beginning by looking into a mirror and saying, 'You meaningless clot'. Live that day, believing nothing has value or meaning. It will not work.

But, begin believing that God is, and that God is love, and that he has died for us, and that every moment has meaning, and that we are surrounded by his merciful providences. That will work out gloriously. Because it is our privilege to encourage others to share our joy, consider further irrefutable evidences we can offer to those not yet committed to their Saviour.

A single yeast cell, the by-product of the brewing industry, is used as a natural source of protein and B-complex vitamins. It is five microns long. Remember that a micron is one millionth of a metre, and a metre is approximately 39 inches. This cell has as many parts as a Boeing 777 jetliner, and it reproduces at a miraculous rate. As Michael Denton has pointed out, nearly every feature of our own advanced machinery has its analogue in the cell. Again, to quote Denton, it is an object of unparalleled complexity and adaptive design, with millions of openings that allow a constant stream of materials to flow in and out. Could that cell be so magnified that we could see into its interior, we would be dazed by the millions of moving objects forever weaving and interweaving and doing a thousand tasks.

According to Professor Matthew Fox, when the original fireball that became the universe first expanded, there was a decision made in the first second on our behalf. The decision was that the expansion of that fireball would be at such a rate that if it were one millionth of a millionth of a millionth of a second slower or faster you and I would not be here today. The earth could not have become the hospitable planet that we know (Samantha Trenoweth (ed.), *The Future of God*, page 249).

Francis S. Collins, the head of the genome project, in his book *The Language of God* speaks similarly. We quote:

If the rate of expansion one second after the Big Bang had been smaller by even one part in one hundred thousand million million, the universe would have re-collapsed before it reached its present size. On the other hand, if the rate of expansion had been greater by even one part in a million, stars and planets could not have been able to form.

(p. 72)

Whole books could be written on the marvel of the human form. Think of the liver with its five hundred tasks and the brain, which is a million times more complicated than anything man has invented. Every part of the human organism from the cell to the brain is miraculously fashioned to enable us to live healthfully.

How can there be atheists when the majority of physicists and other scientists believe such things as these? The answer lies in cognitive dissonance from which we all suffer to one degree or another. We all tend to be blind to that which is inconvenient to believe. Long ago a bishop said about a young man arguing against episcopacy: 'Does he think he can talk me out of ten thousand a year?'

Both Julian and Aldous Huxley rejoiced in choosing atheism, for it left them without moral restraints. Such confessions are multiple. By no means all, but a large proportion of unbelievers have become such on the ground of convenience.

The options regarding our arrival are only three: either an eternal nothing made matter and mind, or an eternal matter made mind, or an eternal mind made matter and mind. The Christian view has always been the third option, and honesty compels it.

Chapter Two - Putrefaction or Providence?

Can we be absolutely certain that nothing that in any way disturbs our peace is too small for God to notice, and regarding which he has no purpose? The answer is found in the meaning of the one word—providence. From Genesis to Revelation the Bible teaches that God is omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient, and that he is everywhere present, and everywhere active. Luke 12:7 can mean nothing less:

Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don't be afraid, you are worth more than many sparrows.

God is named Jehovah-Jireh [God provides] in Genesis 22:14. He provided a substitute sacrifice for the beloved son Isaac. In the Bible's last book, the prelude to every prophetic chain is God planning what is about to transpire. Every Bible book between Genesis and Revelation teaches the same truth.

All Christian truth finds its greatest intensity in the events at and surrounding Calvary. Consider the following passages taken from the Passion Week accounts. Here is the first passage:

Matthew 27:19:

While Pilate was sitting on the Judgment seat, his wife sent word to him, "Have nothing to do with that righteous man, for I have suffered much over him today in a dream".

Consider how appropriate are the words of Charles Spurgeon:

If anything beneath the moon may be thought to be exempt from law, and to be the creature of pure chance, surely it is a dream. ... Ordinarily, they are the carnival of thought, a maze of mental states, a dance of disorder. The dreams, which would naturally come to the wife of a Roman governor, would not be likely to have much of tenderness in them, and would not, in all probability, run in the line of mercy. Dreams ordinarily are the most disorderly of phenomena, and yet it seems they are ordered of the Lord.

I can well understand that every drop of spray when it dashes against the cliff has its appointed orbit as surely as the stars of heaven; but the thoughts of men appear to be utterly lawless, especially the thoughts of men when deep sleep falls upon them. As

well might one foretell the flight of a bird as the course of a dream. Such wild fancies seem to be ungoverned and ungovernable. Many things operate naturally to fashion a dream. Dreams frequently depend upon the state of the stomach, upon the food and drink taken by the sleeper before going to rest. They often owe their shape to the state of the body or the agitation of the mind. Dreams may, no doubt, be caused by that which transpires in the chamber of the house; a little movement of the bed caused by a passing wheel, or the tramp of a band of men ... or even the running of a mouse behind the wainscot may suggest and shape a dream. ... Whatever may have operated in this lady's case, the hand of providence was in it all, and her mind, though fancy free, wandered nowhere but just according to the will of God, to effect the divine purpose. ... Even dreamland knows no god but God, and even phantoms and shadows come and go at his bidding. ... Pilate must be warned, so that his sentence may be by his own act and deed, and that warning is given him through his wife's dream. So does Providence work.
(Treasury of the New Testament, Vol. 1, p. 382)

Consider now the second passage:

Mark 11:2-7:

Jesus said to them, "Go into the village opposite you, and immediately as you enter it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat; untie it and bring it. If any one says to you 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord has need of it and will send it back here immediately.'" And they went away, and found a colt tied at the door out in the open street; and they untied it. And those who stood there said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" And they told them what Jesus had said, and they let them go.

Jesus foretells that their search will be satisfied immediately on their entrance into the village. And the colt is no ordinary one, but one never ridden before. Any opposition they encounter will be removed by the words he gave them to speak. All happened just as predicted. Again, providence is at work.

Now the third:

Mark 14:13-16:

And he sent two of his disciples, and said to them, "Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you; follow him, and wherever he enters say to the householder, "The Teacher says, "Where is my guest room, where I am to eat the Passover with my disciples?" And he will show you a large upper room furnished and ready, there prepare for us". And the disciples set out and went to the city, and found it as he had told them; and they prepared the Passover.

Again we will permit the prince of preachers to make his comments on this event:

Our Lord intended to celebrate the Passover in the large upper room belonging to the person to whom he sent Peter and John; the message which he sent by their lips was all powerful, the man at once yielded up his furnished parlour without difficulty or demur, because there went a power with the word which the man was unwilling and unable to resist. ... We observe, in the first place, that the time and the circumstances were all appointed. Two apostles were commanded to go to the city; when they should come to the city, providence would be there working before them—they were to meet a man just at the entrance of the city; he was to be there at the very moment of their arrival; he and none but he. This man must bear a pitcher—the pitcher must be filled with water; the water carrier must proceed to a certain house, and to no other. This house must contain an upper room, large enough to receive Christ and twelve others; this room must be in the possession of a person who would be perfectly willing to receive the Master and his disciples, and the good man of the house, must be at home to show the room, and give the messengers admittance at once. Here were several very unlikely things to meet together at one particular juncture, and yet they did so meet. Providence arranges that when the apostles are at the city gate the tankard bearer is there too, with his pitcher full of water; he goes to the house, the house is the right habitation, the man who possesses it shall be the right man, and Christ shall be entertained.

(Ibid., p. 572)

The Old Testament is similarly permeated with the gracious works of providence. See, for example, 1 Kings 22:34. When this text is studied in connection with the preceding chapters it is seen that the 'venture' mentioned was no chance affair. God directed the arrow referred to, and it killed the wicked king in harmony with a previous divine forecast.

That most beautiful Bible book of Ruth is also redolent with the fragrance of a wise and loving providence. We are told that Ruth just happened to go to the field of Boaz. Yet, clearly, it was no happenstance, but the Lord's plan. The rest of the story tells of the union of these ancestors of our Lord Jesus—Boaz the lord of the harvest, who spoke so kindly to the despised alien, and Ruth. These two became the ancestors of David and Jesus the great Son of David.

There is another Old Testament book which records how the Jewish race with its millions was preserved from eradication by a series of remarkable providential interpositions. From a literary viewpoint this is one of the best historical accounts ever written. But it is much more than that. It clearly teaches that there is no such thing as chance, that God indeed counts the hairs of the heads of his children. The Psalmist triumphantly sang that all things were God's servants and that the divine kingdom rules over everything. See Psalms 119:91; 103:19.

The book of Esther demonstrates these realities. In it the name of God cannot be found, while a heathen king is referred to over 150 times. But though the divine name is not to be found, God's hand is everywhere present. This book is the history of how Haman, a wicked descendant of the cursed Amalek, plotted to extinguish the Jewish race in order to rid himself of one particular member—Mordecai. Read the whole fascinating story. Read how Queen Vashti was deposed to prepare for her replacement Esther; how Mordecai saved the king's life, but was not rewarded on the spot; how the villain's casting of the lot yielded a twelve month delay for the execution of the holocaust; how the king suffered from insomnia just the night before Esther will make her plea; how miraculously he stumbled upon the account of his deliverance by Mordecai, and his failure at that time to reward his saviour. There is much more implied or stated. Consider that providence must have controlled the DNA inheritance of the brave heroine who was selected as Queen because of her beauty, and who manifested the courage revealed by her words: 'If I perish, I perish'.

Providence is not fate. Fate has no eyes, but the eyes of the Lord are upon every square inch of the world. Because we are all fragile, and because the world is a very dangerous place, the Bible repeatedly assures us that God is in control, and that his eye is always upon his children. Luke 21:16-18 at first sight seems contradictory. Believers can perish and yet not a hair of their head is harmed. How can this be?

The verses are Christ's assurance that even death has no lasting harm for his children. The Christian's death is a momentary sleep, and then at the return of Christ—glory! Though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death we need fear no evil, for our Saviour is with us. Shadows cause no harm, and neither can death for the believer.

May we offer what we consider is a shortcut to solving life's biggest question? Consider Matthew 24:35. Christ is giving his forecast of the future on the last Tuesday of his life. Here are the most remarkable words ever uttered on this globe. 'Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away'. Stop and think about that. An uneducated Jewish peasant is claiming that his teachings would outlast the universe! And after two thousand years that have witnessed the rise and fall of empires, kings and tyrants, these words still confront us creating wonder. Are not words the most ephemeral of all things? Does not an ant live longer than almost any spoken word? And are not heaven and earth the most enduring realities of all?

The same speaker predicted that his followers would be 'the salt of the earth', protecting humanity from dissolution. Jesus, pre-eminently, has been that salt, a salt that never decays and never vanishes away. If he were God in the flesh, we can understand this phenomenon, but not otherwise.

Some may be tempted to think that while providence acted so constantly in Bible times, perhaps the same is not true today. However, the innumerable stories about individual Christians assure us that such is not the case. Read the best classical biographies of John Newton, William Carey, Hudson Taylor, Charles Spurgeon Gladys Aylward, Adoniram Judson, Martin Luther and a host of others who followed them. They provide overwhelming evidence that God's hand still rules and overrules. In the well-known biography of Alexander Whyte, Scotland's great preacher, we read these words:

The biography of every one of us is to ourselves as luminously supernatural, and as palpably full of divine interferences, as if it were a page out of the Old Testament history.

(Faber, p. 649)

Chapter Three - Amazing Grace

John Newton (1725-1807)

Those who doubt the reality of the divine Hand intervening for good in individual lives will find encouragement in the biographies of John Newton. Bernard Martin's *An Ancient Mariner* and Grace Irwin's *Servant of Slaves* are particularly recommended.

Almost everybody knows the hymn *Amazing Grace*, but not all realize that it is itself biographical. On his tombstone is inscribed:

John Newton
Once an infidel and libertine,
A servant of slaves in Africa,
Was
In the rich mercy of our Lord and Saviour
Jesus Christ,
Preserved, Restored, Pardoned,
And appointed to preach the faith
He had long laboured to destroy.

This is literally true. John's mother died two weeks before his seventh birthday. At age eleven he went to sea with his father, a shipmaster in the Mediterranean service. Before his father retired in 1742, John had sailed on six voyages with him.

The most significant event in his early years was his falling in love with Mary Catlett, daughter of close friends of his mother in days gone by. The love story of John Newton and Mary Catlett (Polly) transcends *Romeo and Juliet* by far. His love would repeatedly divert him from suicide, and that love would be the chief motivating force of his being. He dreamed of her every night for three months after their initial meeting, and hardly a waking hour passed without thoughts of her.

Although his father arranged for him to work at a sugar plantation in Jamaica he chose to sign on with a merchant ship. The Christian faith imbued in him by his devout mother had by this time been lost, and he rejoiced in his proud unbelief. At a young age he triumphed in the loss of his chastity.

In 1743, while headed to see Polly, he was press-ganged into the Royal Navy. After desertion to see his father in the hope of being delivered from the Royal Navy, he was recaptured and marched like a felon through the streets of Plymouth en route to the sea. Back at his ship he was handcuffed and left in the pitch darkness of the hold. After that he was tied to a grating and received a flogging of eight-dozen lashes. His status of midshipman was reduced to the rank of a common seaman.

Humiliated and in constant pain, he resolved he would murder the captain and then suicide by jumping into the sea. But the passage of days altered all that. Dramatically his life's course was suddenly changed. At seven-thirty one morning when he should have been up, a shipmate cut through the lashings at the foot of the hammock, and John's rest was abruptly ended. He heard a seaman talking of a nearby slave ship that was about to exchange two of its crew for two on John's ship. In great haste he searched for two of the *Harcourt's* lieutenants and pled with them to secure permission for him to be one of the men leaving the vessel. Amazingly, permission was granted, and within minutes he was aboard the *Pegasus* and bound for West Africa.

On board the slave ship he became a thorn in the side of many of the crew. He was now quite unhampered by scruples, and he delighted in outrageous blasphemies that shocked even a hardened crew. But another great change was about to dawn. The ship docked on the African coast and Amos Clow, slave-dealer, came aboard. John, fearful that the new captain of the *Pegasus* might return him to a Royal Navy ship asked Clow to use him as an assistant. And it was done.

But now John found himself out of the frying pan into the fire. When his new master took off on a business trip he left John in the charge of his indigenous wife who was a regular Lady Macbeth, capricious and imperious. When fever overtook him, after days he awoke to find himself in slave quarters and without food or drink. In the following days his new overseer (known as P. I.) sent him meals from the scraps from her own. At night he crawled out into the field to find roots to eat. They made him ill. At this point Clow returned, but took his wife's side. Deliverance only came to John when a sea captain, searching for him at the request of his father, found him. Surely that had been like looking for a needle in a haystack, but God does the impossible.

All this was in 1748 when John was twenty-three years of age. Now on the merchant ship *Greyhound*, he began his journey home. A severe storm off the coast of Donegal almost sank his ship, and as at the tiller he wrestled with mountainous waves, he began to rethink his infidelity. On board was a famous Christian classic—*The Imitation of Christ*, which he had read in part with a yawn. Of course, that was before the storm, but some of it lingered in his mind. The ship only survived, apart from providence, because of its cargo of beeswax and wood, which were lighter than water. During his storm meditations he thought of the strange deliverances he had experienced earlier.

He recalled how at twelve years of age he had been thrown from his horse and landed only a span away from the murderous impaling stakes of a newly cut hedge. On a later day, a five minutes delay kept him from a friend's small boat, which subsequently capsized killing its crew. Then there had been the chance cutting down of his hammock which made possible his transfer from the *H.M.S. Harwich*, and most recently the strange arrival of the sea captain commissioned to find him. There had been other mysterious deliverances. He was grabbed by a shipmate when in a drunken fit Newton had taken to the rail in order to jump into the sea. It was all very strange, but the author of *The Imitation of Christ* would have had an explanation.

When the storm ceased, the battered ship refused to answer to the tiller as it should have. Grace Irwin tells us of the new threat:

As day dragged after day and a week lengthened to a fortnight the famishing sailors saw their ship increasing the distance between them and all known land, heading for unvisited northern waters where no other ship could sight them, where indeed no other ship might ever have been

(p. 182)

Yet, four weeks after the storm, the *Greyhound* made land at Londonderry in Ireland. Citizens made much of the delivered sailors, and John found himself in company with the Mayor on a shooting party. Climbing a steep incline his gun had gone off, and its bullet pierced the brim of his hat.

All of this was in startling contrast with his last weeks at sea. His fellow sailors had come to view him as a Jonah. Had not all their troubles come

after he boarded? There was talk of throwing him overboard. The sight of land not only saved the crew, but also saved him.

In the months that followed, John studied the Bible assiduously and read books on Christian evidences. He renewed contact with the love of his life, who had saved him many a time while he was absent from her and considering taking his own life. In 1750 they married, and the honeymoon lasted until Mary's death forty years later.

In those days slavery was a respectable occupation, and as an experienced sailor, John pursued that livelihood for several years. However, he felt increasing sympathy for the captives of each slave vessel. Ultimately he would put in print his mature views about slavery, and these views aided Wilberforce and the British government as they pondered the ethical dilemma of the nation.

Ordained as an Anglican minister he had sweet fellowship with William Cowper, and together they wrote the *Olney Hymns*. John wrote two hundred and eighty of the pieces, and Cowper sixty-eight. He came to love the Wesley brothers and George Whitefield and all who cherished the evangelical faith. He was used by providence to change the life and thought of Thomas Scott who became a famous Bible commentator.

In modern literature there have been many slanders about Newton that research has disproved. Anyone converted to Christ must expect opposition, and it came to John throughout his life, and calumny followed him after his death. Anyone who reads the scores of his letters, which have been published, cannot but find a deep and abiding respect for this converted libertine.

John Newton became the rector of St Mary Woolnoth Church in London and drew large congregations. Here, Wilberforce first met him. In one of his final sermons of the last year of his life John Newton made this confession: 'Two things I know. I am a great sinner, but I have a great Saviour'.

Chapter Four - The Shoemaker Taught By God

William Carey (1761-1834)

He has often been called ‘the Father of Modern Missions’, but he was considerably more than that. Though Carey’s early profession was that of a shoemaker, his fame now rests on his missionary exploits, and especially his linguistic accomplishments. Long before he went to India he had mastered several languages. In the mission field he absorbed Bengali, Sanskrit and other tongues. Hardly one person in a million has that ability.

He translated the New Testament into Bengali and Sanskrit by 1808, and in 1809 the whole Bible appeared in Bengali. In 1811 the New Testament in Marathi was published, and four years later the New Testament in Punjabi. In 1818 the Old Testament in Sanskrit appeared, and two years later the Marathi Old Testament. His *Completed Dictionary of Bengali and English* came out in 1825. It takes one’s breath away. He did the work of many men, though he lived only to the age of 72. Assistants he had, but the bulk of the responsibility was his.

Carey is an inspiration to lesser mortals. He claimed only one virtue: he said he knew how to plod. In appearance he was short, stooped (because of his cobbling) and bald (from an disease he had early in England, which made sunshine dangerous for him!). But it was his kindness and humility, as well as his diligence, that marked him out from other men. He admonished one of his last visitors:

“Mr. Duff! You have been speaking about Dr Carey, Dr Carey; when I am gone, say nothing about Dr Carey—speak about Dr Carey’s Saviour”.

He left instructions for the inscription on his gravestone. Here it is:

William Carey

Born August 17th, 1761.

Died June 9th, 1834.

A wretched, poor and helpless worm, on Thy kind arms I fall.

However, he is best remembered by his famous admonition to a sleeping, careless, professedly Christian world that had neglected the majority of mankind. Here is the keynote of his call:

Expect great things from God;
Attempt great things for God.

How could an ignorant cobbler become a very great linguistic scholar? How could a man who could not stand the sun in England yet live for decades in India? How could a man circumscribed by a few villages yet cross the seas to a far away land? The only possible answer is God. That answer is endorsed by a thousand circumstances in Carey's life. The classic biography which best illustrates this is the one by Stuart Pearce Carey written in 1923—*William Carey*. A much smaller volume, but of excellent quality, is *William Carey, Father of Modern Missions* by F. Deaville Walker.

Before we talk more about Carey, his beloved invalid sister Mary must be mentioned. Only heaven knows how much of Carey's accomplishments were due to the prayers of a weak woman confined to her sick room for fifty years. Mary had been William's vivacious childhood companion. When her spine was threatened with disease, he mourned and prayed over her. By age twenty-five she was paralysed.

Then for fifty years she was confined to her sickroom—a grievous imprisonment for one taught by her brother to love the fields and woods. For eleven years she could not speak, nor even whisper. Then, strangely, after having smallpox, she whispered a sentence or two with much pain. After that, she was again mute for twenty years. Her right arm was her only unparalysed limb. Yet her face shone, lit from within, a wonder and blessing to all who knew her.

Loved of her sister's many children, she drew them to Christ. ... She was one of the Mission's chief priests—the incense of whose ceaseless intercession was fragrant to God. ... "Aunt's sufferings", wrote her niece in 1828, "were a few weeks ago very distressing We do all love her so dearly; to part with her would tear us asunder. Her late affliction was enough to kill a person in good health. She is merely skin and bone, and not much of that, and so weak as to be hardly able to sit pillowed up in her chair, while her bed is made. Yet she continues the same sweet-tempered, humble Christian she ever was, feeling for others more than for herself, and always fearful lest mother should debar herself anything for her comfort".

She lived to be seventy-four. Dr Gotch, her pastor, used to say: “Her work in her affliction, in its way, was great as that which her great brother wrought”.

(Stuart Pearce Carey, *William Carey*, pp. 40-41)

The England of Carey’s day held eight million people. It was stirred by many momentous events such as Wesley’s and Whitefield’s preaching, the Boston Tea Party, the rumblings that led to the French Revolution, and the debate over slavery. Industry was primitive. His parents were weavers, though in later years his father became the schoolmaster of the villager. Only a few people in a typical village could read, and few possessed books of any kind.

At the age of seven William contracted a skin disease that made exposure to the sun’s rays dangerous, and his subsequent nights full of pain. For this reason his parents decided on indoor work—he would be a shoemaker. How much hung on that decision! Carey never worked without a book before him. At twelve he mastered Latin, then a few years later Greek and Hebrew, followed by European languages. From the age of six his mind was constantly engaged in searching for knowledge.

Yet, he loved the outdoors, which were to a significant degree prohibited to him. His bedroom was a miniature museum with all sorts of items gleaned from the fields including bird’s eggs and wildflowers. In his later life in India it was his outdoor activities that balanced his endless hours of translating and kept him in health. We can picture him in the early hours of the day, before the sun was hot, working in what became the most famous botanical garden of Asia.

While his parents were devout and the Bible was read, William knew nothing of evangelical religion till challenged by a fellow apprentice, John Warr, when he was seventeen years of age. Like most boys of his time in every village, he had been guilty of profanity, lying and unchaste conversation for years till he met Warr. The Spirit of God used his fellow apprentice to stir his mind on matters of the heart and God. He began to attend the meetings of Dissenters and ultimately became the pastor of a small flock. It is likely that he heard Wesley preach, and he was greatly influenced by Thomas Scott (won by John Newton to evangelicism and who later wrote a famous commentary on the Bible).

By the age of eighteen it was nothing to Carey to walk twenty-two miles in a day in order to preach. People recognized his worth, and at the age of eighteen he was ordained. Having read Cook's *Voyages* and much earlier the stories about Columbus, his mind was stirred by the evidence that most of the world was Christless, He made a huge leather map showing the religious state of the world, When invited to propose at a minister's meeting a topic for discussion he suggested the Great Commission. Tradition has it that he was immediately rebuked, and told that if God wished to convert the heathen he would do it without Carey or other Englishmen.

Disappointed, but not frustrated, Carey began work on his famous *Enquiry*, an eighty-seven-page document that was to change the world. The full title was *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathen*.

God stirred other minds at the same time. A friend gave him ten pounds to pay for the printing, and three fellow ministers in particular rallied to his cause. The day came when Carey gave his famous sermon which could be entitled *Expect Great Things from God: Attempt Great Things for God*. The outcome, as might be expected, was the formation of the Baptist Missionary Society in 1792. Then followed Carey's famous plea: 'I will go down (to the darkened lands) if you will hold the ropes'.

It is impossible to understand the boldness of the missionary proposal unless we are aware of the stumbling block—the East India Company:

India was a closed preserve in the hands of the East India Company. To go there without a license from the Company was to become a poacher, and to incur the risk of being sent ignominiously home. A man without a covenant was in the Company's estimation a dangerous person; doubly dangerous such a person with a Bible. (*Ibid.*, p. 135)

Walker tells us of the impact on the moral life of India resulting from the East India Company's greed and intolerance:

The Europeans in India were mainly servants of the Company. A few were officials, some were soldiers, and the rest were more or less engaged in commerce. Unfortunately the moral tone was appallingly low. When the Governor General himself, and important members of

his council, lived in open adultery, what could be expected of smaller men! Most of the officials had their Indian concubines, At best, with very few exceptions, they were in India solely for purpose of gain. Some of them amassed riches, many grew slack, and not a few unblushingly yielded themselves to a life of open debauchery and sin. The separation from home, the heat of India, and the general discomforts of life in a tropical country, were regarded as sufficient excuse for indolence and loose living. Newcomers speedily fell into the habits of their seniors, and the vicious circle was constantly enlarged.

(Ibid., p. 113)

When one studies the biographies of Carey and the early history of missionary work in India, one is almost overwhelmed by the tremendous difficulties and obstacles encountered by such men. And the human element predominates. Carey, for example, had a sweet and loving wife Dorothy, who was illiterate, and who trembled at any challenge beyond her native village. Her sister accompanied her to India and later married there, but Dorothy became mentally unhinged. For twelve years Carey had beside him a deranged partner.

There was another close associate named Dr Thomas—a man who loved Christ and the gospel, but who was ‘capricious, unthinking and unthrifty’. Thomas was to become a source of grief and constant anxiety to Carey, despite his dedication to the mission. Both Thomas and Carey’s wife at the time of his first public baptism (following seven years of missionary toil) were sequestered in nearby rooms deranged. The date was 28 December 1800. But in earlier days Thomas was able to make a contribution. He had a friend, George Udney, who owned two indigo factories that needed managers. For six years Carey managed the indigo plant while learning the Bengali language and revising his Bengali New Testament.

Deadly snakes were much more abundant than people in the district where the factory was located. ‘Almost every clump of prickly pear harboured its brace of deadly cobras’, and crocodiles were numerous in the nearby rivers and pools. The toll on human life was heavy, and the concerns that the wild life gave Dorothy Carey can well be imagined. A greater burden was the violent sickness and dysentery the missionaries

endured. Carey became prostrate and too weak to move. Add to this the fact that he was fourteen months in India without receiving a single letter. It was as though his friends of England had forgotten him. They had not, and ultimately came a treasure trove of correspondence.

The weather seemed to turn enemy to the missionaries. Carey wrote in 1798:

All my attention is required to repair what I can of the ravages of a very calamitous flood, which has just swept away all this year's hopes. About ten days ago I went all over the neighbourhood, and the prospects were charming. The fields were covered with rice, hemp, indigo, cucumbers, and gourds. On Friday last I went over the same parts in a boat, when not a vestige of anything could be seen. All was a level plain of water from two to twenty feet deep. The rivers have made two huge lakes, three miles wide and fifty miles long.

(*Ibid.*, p. 177)

In 1800, because of the constant threats from the East India Company, Carey moved to Serampore, a Danish colony. He was no longer without talented and stable helpers. William Ward, a printer, Joshua Marshman, a schoolteacher, and others came out from England and worked with Carey for the decades to come.

The shift to Serampore was triggered by the difficulty of getting four more mission families into India despite the East India Company. Happily, one director of the threatening Company was an evangelical Christian. His counsels and efforts led to a note of introduction from the Danish consulate in London to the governor of Serampore. And so, a company of twelve (four men, four women and four children) bypassed Calcutta and went straight to the Danish settlement. Here Carey and his associates did more for the cause of Christian missions than any group before or since. From Serampore came a stream of translations (in thirty-four languages), so that millions in Asia would find the Bible an unlocked book. Many of the languages used had never been printed before. In order to do this, William Ward made special punches.

India's rulers made Carey a Professor of Bengali and Sanskrit at the Governor General's College of Calcutta, and Carey served there for thirty years with distinction. More important, however, was the establishment of a Christian College by Carey and fellow workers at Serampore. (They

knew that there would never have been a Protestant Reformation but for Christian scholars.) The college would train innumerable indigenous ministers for the growing Christian church. It provided education in art and sciences for all comers regardless of caste or country. This College became the first degree-granting institution in Asia. Things were never entirely smooth sailing. After twelve years of mental illness, during which Carey refused to have his wife put in an institution, she died. In her later years she was a threat to both her husband and the children. In a letter home Carey wrote that he feared for his life. None can criticise Dorothy. She had been through trials that very few women could have survived.

Andrew Fuller, Carey's chief supporter in England, died in 1815. A bureaucrat succeeded him and proved to be a tyrant over the missionaries. So Carey severed his ties with the Society he had founded. His last years were lived quietly, and to a friend he declared, 'Not one of my desires has been left ungratified'.

Towards the close of his biography Walker pays a special tribute to Carey:

After the fashion of his time Carey kept a journal and wrote lengthy letters in which his piety and spiritual experiences are expressed with the utmost freedom. It is startling to read, "I think no man living ever felt inertia to so great a degree as I do". Frequently we find him bitterly upbraiding himself for inactivity and lack of zeal. He was perfectly sincere in writing thus. The climate of India is highly enervating; it saps the vitality and quenches the spirit. Men of weak disposition will go under, and even strong men have fallen victims to it. Carey never had a furlough or even a voyage to Burma or Madras. From the day he set foot in the country, it can be said with some degree of certainty that he never felt a really cold blast of wind. Even his iron frame must have felt the "listlessness" of the tropics stealing over him, and we may take it as certain that he had the same continual struggles with himself that other men have. But his tremendous sense of vocation and the overwhelming conviction that God had called him enabled him to overcome all the downward pull of life in the tropics.

(Ibid, pp. 248-249)

5 December 1829 was one of the happiest days of Carey's life, for on that day the famous edict abolishing *suttee* throughout British dominions and India was proclaimed. For a quarter of a century he had worked to this end, and now his was the task of translating the edict into Bengali. 'No church for me today', he shouted. Normally he did no work on Sunday, but this was different. 'If I delay an hour to translate and publish this, many a widow's life may be sacrificed', he said. He finished the assignment that very day.

To understand Carey's joy over the abolition of *suttee* it must be remembered that in the Bengali provinces alone each year 10,000 widows lost their lives because of a senseless and wicked tradition.

When he died on 8 June 1834, messages of sympathy from individuals and societies poured in to Serampore, and even the Calcutta newspapers gave him praise. How must the angels have sung and given praise to God who can take the weak things of earth and use them so mightily!

Chapter Five - The Englishman Who Loved China

Hudson Taylor (1832-1905)

Napoleon once expressed the opinion that if China awoke the whole world would be shaken. The complete fulfilment of this prophecy may yet be future, but to Christians the most marvellous thing about that great land is its rapidly growing Christian church. No one knows the exact number of believers in China, but seventy million is a frequently used figure. And that, of course, is several times the population of Australia.

While many missionaries from Roman Catholicism and Protestantism have worked in China, the most influential among them all is undoubtedly Hudson Taylor, the founder of the China Inland Mission. He began it with 'ten pounds and all the promises of God'. He was aged twenty-two when he first arrived in Shanghai, but his decades of missionary service were climaxed by preaching in the chief countries of Europe, USA, Australia and New Zealand. Ultimately, as a result of God's working through him, thousands left their homelands to serve Christ in lands where the Saviour was little known.

Before Hudson was born, his father prayed that if God gave him a son that son would spread the gospel throughout China. Hudson did not know anything about this prayer until years after he left England's shores. But at four years of age he had declared his ambition to be a missionary in China.

Hudson Taylor is a splendid illustration of 1 Corinthians 1:26-29:

For consider your call, brethren; not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth; but God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong, God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

As a child, the founder of the China Inland Mission was frail and often ill. So much was this the case that he had only two years of schooling. His mother taught him at home. Time and again in his biographies we read of his crises in health.

The most significant thing about the personal life of Hudson is his complete confidence in the promises of God regardless of all the negative appearance of circumstances. While still a teenager he resolved he would prove God before going to China, and he did. While working for a doctor who had told him to give a reminder when his salary was due, Hudson resolved he would never do that. He would depend on God to remind his employer. The day came when he owed rent, and possessed only the equivalent of thirty cents. A poor desperate man pled with him to come and pray for a very sick wife. He did so and observed the perfect poverty of the family's surroundings. He felt he could not pray in sincerity until he resolved to give them all he had. This he did, and went to his lodging singing.

The next morning came a postal parcel containing gloves covering a sovereign. But still the doctor forgot about Hudson's salary, until one day he confessed his renewed awareness. However, the good doctor had earlier deposited all his office money into the bank. So he still could not pay his junior at that time. Hudson worked late that night in the office, and to his surprise Dr Hardey returned laughing because a rich patient had insisted on paying him in cash. Now Hudson knew he could go to China.

The voyage took five and a half months amid mortal perils. Deliverances came, acknowledged by captain and crew to be from God. Arriving at the foreign settlement in Shanghai, China, Hudson realised that the same providence was his only hope for survival there, as China was involved in war, and Shanghai was invested by rebels. To make matters doubly worse, the Missionary Society that had paid his way to China had forgotten to send him funds and he was in embarrassment, cast upon the generosity of other missionaries. It was good training, which he remembered in later years when hundreds of missionary families were, to all outward appearances, dependent on him throughout inland China.

Calamity after calamity pursued him. The residence he had procured in the Chinese quarter was rained on by gunshot and cannonballs. His medical equipment was destroyed in a fire, and a Chinese servant stole his other possessions. In desperation he went to Ningpo, hoping to get medical equipment from a Christian doctor. There he met the love of his life. While in England a temporary but strong emotional attachment had been sundered, because his intended could not endure the thought of going to China. But now he found a young woman who had been left as an

orphan in China years before, and who was greatly loved by all who knew her.

Maria Dyer worked for Miss Aldersey, the principal of the first missionary girl's school in China. But Miss Aldersey saw no good in Hudson because he was not ordained, belonged to no missionary society and dressed in Chinese garb. She dictated a letter to the young suitor that his approaches were not acceptable and so threw him into temporary despair. A letter of appeal to Maria's legal guardian in England took months to bring a reply, for there were no cables in those days. Joyously, he and a fellow missionary planned to entertain Maria. But by the time they pursued their usual generous distribution to scores of the poor their funds were exhausted. What to do? They resolved to sell anything that would bring in money. They took a clock to a possible buyer who liked it, but who declared he would have to keep it for a week to test it before he could pay for it. The next try was a great iron stove, but they lacked the necessary fare for crossing the river to the hoped for purchaser. As they prayed on the morning that marked Maria's longed for advent, a knock at the door brought them a remittance from friends in England. Now they could afford a tea party.

Maria proved an ideal helpmate for Hudson and toiled by his side for twelve and a half years, bearing him four children. But typhoid fever took her at the age of thirty-three. Some years before the loss of his wife Hudson returned to England for restoration of health and passed through a spiritual crisis. As he examined his great map of China and thought of the twelve million or so dying without Christ every year he realised the need for desperate steps of faith. It would take twenty-four helpers to provide missionaries for each Chinese province. But the thought of being responsible for twenty-four people and their families overwhelmed him, until the day came when he surrendered to God and said in effect 'Let's do it'. In 1866, the Lammermuir party (called after their transporting vessel) left for China.

Life was never restful in China. Riots, continuous threats and sickness dogged every missionary. Hudson lost several children over a period of years. A different kind of crisis overtook him in 1869. Personally knowing the conflict of Romans 7:14-25, he longed for continuous spiritual victory. It came to him through the lines of one well versed in Christian battles. He read that 'Christ received is holiness begun; Christ cherished is holiness

advancing; to count upon Christ as never absent would be holiness complete'. He wrote that he now saw the main principle in the Christian life was not to sigh and struggle for more faith, but to keep one's eyes upon the faithful One, knowing that the Saviour could never leave his own. He saw that not only was Christ the vine, but that he was also the branches and the leaves, and that every believer was in that vine as part of Christ. How then could the believer be weak while Christ was strong?

Hudson's faith, growing by bounds, called for seventy more helpers, then a hundred and later a thousand. Many Christians know something of the story of the Cambridge Seven. The world's most famous cricketer, Charles Thomas Studd, was converted and joined Hudson Taylor and other university men to make a call for fellow missionaries that would resound through England, Scotland and, later, USA, Australia, and New Zealand. John Charles Pollock has written a book upon that remarkable providential stirring of the Christian waters throughout the world. Dwight L. Moody, along with Sankey, and helped by Henry Drummond, paved the way for the widespread spirit of missionary consecration that marked the 1880s around the world. And through it all Hudson Taylor was a leading spirit.

Hudson Taylor never made public appeals for money, but for half a century financial support came, reaching the equivalent of millions of dollars. When he was personally destitute, men like William Thomas Berger and George Muller (the founder of several English orphanages by faith alone) sent him generous funds—ultimately funds enough to support hundreds of missionaries scattered throughout inland China. The hand of providence is found upon every page of Hudson Taylor's life, and there can be no naturalistic explanation. God chose the weak and confounded the mighty. Satan's strongholds fell before the knock of faith, and multitudes of those once dead in trespasses and sins rose in resurrection life to change their world.

Chapter Six: The Unknown Child Who Found the Lord of Glory

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

Who has ever had had a congregation of a million? Spurgeon did, if we include the readers of his regular sermons. Later, the record tells of one hundred million of his sermons being translated into twenty-three languages. His influence was worldwide, and even today he is the most read of all Christian writers.

Providence governed every aspect of Spurgeon's life—his ancestors, his parents and grandparents, his conversion, his marriage and his preaching and writing. Providence even overshadowed his frequent illnesses. Thousands of frail ministers have been encouraged by Spurgeon's courage while incapacitated. In the mercy of God his infirmities did not prevent his preaching over 3,500 sermons that have blessed millions.

Spurgeon told the story of his conversion hundreds of times. It enshrined the very gospel he preached. From the age of ten he trembled because of his inborn depravity and his inability to perfectly fulfil the law of love. After having tried every church and chapel in his town, he was led to a tiny Methodist chapel. Ever afterwards, he praised God for the snowstorm that prevented the fulfilment of his original intention, and forced him down a tiny street into a very small building where only about a dozen were gathered.

The minister was snowbound, and a layman ascended the pulpit to proclaim Isaiah 45:22: 'Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth'. He stressed that looking was the simplest thing in the world, and that all were to look to their Substitute and Representative on Calvary. This was the only way forgiveness of sins and eternal life could be procured. The unknown speaker fixed his gaze on the boy and said, 'Young man, you look miserable, and you always will be unless you look. Look and live. You have nothing to do but to look'. So Spurgeon looked, and his world was transformed along with his emotions and thoughts. He felt like dancing all the way home. There, all could see that he had met with God. 'I, an obscure, unknown child, found the Lord of Glory', he often later confessed.

Beginning with tract distribution he soon was preaching and became the pastor of a small country church. Ultimately, he went to a fashionable, but almost empty London church, which grew and grew. Later, he founded the famous Metropolitan Tabernacle, where he preached for decades until his death. His religious background had been nonconformist, but his study of Scripture led him to baptism by immersion, and he became the most famous Baptist in the world.

Spurgeon came from a family of seventeen, nine of whom died in infancy. He was one of the two boys surviving. What a providence there was in that! By the age of six he was reading Puritan classics, such as *Pilgrim's Progress* (which he read over 100 times during his lifetime). Later, he told ministerial students:

He that does not read will never be read. He who doesn't quote will never be quoted. He who does not use other men's brains shows he has no brains of his own.

Ultimately, he had a personal library of 12,000 books, any of which he could have found in the dark.

Friends urged the young preacher to go to College. Reluctant to do so, he nevertheless agreed to have an interview with the famous Dr Angus, principal of a great ministerial college. He and Angus arrived on time, but a thoughtless servant girl showed them into separate rooms, where each waited for hours and then left without meeting. Such was the strange providence that put an end to Spurgeon's higher education. Henceforth, he read voluminously and interminably and was taught by the Spirit.

The London boy preacher of twenty had plenty of critics, but he outlived them and outpreached them. Sunday after Sunday, London streets were choked with people, horse-drawn vehicles were held up, and pedestrians were forced to find side streets. The crowds poured into his huge church, but sometimes believers chose to stay away so newcomers might take their place. Every Sunday, Spurgeon preached to 10,000 (at morning and evening services).

Soon he had established a College for ministerial hopefuls, an orphanage, a colportage (bookselling) association and other institutions. These were sustained by heaven's blessing, gifts from grateful listeners. Cities in England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales arranged meetings in the largest buildings that could be hired. People in USA demanded that cables

convey his sermons. One man purchased 250,000 copies of the sermons and distributed them to every crowned head in Europe and to university students and others. Newspapers in various lands published the addresses. They were even cherished in the goldmines of West Australia.

The day came when he stopped an attractive young woman leaving the Tabernacle with the question: 'Do you pray for him who is to be your husband?' She ultimately bore him twins who also became preachers. On one occasion Spurgeon gave a veiled description of his wife as follows:

She delights in her husband, in his person, his character, his affection; to her, he is not only the chief and foremost of mankind, but in her eyes, he is all in all. Her heart's love belongs to him and to him only. He is her little world, her Paradise, her choice treasure. She is glad to sink her individuality in his. She seeks no renown for herself; his honor is reflected upon her, and she rejoices in it. She will defend his name with her dying breath; safe enough is he where she can speak for him. His smiling gratitude is all the reward she seeks. Even in her dress she thinks of him, and considers nothing beautiful which is distasteful to him. He has many objects in life, some of which she does not understand; but she believes in them all, and anything she can do to promote them, she delights to perform. ... Such a wife, as a true spouse, realises the model marriage relation, and sets forth what our oneness with the Lord ought to be!

(Cited by Richard Ellsworth Day, *The Shadow of the Broad Brim*, p. 104)

The words will read strangely to many a modern clerical wife, but then it must be pointed out that even in the ministry Spurgeons are very rare indeed!

Susannah, at the age of thirty-three, became an invalid. Her husband's real love letters began at that time. In a period of over twenty years Susannah mailed out as gifts, chiefly to ministers, more than two hundred thousand books, many of them from her husband's pen. On one occasion when her husband had to leave home to preach she could not help weeping. He noticed, of course, and said: 'What! Crying over your lamb, wife? Do you think the children of Israel stood and wept over the lamb they laid on his altar?'

His sermons were always about Christ, his Cross and his salvation. They suited both Arminians and Calvinists for he declared that each group had truth as well as error. Justification by faith was a theme that permeated all his preaching. In his later years he condemned those preachers who denied the Atonement, the Resurrection, regeneration and the inspiration of Scripture. Finally, he withdrew from the Baptist British Union. Expecting sympathy, he was surprised by its lack. He was but following the experience of William Carey, William Booth and many others who discovered that tradition often wins over truth in denominations. The controversy of Christ versus Caiaphas is always present in every church. The principles of the gospel are usually the catalyst.

Spurgeon was frequently in the grip of Giant Despair. Depression overwhelmed him—partly because of inherited physical problems, but also as the result of overwork as his energies dissipated. His constant sufferings kept him near to the throne of grace. He could not but shed abroad the sustaining gifts of grace that kept him from sinking where neither man nor angel could help. I can remember being close to a breakdown from overwork. I left home and work for two days and read with great profit these words from Spurgeon:

Depression comes over me whenever the Lord is preparing a larger blessing for my ministry. It has now become to me a prophet in rough clothing. A John the Baptist, heralding the nearer coming of my Lord's richer benison.

(C. H. Spurgeon: Autobiography, Vol. 1, p. 264)

Despite his bouts of depression, Spurgeon had a depthless treasury of humour. It was a minor chord in much of his preaching and emerged strongly when he lectured to his students at the College. No doubt it was a gift to him from birth. Once he was away preaching and sent around a hat for an offering. When it returned empty, he gave thanks to heaven 'that I got my hat back'. (See his sermon on *The Good Samaritan* for other examples.)

One of his darkest hours was when visiting the sick and the dying at the time of a cholera epidemic. Despairing, he watched his friends die one by one until 'a little more work and weeping would have laid me low among the rest'. But one day when returning from a funeral he noticed a placard

in a shoemaker's window. It read: 'Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the Most High thy habitation, there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling'. The effect on Spurgeon was immediate, and he told friends that after reading the message he felt 'perfectly secure, refreshed and girded with immortality'.

Because of this affliction, he was enabled to help countless other sufferers. One day he received this letter:

Oh, Mr Spurgeon, that little word of yours, "I am feeling low" struck a chord, which still vibrates in my spirit. It was to me like reading the forty-second Psalm. I imagine there is nothing in your ministry to the saints that comes home more tenderly to tried and stricken souls than just what you there express, "I am feeling low". The great preacher, the author of *The Treasury of David*, this man sometimes, aye, often, "feels low" just as they do. In all their affliction he was afflicted—this is what draws hearts to Jesus; and the principle is just the same when the friends and intimates of Jesus "feel low". The fellow feeling, thus begotten, makes many wondrous kind.

Your friend in Jesus

John Louson

(Cited by Day, *Ibid.*, p. 179)

Spurgeon wrote one-hundred-and-thirty-five books and edited twenty-eight. Seventy-five volumes carried over 3,000 of his sermons that he had carefully edited. Yet once he affirmed that writing was the work of a slave. He slaved out of love to men and women. Very few people are good with both tongue and pen. But he was.

On two occasions he received personal gifts of over \$32,000, but he insisted on giving all away. His whole life was but commentary on the text, 'Whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it'. He had thousands of friends and co-labourers. For instance, in London, a young publisher named Joseph Passmore was drawn to him by cords that only death would break. He and his associate, James Alabaster, became Spurgeon's printers. Initially the project was a great risk, but ultimately it made the publishers wealthy, but ever generous. They were close friends of Spurgeon for thirty-three years, and all died within a few months of each other. On one occasion Spurgeon had the duty to rebuke

a man sharply for his transgression. The reply was: 'Well, that may be so; but I'll tell you what, sir, I would die for you any day'.

Once noticing the need of an unsuccessful elderly organ grinder he himself took over the organ, while amazed hotel guests showered both with English pound notes. No wonder his critics fell away one by one. To know Spurgeon was to love him. He refused to be ordained, once commenting, 'Where is the Scriptural warrant for such nonsense?' He despised the word 'Reverend' as applied to ministers and took it off all proof sheets. He also opposed what he called 'funeral fopperies', saying that the expenditures were more for the profit of the undertaker than anyone else. Not only did he shun all superfluous display, he modelled humility. In an early diary he wrote, 'Make me thy faithful servant, O my God; may I honour thee in my day and generation and be consecrated forever to thy service'.

He was decidedly Christocentric in his living and in his preaching. Once visiting Italy, and beholding the Coliseum, he climbed to its very top and began to sing: 'I'm not ashamed to own my Lord'. While American tourists looked up and joked, he went on singing: 'Am I a soldier of the Cross?' and 'Ashamed of Jesus?' In a travelogue lecture he challenged all his readers: 'Get a view of Christ and you have seen more than mountains and cascades and seas can ever show you. Earth may give its beauty, and stars their brightness, but all these put together can never rival him'.

His first words at the Tabernacle were these:

I would propose that the subject of the ministry in this house, as long as this platform shall stand, and as long as this house shall be frequented by worshippers, shall be the person of Jesus Christ. I am never ashamed to avow myself a Calvinist; I do not hesitate to take the name of Baptist, but if I am asked what is my creed, I reply 'It is Jesus Christ'. My venerated predecessor, Dr. Gill has left a Body of Divinity, admirable and excellent in its way; but the Body of Divinity to which I would pin and bind myself for ever, God helping me, is not his system, or any other human treatise; but Jesus Christ, who is the sum and substance of the gospel, who is in himself all theology, the incarnation of every precious truth, the all-glorious personal embodiment of the way, the truth, and the life.

(C. H. Spurgeon: Autobiography, Vol. 2, p. 34)

His last words were these:

If you wear the livery of Christ, you will find him so meek and lowly of heart that you will find rest unto your souls. He is the most magnanimous of captains. There never was his like among the choicest of princes. He is always to be found in the thickest part of the battle. When the wind blows cold he always takes the bleak side of the hill. The heaviest end of the Cross lies ever on his shoulders. If he bids you carry a burden, he carries it also. If there is anything that is gracious, generous, kind, and tender, yes, lavish and superabundant in love, you will always find it in him. His service is life, peace, joy. Oh, that you would enter on it at once! God help you to enlist under the banner of Jesus Christ.

(Ibid., Vol. 2, pp. 499-500)

It is fitting to close this brief review of Spurgeon by other representative quotations:

My Lord wore my crown of thorns for me, why should I wear it too? He took our griefs and carried our sorrows that we might be a happy people and be able to obey the command, "Take no thought for the morrow". Ours is the crown of loving kindness and tender mercies, and we wear it when we cast all our care on him who cares for us. *(Treasury of the New Testament, Vol. 1, p. 391)*

What a wonderful thing it is, that a mass of promises and prophecies, and types, apparently so heterogeneous, should all be accomplished in one person! Take away Christ for one moment, and I will give the Old Testament to any wise man living, and say to him, "Take this; this is a problem; go home and construct in your imagination an ideal character who shall exactly fit all that which is herein foreshadowed; remember, he must be a prophet like unto Moses, and yet a champion like to Joshua; he must be an Aaron and a Melchisedek; he must be both David and Solomon, Noah and Jonah, Judah and Joseph. No, he must be not only the lamb that was slain, and the scapegoat that was not slain, the turtle-dove that was dipped in blood, and the priest who slew the bird, but he must be the altar, the tabernacle, the mercy-seat and the shewbread".

Nay, to puzzle this wise man further, we remind him of prophecies so apparently contradictory, that one would think they never could meet in one man. Such as these, "All kings shall fall down before Him, and all nations shall serve Him"; and yet, "He is despised and rejected of men". He must begin by showing a man born of a virgin mother—"a virgin shall conceive and bear a son". He must be a man without spot or blemish, but yet one upon whom the Lord doth cause to meet the iniquities of us all. He must be a glorious one, a Son of David, but yet a root out of a dry ground. Now, I say it boldly, if all the greatest intellects of the ages could set themselves to work upon this problem, to invent another key to the types and prophecies, they could not do it.

I see you, you wise men, you are poring over these hieroglyphs; one suggests one key, and it opens two or three of the figures, but you cannot proceed, for the next one puts you at a nonplus. Another learned man suggests another clue, but that fails most where it is most needed, and another, and another, and thus these wondrous hieroglyphs traced of old by Moses in the wilderness, must be left unexplained, till one comes forward and proclaims, "The cross of Christ and the Son of God incarnate", then the whole is clear, so that he that runs may read, and a child may understand. Blessed Saviour! ... Everything is summed up in Thee.
(Ibid, Vol. 1, p. 671)

No evil can happen to me, seeming ill is but another form of benediction. If all events shall aid me, what matters in what dress they come, whether of scarlet and fine linen, or sackcloth and ashes. ... The bitter is sweet and medicine is food. Courage, ye shall meet naught but friends between this and the pearly gates, or if you meet an enemy it will be a conquered one. ... The winds which toss the waves of the Atlantic of your life are all sure to waft your ship safely into the desired haven. Every wind that rises, whether soft or fierce, is a divine monsoon hurrying in the same direction as your soul's desires. ... God walks in the tempest and rules the storm.

Chapter Seven - The Parlour-maid Who Stirred Hollywood

Gladys Aylward (1900-1970)

Only providence can account for the miracle of Gladys Aylward—the diminutive, poorly educated parlourmaid who found her way to China, acted as a spy during the conflict between China and Japan, and led one hundred children to safety over mountains and rivers. Originally viewed as a ‘foreign devil’ by the Chinese, she became a heroine to multitudes.

While still a teenager, Gladys was drawn to China. She was passing a church with a great banner in front advertising a meeting. Without really knowing why, she decided to enter. A young minister spoke about the accomplishments of missionaries in foreign lands, and so the seed was sown which was to become a mighty tree. She felt God was telling her that he wanted her in China.

Training at the China Inland Mission in London for three months led to a great disappointment. She was kindly told that at her age learning Chinese was almost impossible. Besides she had failed in her subjects. She was recommended instead to work for an elderly retired missionary couple in Bristol who encouraged her to persevere in her ambitions.

She became a rescue sister in the slums of the waterfront and the city. Here she saved many young girls who had fled their homes to seek adventure and ended up in prostitution. Working in all weathers, Gladys developed pneumonia and was advised by her parents to attend a local church and pray for healing. It was here that she heard about Jeannie Lawson, a very old missionary at Yangcheng in China, who was seeking a young helper. Correspondence ensued, and Gladys knew God was going to fulfil her heart’s desire.

Working as a parlourmaid—not only by day during the week, but on weekends and some late evenings also—she began to accumulate a small amount of money. Armed with this she went to a London Travel Bureau and enquired the fare to China. Ninety pounds! Impossible! Was there any cheaper way? Yes, she was told, she could go via the Trans-Siberian Railway, but the war between Russia and China made that impractical. The clerk insisted that his company wanted to deliver their passengers alive.

Gladys insisted that the clerk take regular payments, and on Saturday, 18 October 1930, she arrived at Liverpool Street Station for the adventure of her life. She had with her a Cook's traveller's cheque for two pounds, two suitcases, one of which had a kettle and a saucepan tied to its handle. Inside the cases, apart from clothes, were tins of corned beef and baked beans, plus tea and hardboiled eggs. She also had an old fur coat, which had been cut up and made into a rug.

All went well until she entered Russia. Here she was amazed to see starved and discouraged people at train stations. When she arrived at Siberia, she was told that all passengers must leave the train at Chita. She refused—had she not paid for a greater distance? Soldiers entered the train. Hours later she heard the sounds of gunfire and saw distant flashes light up the sky. Then came the end of the line with the battlefield a short distance beyond. Gladys was told that she must go back to Chita.

For hours she trudged through the snow by the railway line. Exhausted, she sat down on the icy cold rail and used her spirit stove to make herself a hot drink. Then arranging her suitcases into a windbreak, and using her fur rug, she tried to sleep, listening to the distant howling of wolves.

Eventually, Gladys saw the lights of Chita, and ultimately climbed onto its platform and collapsed. The next day she was arrested and interrogated by officials who misread the word 'missionary' as 'machinist' in her passport. They determined that she should work in a Russian factory. Desperately, she showed them coloured plates in her Bible, and insisted she was not a machinist. But when she showed them a photo of her brother in his army uniform, they believed him to be a dignitary. Finally, she was given a new ticket and a visa. She was told that she must change trains at a place called Nikolshissur.

Again, she was threatened by officialdom at the new city. They insisted that she must become a machinist, and a member of the secret police took her passport. But then providence intervened. Gladys found herself led by a young woman into a private area. She was told that her only hope was to escape as soon as possible. She was told she must demand her passport back and be ready at midnight. A man would knock on her door. She was to follow him, and he would lead her to the nearby port where Japanese ships were anchored.

All went as planned, and soon, thanks to a kind Japanese captain, she was on her way to Japan. From Kobe, Gladys caught another ship bound

for China. It took weeks for her to locate Jeannie Lawson, and the last part of her journey was by mule transport over mountainous terrain. Jeannie Lawson did not live long after Gladys arrival, dying because of an accident. By this time Gladys had Chinese friends who greatly respected her.

Then followed amazing years during which Gladys 'the foreign devil' learned the language and became friends with a Chinese Mandarin whom she would eventually lead to Christ. He appointed Gladys as foot inspector to enforce the new national laws against foot binding. In this job she was able to minister to many Chinese.

Perhaps the most spectacular event in those early years was when the Governor of the prison called Gladys to stop a riot. No one else would enter the bloody scene, but she was known to have the power of God with her. Gladys, no more than 4 feet 5 inches tall, was thrust into a courtyard where men were butchering each other. One towering inmate brandished a large, bloodstained chopper. He stopped with the axe mid-air just a few feet from this tiny woman. 'Give me that chopper, give it to me at once', ordered Gladys. The scene was frozen in time. He glared at her viciously and then suddenly surrendered his weapon. Everybody stopped yelling and fighting.

Gladys called all the men to her and asked them the reason for the riot. They told her that they had no work and very little food to eat. The boredom and semi-starvation excited them to riot. She promised them, that if they would retire from the slaughter and be patient, she would arrange great changes for the better. This she did. Later, with the Governor's permission she even had the prisoners attend a Christian worship service.

Then came the Japanese onslaught on Chinese cities. In Yangchen one day, Gladys heard a buzzing in the skies and looking up saw planes. Everybody in the town had stopped to gaze. They were not familiar with such a sight. It was a spring morning in 1938, and strange objects began to fall from the planes. Soon there were terrible explosions, and masonry and shrapnel filled the air. Gladys and a small group were praying in the Inn of the Eight Happinesses when their upstairs room suddenly subsided, and they slid downwards amid the chaos of timber, dust and plaster. Outside, nine people died.

When Gladys was disinterred from the enveloping chaos she took charge. Groups were organized to care for the wounded, to clear the

streets, and to find food for all. This was the beginning of her war service that lasted for years. She led group after group to safety in small villages on the side of hills. Particularly she gave her attention to the orphans. Becoming friends with a cultured and courteous Chinese officer, she now spied on Japanese movements and passed on her discoveries to Colonel Linnan.

One day she read at random in her Chinese Bible and found a passage she had not noticed before. It read:

Flee ye, flee ye into the mountains. Dwell deeply in the hidden places because the King of Babylon has conceived a purpose against you.

Gladys took this very personally. She knew that posters were plastered in the towns offering a reward to anyone who would hand her over to the Japanese. And then the fate of scores of orphans oppressed her. The decision was formed. She must take the children across the mountains to the Yellow River, and then beyond to an institution established by Madame Chiang Kai-shek in Sian.

Her project seemed crazy—to take numerous children of various ages, most of them between four and eight, on a trek for weeks across desolate mountains. Japanese troops were seeping through the mountain passes all the way to the Yellow River. Gladys hoped to use paths unknown to the enemy. The Mandarin promised her some bags of grain and two men to carry them for the first section. After this food ran out it would still take several weeks to get to Sian.

From then on, Gladys ate little. Hers was always the residue in the bottom of the pot. The older children helped with the younger, and for a while the children enjoyed their adventure. That didn't last. Soon there were cries to Gladys about how much further to the great River. Usually she responded in terms of days. The course of the sun kept them heading south. After heavy mountain mists they would gather around the rocks each morning and lick any moisture that accumulated through the night.

At one stage they ran into soldiers, and joyfully found they were Chinese nationalists. These shared their provisions with Gladys's family, and the children thought it a feast. None gave up, and all remained healthy. At last they reached the river, but there were no boats to be found, and the river was a mile across.

They decided to sing hymns, and the hymns brought them their boat, for a distant Chinese soldier heard their choruses. The bewildered soldier reached the great family and warned them that, although he could get them a boat, it would have to be used repeatedly. He could not guarantee that there would be no Japanese plane attacks. But the river was safely crossed, and the children in the front found a village about three miles ahead.

There the people gladly fed them. They were told that every morning a train stopped where they were, and went on towards Sian. Gladys confessed that she had no tickets but was told that all trains now were refugee trains. For four days they travelled, eating at occasional refugee camps en route. Because a bridge had been blown up, the train ultimately could go no further. Their only hope now was to cross the new mountains, for there were train lines on the other side.

Mercifully, they found small villages tucked here and there in the mountains. These fed the children. On the other side of the hills they learned that coal trains ran regularly to a town near to Sian. Japanese sometimes fired at this train, but that was nothing to Gladys. She piled her family abroad and laughed at their coal-black faces on arrival. They found a refugee organization, and were royally entertained. Now, at last, Gladys could sleep without concern. After many days, a train for Sian arrived and all piled aboard. But to their dismay, on arrival, they found Sian barred up, and watchers from the walls declared that none could now enter. Gladys was told to go away.

At this critical juncture, representatives of the 'New Life' movement found them and guaranteed to get them all safely to Fufeng where there was a great orphanage. And so it happened, but by the time they arrived, Gladys was terribly ill and spent weeks in hospital. She was cared for by missionary doctors who had no idea who she was, because she rambled deliriously in a distant regional dialect and looked Chinese.

On her recovery she turned her reviving energies to service for lepers at a colony near Tibet. After several years, the generosity of Americans paid her way back to Britain for needed medical care. On coming back to health she devised groups to help Chinese refugees pouring into England, and then she set off on lectures around England, the rest of Europe, and USA. After the Hollywood movie, *The Inn of the Sixth Happiness*, with Ingrid Bergman playing Gladys, she became the inspiration of millions.

Several books have been written about Gladys, beginning with *The Small Woman* by Alan Burgess.

May I offer you some of her last words? These are the last paragraphs of the paperback *Gladys Aylward: the Little Woman* as told to Christine Hunter:

It was the deep longing in my heart to see some of my children again, which made me determined to leave the comfortable, safe shores of England and go once more to share the hazards of the people I loved so much.

I could not return to Communist China, but I could go to Formosa and Hong Kong, and many of my loved ones had escaped to these places.

I felt I had finished my work in Britain. I had travelled far and wide telling of the sufferings of the Chinese Christians, and now I wanted to tell the gospel story more in places where it was no easy thing to be a Christian. I was getting older and felt that the years I had left had to be given to my Chinese people.

When I arrived I was given a wonderful welcome—how different from that first time I landed on Mrs. Lawson’s doorstep in Yangcheng. What a joy it was to be met by many of my children, now grown up and with families of their own, but still true to their Saviour. And what a tremendous thrill it was to be summoned to an audience with Madame Chiang Kai-shek herself, and to be thanked by her publicly for what I had done for the children of China.

The conditions under which many of the Nationalist Chinese were living horrified me. The sufferings that many of the refugees had undergone almost broke my heart. There was so much work to do, and I had so little with which to do it. With a handful of other Christians I began a mission in the refugee area of Hong Kong and an orphanage near Taipeh, but there was no money for even necessities.

Then came frequent calls from America to go and tell Christians there of the work, and eventually I felt that this was what God would have me do. Of my own choice I would have preferred to stay with my loved ones and share their privations, but it seemed to me that by going to America I could help in a more practical way. Churches in many places offered me the use of their pulpits, and promised support. So once more I set out for a strange country, knowing little of its customs or its people, but from the first they took me to their hearts and never have I spoken to more appreciative audiences. And again God has proved that if we trust him he will provide, for the organization known as *World Vision* has undertaken by faith to supply money for the support of the mission in Hong Kong and the orphanage near Taipeh.

My heart is full of praise that one so insignificant, uneducated, and ordinary in every way could be used to his glory and for the blessing of his people in poor persecuted China.

(pp. 152-153)

Chapter Eight - The Atheist Who Became a Missionary

Adoniram Judson (1788-1850)

Adoniram Judson was the first of America's foreign missionaries. He demonstrated principles of Christian missionary service that became a blueprint for hundreds who came after him. He was a translator and lexicographer, as well as a preacher of the gospel, and because of him millions of Burmese had the Bible made available to them.

As a young man he was too ambitious to settle for the life of a Christian minister so desired for him by his parents. A college friend converted him to atheism. But God had plans for him. After bringing heartbreak to his father and mother he set off to see the American world.

After many days he found himself seeking accommodation at a small country inn. As the landlord led him up the steps with the lantern flickering over their heads he told Judson 'Sir, I am sorry, but our only room available is next door to the room where a young man is dying'. Judson expressed his sorrow, but said it was acceptable to him. The night was filled with strange noises, and the footsteps of many coming and going. He slept little.

In the morning the birds were singing and the sun was warming the earth, so Judson felt to some degree refreshed. Seeing the landlord he asked after the sufferer in the room that had been next to his. 'I am sorry, Sir, to tell you, but he is dead'. Casually, not knowing why he bothered, Judson asked whether the landlord knew who the young man was. The reply shocked him, and left him feeling bewildered and weak. The name given was the name of his best friend from Providence College who had led him into unbelief.

Judson kept muttering to himself the words 'dead' and 'lost'. All his plans were surrendered, and he turned his horse homewards. To his surprise, he found on his arrival home that his parents had as guests two well-known College Professors from the famous Andover Seminary. In the following days he was persuaded to go at least for a short time to Andover and rethink his philosophy. Within three months he was converted to Christ.

Continuing providences in Adoniram's life led to his discovery of a book about India. He had heard of William Carey and his great work at

Serampore. He wondered who was following in his footsteps. Then there came to him the words of the Great Commission: 'Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature'. And he felt the words were for him.

To the Golden Shore by Courtney Anderson is the best account of Judson's life, and it is deeply significant that the book devotes about eighty pages to the extremely convoluted chaotic events that preceded the arrival of Judson and his wife in Burma. Characteristic of the experiences of the most renowned early missionaries were all those elements apparently designed to frustrate, disappoint, and discourage the would-be apostles of the gospel. Whether we read the historical accounts about Hudson Taylor, William Carey, Adoniram Judson, or other famous missionaries the story is the same—initial events occurred that seemingly were enough to discourage even the angel Gabriel.

When Carey conducted his first baptism of converts his wife and associate missionary were insane and restricted to separate rooms nearby. This was after seven years of an assortment of overwhelming trials. Hudson Taylor experienced repeated disappointments in his early days in China. For Judson also everything seemed to shout, 'Give up, go home'.

An initial trial for Adoniram was the discovery that his Greek New Testament did not support the Congregationalist practise of baptising by sprinkling. Conscience forced him to separate from the very denomination that was paying his way to missionary service. Even before that testing of his soul, his preliminary voyage to England seeking financial help resulted in captivity in France. This meant a delay of eight months (including the voyages) before his return to New England.

Courtney's comments on this unexpected bypass are important. He pictures Judson in the filthy hold of the French privateer:

At the very depth of his despair, however, a new thought came to him. Perhaps God was giving him a foretaste of missionary life to test his faith and determination (p. 90).

And a later reflection found on page 93:

He considered the experience invaluable for a missionary, and all the rest of his life "regarded his detention in France as a very

important, and indeed, necessary part of his preparation for the duties which afterwards devolved upon him”.

But these early difficulties were as nothing compared to the tangled sequence of events, which ensued between the Judsons' arrival in India and their ultimate landing in Burma. The East India Company, like almost all businesses, was only concerned with making money, not making Christians. They were determined to keep all missionaries out of their domains and used force to accomplish these designs. William Carey had been repeatedly frustrated in his efforts to begin his work in India. Only his making the centre of his work Serampore, a Danish possession, enabled him to defeat the Company's designs. For the Judsons the obstructions put in their path were much worse and would have sent lesser souls back to their homeland.

Seasickness, and the near sinking of their ship en route to India, did not cause the missionaries as much concern as the events following their arrival in Calcutta. Police, the agents of the East India Company, told the Judsons that they must leave Calcutta at once, and return to America on the same ship that had brought them to India. Their waiting in Calcutta till they could get a passage to Burma was not permitted. The missionaries were instructed that they could not attempt a mission in any British dominion. The governing Company had no wish for the natives to learn Western ideas, and particularly not the revolutionary ideas of the gospel.

To their surprise the Judsons found that the Company had booked their passage to England to get them out of India. They resolved to try another vessel that soon was leaving for the Île de France but found they needed a police pass. With some persuasion the Captain agreed to take them without a pass. Now the problem was getting their goods and themselves aboard ship without being seen. Midnight bribes accomplished the feat, but late that night the vessel was stopped by police. The passengers must be disgorged so they could go to England.

After much cajolery a pass for the ship was secured, but by then the *Creole* had left. However, it was customary for such ships to anchor a while at the port of Saugur seventy miles away. Hiring another smaller vessel, and blessed by a favourable wind, the missionaries caught up with the *Creole* and were taken aboard. Now their destination was Burma via the Île de France.

While to the Judsons these difficulties were temptations to give up their ideals and plans, later generations of Christians have seen the hand of providence in the whole messy affair. What happened to these pioneers would serve as a warning to their successors not to expect smooth sailing even when God was directing their path. The years of waiting until the first converts were baptised also had a purpose. Later workers in heathen lands would not be quickly discouraged by difficulties, because of what had transpired in the experiences of their predecessors. They would expect trials and thus were armed against them. William Cowper read the workings of providence wisely.

God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps on the sea,
And rides upon the storm.
Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break,
In blessings on your head.
Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace;
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.
His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower.
Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan His works in vain;
God is His own interpreter,
And he will make it plain.

When not far from Rangoon, the captain of the *Creole* told Judson that if they were wrecked on the threatening reefs they would be eaten by cannibals. Ann Judson was so ill on arrival at Rangoon that she had to be carried off the boat on a stretcher. Their accommodation would be a large house Felix Carey had built, but it adjoined smelly rubbish dumps. The

city consisted largely of mudflats and huts by the hundreds poised on poles above the mud. The one great building was the pagoda.

In this heathen city Judson would work for six years, surrounded by threats and trials, before baptising his first convert. But his faithful ministry had its gradual rewards as a tiny church began to grow. His linguistic skills enabled him to do his translating of both the New and the Old Testaments into Burmese and to finally prepare a Burmese dictionary. These were of incalculable benefit for later generations of missionaries. Back in America he had shown his skill in mastering Greek, Latin and some Hebrew. Not many are as linguistically skilled as he was. Clearly, providence had prepared him for his work.

Spending up to twelve hours a day working from scribblings on palm leaves was no sinecure. Only when he bought a horse and rode it every morning did his eyes and head cease to threaten him with surrender of his toils. Later he learned what we would call aerobic exercises to preserve his health. Ann at one time was so ill she had to return to Madras, England, and then America. Their first child Roger, who had given them such joy, lived only eight months. Years later, his sister Maria would also die. The time came when Judson himself had to leave Rangoon to recoup his decaying health.

The voyage intended for health almost destroyed him. Anticipating a two-week voyage and restored vigour, he was instead absent for seven months. His subsequent condition was far worse than when he had left Rangoon. Badcock in his *Adoniram Judson* has given us some insights into those awful days:

It was a terrible voyage. They were not prepared for such a long trip, and before many weeks had passed, provisions ran low. For three months they sailed on, trying to reach land. For much of the time they had to live on mouldy rice, picked up from native vessels. Water, too, was desperately short. Soon Judson became seriously ill. His headache and weakness returned, and then fever came on. All day long he lay in his cabin, tossing to and fro, and always crying out in his thirst: "Water! Water!"

When at last they reached land he was almost too ill to care. However, the captain roused him and persuaded him to send a note by the first shore

party. He addressed it to “any English resident” of the town, begging only a place on shore to die in. He had not long to wait for help. Presently, one of the men came below to tell him a boat was approaching. Dragging himself to the cabin window, he wept with joy and weakness to see two Englishmen, one a soldier, sitting in her bows.

“The white face of an Englishman never looked to me so beautiful, so like my conception of what angel faces are, as when those strangers entered my cabin”, he told Ann later.

It was many weeks before he could get a ship to Rangoon. Meanwhile, there had been trouble in that city. Another missionary had persuaded Ann that she must leave for Calcutta. But when their boat was delayed a little distance out she left it, believing Adoniram would soon be back. And he was.

But the chief crisis for the Judsons came during the British-Burmese war (1824-1826). To the shock of the Burmese leaders, the British found nothing but victory in their advance. Concluding that the only reason for this debacle had to be foreign spies, officers were sent to arrest Adoniram. On entering the Judson home a man with a spotted face seized Adoniram, flung him to the ground and bound him with a tortuous rope around his upper arms. He was thrown into a death prison, only to be shortly removed and taken with other foreigners to another town.

Ann desperately pursued, holding the infant Maria in her arms, first in a boat and then in a dusty cart. On arrival to the prison town she was exhausted, but found her husband in an old shattered building chained to a block-and-tackle arrangement permitting his feet to be raised and lowered. His hair and neck were covered in filth, his arms sore from the cut of the cord, and his ankles chafed raw from heavy fetters on his raised feet. Ann besieged the governor of the town pleading that her husband was American, not British. With an official form she returned to the prison and was confronted by a prison officer ‘who presented the most perfect assemblage of all the evil passions attached to human nature’. He demanded all the money she had and then let her pass.

Says Courtney Anderson:

Then she saw Adoniram coming out of the muck, *crawling*. Two days in prison had turned the most fastidious man she knew into a haggard, unshaven scarecrow, his usually spotless white starched

neckcloth a filthy rag, his neat black broadcloth suit dishevelled, torn and smeared with fragments of rotting plantain leaves. She could scarcely recognize him. She gave him one long horrified incredulous look, and hid her face in her hands. This much Gouger (another prisoner) saw before he turned his back. But that look and that gesture burned themselves into his memory forever.
(p. 312)

Adoniram and the other aliens were in prison eleven months. When they left their hair was matted, their eyes hollow, their bodies only skeletons. Ann's pass enabled her to visit Adoniram, but not to relieve him except with some special tidbits of food.

At one stage Ann spent six months in one of the two rooms of a jailer's wretched, dirty little hovel, sharing her space with a pile of grain. There the little Burmese girl she had rescued fell ill with smallpox, and then the baby. Last of all, Ann succumbed to the disease. And Adoniram, too, was desperately ill.

The success of British arms forced the Burmese to make peace. Swiftly came an order for the release of all the foreigners. But Judson was asked to go to the Burman camp to be an interpreter. Ann and Adoniram spent two weeks with the English army and they were treated with the utmost kindness and courtesy. All their forfeited property was restored. But death was still scything, and Ann developed a mortal fever and died at thirty-seven years of age.

'Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit' (John 12:24). The work of the Lord always has the Lord's own mark—the Cross. Christian service is never done exactly as we would choose. It is always marked by difficulties, dangers and disappointments. So it has always been for the apostles of Christ, for every messenger of grace. And so it was with the Judsons.

Their odyssey inspired countless other Christians. Missionary ranks swelled and overflowed. Millions in benighted lands were to reap gloriously from the bloody sowing of the first missionaries to Burma. Only those spiritually blind do not recognize the all-powerful hand of providence in their story. Despite countless dangers and illnesses, the work of translating the Scriptures into Burmese was accomplished, and a lexicon of that difficult language was brought forth.

Chapter Nine - The Monk Who Solved Life's Greatest Mystery

Martin Luther (1483-1546)

The claim has often been made that more books have been written about Luther than about any other person except Christ. One thing is certain—he has been much loved and much hated. But it is vital to understand that modern Roman Catholic scholars do not revile him as their predecessors did. They respect him and say ‘Amen’ to many of his revolutionary ideas.

An idea which cannot be seen or handled can be mental dynamite. Ernest Rutherford thought of the splitting of the atom, and now we live in a nuclear era, and are dependent on God to save the world from nuclear suicide. The Wright brothers thought men should be able to fly, and at this moment there are millions of people in the air, 30,000 feet up. Adolf Hitler promulgated the idea that the Jews were responsible for modern ills, and this foul aspersion caused the death of millions. Yes, ideas matter. They are almost infinitely powerful.

Martin Luther opened a book which had been sealed to most of earth's millions for 1,500 years. As he read Romans 1:16,17 and wrestled with its contents, he ultimately came up with tremendous ideas which changed his world, and laid foundations for the New World centuries later. What were those ideas? You don't have to be good to be saved (but you do have to be saved to be good). Only God is given away, and only heaven can be had for the asking. Salvation is free, because it was purchased for sinners by the Son of God's vicarious, substitutionary, representative sacrifice.

Luther has recorded his experience after the disappointing trip to Rome. He tells us that the Bible became a new book to him, that heaven opened its doors and that he now entered Paradise. He was a new man.

Here are the words that he read which caused him first despair, and then jubilation:

For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith, as it is written, “He who through faith is righteous shall live”.

(Romans 1:16,17, RSV)

Older versions translate the closing words as ‘the just shall live by faith’. It is vital to understand that the Greek word is the same for both righteousness and justice. Where many versions talk of ‘the righteousness of God’, others translate the same Greek ‘the justice of God’. Also, observe the order of the last words given by many modern translators. ‘Righteousness’ is linked with ‘faith’, and ‘live’ is a consequent. About fourteen times in chapters 1-5 of Romans the words for righteousness and faith are linked, but that is not the case in the following chapters. Chapters 1-5 are about the Christian message: righteousness comes only by faith; whereas the later chapters are about the Christian life. ‘Here is how justified sinners should live’.

When Luther first read these verses, because of his background, he immediately misinterpreted them to mean: ‘God demands perfect righteousness of us, and only if we develop such shall we live in his sight’. After much prayer and thought, he realised that the ‘righteousness of God’ was for us, to us, not by us. It was a divine gift to the empty hand of faith. The monk who had been so gloomy and depressed and so angry with God now understood the word ‘gospel’. It signified good news, not good advice or good views. As Tyndale later said it is such good news that ‘it makes the heart to sing and the feet to dance’. It is good news that centres around two great truths: God has taken on humanity (the incarnation of Christ) and he has paid for our transgressions—what Christians call the Atonement.

There can be no good news unless God took flesh in order to exemplify all that the love of heaven embodied. He became the truth; he became mercy; he became love; he became everything of value. Men may say that they believe in God, but not in Christ. Such belief does not satisfy the soul. As Alexander Maclaren declared many years ago: ‘When men turn their back upon the Cross, they look upon a landscape all swathed in mists, and on which darkness is steadily settling’. Humans want embodied love, which cares, converts, teaches and satisfies.

Again we quote Maclaren:

Oh! I sometimes wonder how it is that godless men front the facts of human life and do not go mad. For here we are, naked, feeble, alone, plunged into a whirlpool, from the awful vortices of which we cannot extricate ourselves. There foam and swirl all manner of evils,

some of them certain, some of them probable, any of them possible, since we are at discord with Him who wields all the forces of the universe, and wields them all with a righteous hand.

(Maclaren's Expositions of Holy Scripture, Vol. 11, p. 349)

As for the second great truth of the gospel that Luther believed and taught until death, it is such a truth that men could never have invented. It proves the inspiration of Scripture. J. Gresham Machen pungently wrote on the Atonement, which is the gospel's second distinctive teaching:

How shall you be at peace with Him? Many ways have been tried. How pathetic is the age-long effort of sinful man to become right with God: sacrifice, lacerations, almsgiving, morality, penance, confessions! But alas, it is all to no avail. Still, there is that same awful gulf. It may be temporarily concealed; spiritual exercise may conceal it for a time; penance or the confession of sin unto men may give a temporary and apparent relief. But the real trouble remains; the burden is still on the back; Mount Sinai is still ready to shoot forth flames; the soul is still not at peace with God. How then shall peace be obtained?

My friends, it cannot be attained by anything in us. Oh, that that truth could be written in the hearts of every one of you! Oh, that it could be written in letters of flame for all the world to read! Peace with God cannot be attained by any act or any mere experience of man; it cannot be attained by good works, neither can it be attained by confession of sin, neither can it be attained by any psychological results of an act of faith. We can never be at peace with God unless God first be at peace with us. But how can God be at peace with us? Can He be at peace by ignoring the guilt of sin? By descending from His throne? By throwing the universe into chaos? By making wrong to be the same as right? By making a dead letter of His holy law? "The soul that sins it shall die", by treating His eternal laws as though they were the changeable laws of man?

Oh, what an abyss were the universe if that were done, what a mad anarchy, what a wild demon-riot! Where could there be peace if God were thus at war with Himself; where could there be a foundation if God's laws were not sure? ...

How then can we sinners stand before that Throne? How can there be peace for us in the presence of the justice of God? How can He be just and yet justify the ungodly? There is one answer to these questions. It is not our answer. Our wisdom could never have discovered it. It is God's Answer. It is found in the story of the Cross. We deserved eternal death because of sin; the eternal Son of God, because he loved us, and because he was sent by the Father Who loved us too, died in our stead, for our sins, upon the Cross.

(The Good Fight of Faith, Machen's last sermon at Princeton Theological Seminary, March 10, 1929)

These were the central truths of the gospel that Luther preached and wrote about from the time of his understanding of Romans 1:16,17 until his death. We paraphrase his teaching in the following paragraphs to be followed by exact quotations from his pen.

Righteousness before God was not to be achieved but to be received. It does not become ours by penance, sacrifices, churchgoing, long prayers, even Bible reading, or listening to officials of the church. It is a gift. That word occurs over and over in the last verses of Romans five, and because we are spiritually stupid the Greek text even speaks of 'the free gift'. How could there be any other gift, if gift it be?

It seems too good to be true. That, through faith alone, the sinner should become free of all condemnation, that his sins of the past, present, and the future, have all been paid for, that he has the verdict of the last Judgment even now, and eternal life thrown in. We will miss the glory of all this unless we understand that to be justified never means to make righteous internally. It means to be accounted righteous. Fullness of merit is imputed to the penitent sinner. And it is over him or her all the time until glorification, as the cloud continually sheltered the Israelite pilgrims.

If justify meant to make us righteous internally, then none of us could claim it. Which of us is perfect through and through? Suppose you ask a huge audience: 'Whoever is perfect, let him or her stand up'—how many would stand? Only idiots. In Romans 4:5 we are told that God justifies the ungodly, and about a dozen times in this chapter we read of justification as a status imputed, not a state achieved. It has to do with our position, not our condition.

Luther insisted that justification had to be distinguished from sanctification. The righteousness of the first is one hundred per cent, but

it is not inside us. It is imputed. The righteousness of sanctification is inside us, but it is never one hundred per cent. It is imparted. Justification is the Christian message, but sanctification is the Christian life. 'Christ received is holiness begun; Christ cherished is holiness advancing; Christ counted upon as never absent would be holiness complete'. But Luther preached that the Christian 'is always a sinner (though not a wilful one), always a penitent, and always right with God'.

Justification is not just forgiveness; it is acquittal. It means to be treated as though we had never sinned. In Scripture it is always the opposite of condemnation. And condemnation does not mean to make bad, but to declare bad. Justification declares us accepted in the beloved, complete in Christ, despite what we are in ourselves. We are not under law as a covenant; we are not under its curse. See Romans 6:14, Galatians 3:10; 2:19. We were ruined without asking for it by our representative, the first Adam, and we were redeemed without any doing on our part by our second Representative, the Second Adam. See Romans 5:18.

In essence, the reformed monk taught the world that, according to the gospel, righteousness (justification) is free, and it is for all who want it enough. This justification was not just for the past, not just for probationary time, and it was perfectly consistent with residual sin. It does not destroy the law (though we are no longer under it as a covenant), nor does it make sanctification unnecessary. The gospel means nothing other than justification (righteousness) by faith alone, and that faith has no inherent merit. It is but a channel along which grace pours.

So now Monk Martin had something to sing about, and sing he did. He could tell his listeners that this wonderful gift was for everyone who believed. It was not only for a select few. God's invitation to his party is not like ours. 'Whosoever will may come'. There was no barrier between us and heaven, except the barrier of our unbelief. The best is for the worst. Yes, Satan tells me that I am a sinner, but Luther's reply is that Christ came not to call the righteous but sinners. God's gift is not just for Greatheart, but for Little Faith.

A tiny filament of wire can carry electric current as surely as a huge thick cable. Does not the commended woman of Mark 5:24-34 illustrate the certainty of the great reward though our faith be an ignorant and deficient one? Is not the faith of every believer very much like the moon, often only a tiny arc rather than at the full, always marred by shadows

and missing sections? Yet, it is selected by Christ to be the light of our night, and the key to our salvation. How could he have made salvation easier?

There is no merit in faith, Luther insisted. We are not saved because of faith but through faith. It is only the channel. And it is evoked when the gospel is preached. If we do not resist the good news, the Holy Spirit creates faith. Even those poor souls who claim that they do not have it in them to believe can remember that Romans 10:13 declares that all who call will be saved. Anyone can call, whether learned or ignorant, rich or poor, healthy or sick, reputable or disreputable. Anyone can call. You can call. And Luther said we should call now, the moment we hear the gospel. The fatal word that fills hell is 'tomorrow'. Today is the day of salvation, now is the appointed time. See 2 Corinthians 6:2.

How all this works out is clearly told us in Scripture. Our guilty first parents were clothed by a sacrifice that they did not provide. Noah's family was saved, although God declared that only Noah was righteous. Ruth—the alien forbidden by law—found grace, acceptance and fruitfulness through the generosity of Boaz, the lord of the harvest. The crippled Mephibosheth, living abjectly in exile as an enemy of the king, receives an invitation to come home. He is clothed with garments that cover his crippled feet. He sits at the royal table with the king—all because of a covenant made long before. Though crippled by a fall for which he was not responsible, by grace he becomes a member of the royal family. See 2 Samuel chapters four and nine.

Look at the penitent thief on the cross. His hands are nailed so he can do no great works for Christ. His feet are spiked, so he cannot run any messages for Christ. But he sees and believes and receives Paradise. That's the way we are all saved. That was Christ's message to Nicodemus. See John 3:15,16. That is the everlasting gospel. That was the message of Martin Luther, and today not only the evangelicals of Protestantism, but also the best scholars of Roman Catholicism affirm that gospel.

What difference does it make to the believer? He will see God differently, as for him not against him, as overwhelming in love, grace, pity and mercy—not a stern vindictive judge. He will see human beings differently, for they are to be recognised as the purchase of the blood of Christ. How the believer treats others is how he treats Christ. See Matthew 25:40. The believer sees himself differently. He need not be afraid to

confess his failings, his mistakes and his unchristlikeness, for he is still accepted in the beloved. See Colossians 1:10; Ephesians 2:6. He will see his duty differently. For none of us lives to himself alone. 'If we live, we live to the Lord' (Romans 14:8). We are not our own. We can claim nothing as our own except our sins. All we have is the purchase of the blood of Christ. Therefore, we are stewards. Our chief duty is to take the gospel to the world. All the material goods God has given us are to be used to do that, while keeping ourselves, our families, in body and mind as the privileged and holy temple of God. The person who spends selfishly is a thief who has never seen the meaning of the cross.

So we even see our possessions differently. They are not ours. They are Christ's, lent to us; they must be used to his glory. How solemn to read in Mark 10 the story of the rich young ruler who left Christ because he had great possessions. Immediately, the Lord says that it is as difficult for a rich man to enter heaven as for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. What a staggering verse! Many have tried to water it down. But it means what it says. If we think of our goods as our own (like the rich fool of Luke 12) we shall never see heaven. Christians are only stewards, gratefully using all God has lent to minister to the world. Do not steal from God by paying a tithe and treating the other nine-tenths as our own to be used selfishly. Our health, talents, privileges, time and possessions—all are his.

The chief evidence of whole-hearted dedication to God is manifested in the mature Christian's disposition. It is permeated by the love of 1 Corinthians 13, yet embraces more. We could call it by a word that makes angels sing, but which humans nearly all ignore—humility. What is humility? Let Andrew Murray answer:

Humility is perfect quietness of heart. It is to have no trouble. It is never to be fretted or vexed or irritated or sore or disappointed. It is to expect nothing, to wonder at nothing that is done to me, to feel nothing done against me. It is to be at rest when nobody praises me, and when I am blamed or despised. It is to have a blessed home in the Lord, where I can go in and shut the door, and kneel to my father in secret, and am at peace as in a deep sea of calmness, when all around and above is trouble.

Murray, of course, is just expanding Matthew 11:29: 'Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest for your souls'.

According to the Apostle Peter this is an ideal for every believer: ‘All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble”’ (1 Peter 5:5, NIV).

Christ told his disciples that they would always be in trouble, but never fighting on their own, and that fear was to be alien to them. Paul says the same. Note Romans 15:13, ‘May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit, you may abound in hope.’

The height of our joy and peace and hope depends upon the depth of our thanksgiving to God. Albert Schweitzer had it right when he taught in his *Reverence for Life* that the meaning of life is to give thanks for all as God’s gift. The New Testament repeatedly tells us to give thanks for everything. Even apparent evil will work out for good. The one who knows the gospel will discern privilege in all hardships, order in confusion, success in failure. Calamities will be seen as disguised mercies, and woes as blessings. What a new world indeed for the believer! No wonder Martin Luther, despite the continuous attacks on his life and the unending aspersions on his character, loved to play the lute and sing. He even composed much music, such as, ‘A Mighty Fortress is our God’.

No wonder Martin’s life was surrounded by merciful providences. Not only when he feared lightning might strike him dead, but after Charles the fifth declared him an outlaw. Such confidence had he in Christ that, when warned about the danger of going to Würms, he declared, ‘Though there be as many devils there as tiles on its roof-tops yet I shall go’.

Martin Luther was brought up in the home of German peasants. His parents were strict, but not without love. The father determined his son should be a lawyer. Martin began the training, but felt he was not doing what was best. He returned to his home in 1505, but his mother told him not to communicate his doubts to his father. A few days later, journeying back to Erfurt University, he found himself enveloped in a tremendous storm. Roland Bainton states in *Here I Stand*:

The immediate occasion of his resolve to enter the cloister was the unexpected encounter with death on that sultry July day in 1505. He was twenty-one and a student at the university of Erfurt. As he returned to school after a visit with his parents, sudden lightning struck him to earth. In that single flash he saw the denouement of

the drama of existence. There was God the all-terrible, Christ the inexorable, and all the leering fiends springing from their lurking places in pond and wood that with sardonic cachinnations they might seize his shock of curly hair and bolt him into hell. It was no wonder that he cried out to his father's saint, patroness of miners, "St. Anne, help me! I will become a monk".

Luther himself repeatedly averred that he believed himself to have been summoned by a call from heaven to which he could not be disobedient.

(p. 32)

Only twenty-one years old, he now left the university and entered a cloister. Fastings, vigils and scourgings, as well as zealous study, characterised his days. He later wrote 'If ever a monk could obtain heaven by his monkish works, I should certainly have been entitled to it... . If it had continued much longer, I should have carried my mortifications even to death'. It was as though he slept upon the Decalogue as a pillow. God's loving providence raised up for him a great counsellor, the Vicar-General Staupitz. He told Luther to look away from himself and hell, and instead look to Jesus. 'Instead of torturing yourself on account of your sins, throw yourself into the Redeemer's arms. Trust in him, the righteousness of his life, in the atonement of his death. You are angry at God, but he is not angry with you'.

Not long after, he was called from the monastery to the University of Wittenberg. Here he became mighty in the Scriptures, and a preacher whom multitudes loved to hear. But a chance visit to Rome filled him with misgivings. Later he could say: 'If there is a hell, Rome is built above it'.

In those days divine grace was a commodity bought and sold. An official by the name of Tetzl was authorised to sell indulgences in Germany. He promised safety from hell for purchasers, and safety for their departed loved ones. Luther was scandalised and declared, 'I will put a hole in his drum'. And he did. On a special festival day he posted his ninety-five theses on the church door at Wittenberg. It was an invitation to debate the theses he had proposed. In a matter of weeks, they had permeated all of Christendom. After preliminary skirmishes with Rome's champions, the Emperor Charles V summoned Luther to Würms.

The outcome is well known. After much controversy Luther was called to recant of his writings and beliefs. Here is his reply:

Since then Your Majesty and your lordships desire a simple reply, I will answer without horns and without teeth. Unless I am convicted—by Scripture and plain reason—I do not accept the authority of popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other—my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. God help me. Amen

Historian Roger Bainton tells us that:

The earliest printed version added the words: “Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise”. The words, though not recorded on the spot, may nevertheless be genuine, because the hearers at the moment may have been too moved to write.

(Here I Stand, page 185)

Many who have stood before councils for conscience’s sake have echoed Luther’s words. Carey, Wesley, Whitefield, Spurgeon, William and Catherine Booth and many others have challenged and been challenged by their own church governments. God knows that history has proved them right. The New Testament recognizes no church hierarchy and plainly teaches the priesthood of all believers. The conflict between Christ and Caiaphas is always with us.

Spirited away from Würms by the sympathetic Elector of Saxony, Frederic the Wise, Luther found himself in Wartburg castle. Here he translated the New Testament, and later with help from others, the Old Testament as well. Here he wrote much to stir the consciences of all who claimed to believe in God.

Infallibility did not belong to him or any other reformer. Willing to risk his life and comforts for the sake of Bible truth he none the less erred in a variety of ways. In his last years, when his health was deteriorating and with it his spirits, he became intensely anti-Jewish. It was not on racial grounds, only on religious grounds, but grounds that were not good enough. He that is without sin amongst us, let him be first to cast a stone.

It is appropriate that we should let Luther speak for himself. Here are some typical snippets from his many writings.

Justification

Justification is our only protection, not only against all the powers and plottings of men but also against the gates of hell. [It means] by faith alone in Christ, without works, are we declared just and saved. The article of justification is the master and prince, the lord, the ruler and the judge over all kinds of doctrines; it preserves and governs all church doctrine and raises up our conscience before God. Without this article the world is utter death and darkness. No error is so mean, so clumsy, and so outworn as not to be supremely pleasing to human reason and to seduce us if we are without the knowledge, and the contemplation of this article.

The doctrine of justification must be diligently learned; for in it all the other articles of our faith are comprehended. And when that is safe, the others are safe also.

This doctrine is the head and the cornerstone. It alone begets, nourishes, builds, preserves, and defends the church of God and without it the church of God cannot exist for one hour. For no one who does not hold this article—or to use Paul's expression, this 'sound doctrine' (Titus 2:1)—is able to teach aright in the church or successfully to resist any adversary. ... This is the heel of the Seed that opposes the old serpent and crushes its head. That is why, Satan, in turn, cannot but persecute it.

The article of justification and of grace is the most delightful, and it alone makes a person a theologian and makes of a theologian judge of the earth and of all affairs. Few there are, however, who have thought it through well and who teach it aright.

Nothing more is required for justification than to hear of Jesus Christ and to believe on him as our Saviour.

But faith, which the Holy Spirit infuses into us when we hear about Christ, lays hold of Christ And no sin, neither our former sin nor that remaining in our flesh, is laid to our charge.

Of this article nothing may be yielded or conceded, though heaven and earth fall to ruin. ...

The article of justification must be learned diligently. It alone can support us in the face of these countless offenses and can console us in all temptations and persecutions Christ directly promises eternal life to him who believes on him. He does not say: Whoever believes on me *will* have eternal life; but: as soon as you believe on me, you already *have* it. ... If you can believe on me, you are saved, and eternal life is already bestowed on you. ... We are to do works, render God obedience by them, and be pious; but they will not do for our salvation. Eternal life is mine before I die.

Although we cannot get rid of sin altogether in this life and some of it always remains, even in the most saintly, yet believers have the comfort that these sins are covered for them through the forgiveness of Christ, and are not put to their account for condemnation as long as they continue to believe in Christ.

The righteousness of God is that by which we are justified, or the gift of the forgiveness of sins. This righteousness in God is pleasant, because it makes of God, not a righteous Judge but a forgiving Father, who wants to use his righteousness, not to judge but to justify and absolve sinners.

The 'righteousness of God' is always taken to mean faith and grace in the Scriptures. ...

This, then, is the amazing definition of Christian righteousness. It is the divine imputing or accounting for righteousness or unto righteousness because of faith in Christ or for Christ's sake. ... Therefore this unspeakable gift excels all reason: God accounts and acknowledges him as righteous without any works who apprehends his Son by faith alone. ...

It is a foreign righteousness entirely outside us, namely Christ himself is our essential righteousness and complete satisfaction.

Insist on it, then that inwardly, in the spirit, before God, man is justified through faith alone, without all works, but outwardly and publicly, before the people and himself, he is justified through works, that is, he thereby becomes known and certain himself that he honestly believes and is pious. Therefore you may call the one a

public justification, the other an inward justification, but in this sense that the public justification is only a fruit, a result, and proof of the justification in the heart. ... This is what St. James means in his Epistle when he says (2:26) "Faith without works is dead", that is, the fact that works do not follow is a certain sign that there is no faith, but a dead thought and dream, which people falsely call faith. This is the rule, and this must be the verdict: Either go to hell or consider your own human righteousness a loss and mere dirt. (All these statements come from the three-volume anthology *What Luther Says* compiled by Ewald M. Plass, Quotations 701, 703, 704, 707, 718, 719, 723, 1225, 1227, 1229, 1230, 1232, 1233.)

It should be remembered that the opprobrium poured on Luther in his lifetime, and for a long time after, is now out of date. Roman Catholic scholars today have great respect for the Reformer, and for his teaching on justification. See, for example, the commentary, *Romans*, by Joseph A. Fitzmyer.

Chapter Ten - Literary Miracles and the Supreme Miracle of Choice

We have so far drawn from science, the Old and the New Testaments and the biographies of some whom God has greatly used. The Bible offers undeniable evidence regarding the existence and providence of our Creator. It should not be just read, but studied.

For example, the story of Joseph, the despised Jew who saved his world with the bread of life, is in itself a miniature of the four Gospels. Some of the very words and expressions as well as ideas written centuries after Genesis are found in the ancient story. See *The Study of the Types* by Ada R. Habershon, pages 169-174, for over one hundred and fifty of these.

Kindly read those last words again, and marvel at the miracle there expressed. In all the literature of the world there is no parallel to this verbal miracle. Only divine inspiration can explain it. But the miracle does not end there. Habershon has done the same with Moses, another type of Christ, listing about one hundred and thirty parallels between the story in the Pentateuch and that in the Gospels. Rightly understood, the Bible is a book about Christ.

Everybody knows that the Old Testament is full of references to priests, sacrifices, kings, prophets, judges, sanctuaries and temples, but not everybody has learned that all of these find their ultimate fulfilment in Christ.

Arthur Pink, writing on Joseph, found over four score parallels between his life and the Saviour he prefigured. This is why the Scriptures give to that single life more than ten times as much space as it gives to the creation of the universe. Read the life story closely. It is full of providential interpositions, without which that ancient world might have perished. No wonder Joseph could say to his penitent brethren: 'God sent me before you to save your lives by a great deliverance' (Genesis 45:7).

That same providence surrounds every Christian, and nothing can touch him except by divine permission. God is the one great circumstance, and all other circumstances the wisest and best because either permitted or initiated by him.

One of the most mysterious chapters of the Bible, Ezekiel 1, is a symbolic presentation of divine providence. This also calls for intense study, not a mere reading. But the fruitage makes it worth the effort. The

description of the heavenly throne seems so intricate, but at every point, whether the revolving wheels full of eyes, or the stable axis, or other features, providence is symbolised. It may be that some who have read these lines have never trusted their lives to the hand of their loving heavenly Father.

Because life is so brief we would urge you to accept the gospel without delay and find grace unlimited and joy unbounding.

A whole book describing the taste of honey would not be as useful as the tasting of a tablespoon of the nectar. Scripture says: 'Taste and see that the Lord is good'. Taste today, this very hour. Now! It is not hard to do if you linger by Calvary enough.

No one can ever love God until convinced that God loves him, and the Cross of Christ reveals that supernal love. Our sins crucified him, but he willingly chose to suffer so, and he loves us even in our weakness and sin. Do not spit in his face. Give yourself to him without delay.

Time and place will cease to know you,
Men and things will pass away,
You'll be moving on tomorrow.
You are only here today.

Every act of our life is determined by our beliefs about the undergirding realities of existence. These beliefs may be overt or intrinsic, but everyone is guided by them. You may choose to believe that all is the product of chance, that you are only 'a meaningless clot of coincidental molecules'. Or you can choose to believe that the Universe not only had a Creator, but that that Creator is a sovereign King who attends the funeral of every sparrow and counts the hairs of your head, your tears and your sighs.

In all the manifold sorrows of life there is inexpressible comfort if one believes the words of Christ: 'Your heavenly Father knows'. As every dark night gives way to morning; and every arc of a new moon gives way to a glorious fullness; as every low tide is succeeded by a high one; and every sown seed by the spectacle of new life; for the believer every shadow of death is followed by glory and eternal joy. Can you imagine anything more wonderful, or more satisfying?

Love all God's creation, both the whole and every grain of sand. Love every leaf, every ray of light. Love the animals, love the plants—love each separate thing. If you love each thing you will perceive the mystery of God in all; and when once you perceive this, you will thenceforward grow every day to a fuller understanding of it: until you come at last to love the whole world with a love that will then be all-embracing and universal.

(Fyodor Dostoyevsky)

Why GOD?

MORTIMER ADLER, the genius behind Britannica's *Great Books of the Western World*, said that the most important question ever asked is Does God Exist?

He declared that this towered above all other questions because it has more impact on all other issues of life. A moment's thought validates Adler's claims. Where there is no God, there is no man (only a meaningless clot of coincidental molecules), no meaning, no values, no forgiveness of sins, no hope, and no immortality.

This book sums up the current logical and scientific evidence for God's existence, and then illustrates the fact of divine sovereignty as demonstrated in well-known lives. The experiences of John Newton, William Carey, Hudson Taylor, Charles Spurgeon, Gladys Aylward, Adoniram Judson, Martin Luther are chronicled with emphasis on events that statistically are beyond chance. Every reader will here find encouragement and hope to successfully meet the challenges of everyday life.



Dr Desmond Ford is the founder of *Good News Unlimited* and has written many books on Jesus and his gospel. Good News Unlimited is a global Christian media ministry that spreads the Word like wildfire through simple gospel content. Because Word Spreads Fast.
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