

March 1994

# The Moral Vacuum

A believing Christian had been elected to represent a rural constituency as a member of the French parliament sometime last century. On arrival in Paris, having no acquaintances or relatives in that city, he enquired as to where he could find respectable lodgings. At length he was directed to an address, and after inspection decided he would stay there for at least three months.

"I will take these rooms, and will pay the three months rent now," he told the landlord and produced the cash sum.

"Thank you very much," said the landlord, "I will write you a receipt immediately."

"There is no need," answered the Christian, "God was witness."

"Do you believe in God ?" sneered the landlord.

"Yes, I do. Don't you ?

"No I don't." the landlord answered.

"In that case I will have a receipt" said the Christian.

This little story illustrates the only possible basis for morality. Without religion there can be no morality, and without morality there can be no law.

Our English Prime Minister last year declared war on declining standards. Conduct which is not fitting for public office will no longer be tolerated. Yet the campaign appears to have been a failure, as more and yet more government officers have been shown to be delinquent in conduct. Unfortunately the Prime Minister is an avowed atheist, so the moral crusade has no real motivation, other than expedience and tradition. The press have

probed the lives of many ministers and have found them wanting. In spite of the many words of exhortation there is nothing at the heart of the campaign.

There has been a series of programmes on national radio in England, probing into the cause of the present decline in standards. This series is titled "The Moral Maze," and in it an eminent psychologist questions the basis of people's actions and motives. No doubt many people listened with interest to the first few programmes, probably hoping to find a reason for the current morass which passes for order. Others may have hoped that an answer would be found, enabling the authorities to put into action a plan to redress the current decline.

It is significant that those who could not live with God now cannot live with themselves. Society is daily becoming more fragmented. Many children now have televisions or computers in their own rooms, and have become remote from their families, often joining parents only at mealtimes. Frequently we hear of a lack of community spirit in a neighbourhood, as families become withdrawn from neighbours. Countries comprised of a group of smaller states which once were united are now fragmenting as sectional interests become the main motivation.

The cause of most problems, both family and national, and the reason why our Prime Minister's 'Back to Basics' crusade has failed is that THERE IS NOTHING AT THE CENTRE. Mere expedience or tradition will not fill the moral vacuum.

We take comfort from the scriptures, particularly from Colossians 1:19 "ALL HAS ITS COHESION IN HIM." It is God's love and His purpose which gives reason to the universe. Without Him nothing will cohere. The late E.H. Clayton once remarked "Ignorance of God is the cause of all earth's woes !" We also rejoice that the revelation of God will ultimately result in the reconciliation of all mankind.

# NEWSDESK

## IN AMERICA MEETINGS IN 1994.

Meetings dates have been announced for the **1994** year, as detailed below. Please contact the secretary whose phone no. is given for further details.

April 23. Clint Tenniswood, 1226 E. Sheridan Line Rd. Melvin, MI48454. ☎# 313-378-5734. Call Dean Hough: ☎# 313-798-8131.

May. 14. At Tom and JoAnne Hough's. 7170 Hough Rd., Almont, MI 48003. ☎# 313-798-8734. Call Dean Hough, Host. ☎#313-798-8138.

June 10, 11, 12. Ted McDivitt, 9500 Wolf Rd., Windham, OH 44288 ☎# 216-326-2554.

July 16. Leonard Bowerman, 229 So. Detroit St., Lansing, MI 48912 ☎# 517-371-3690. Meetings at Truth and Grace Chapel, 600 Regent St.

August 5,6,7. Grace & Truth Chapel, Baldwin, MI 49304. Phone for info. ☎# 616-745-7562.

Sept 10. Orville Hunt. Same location. See info above.

Sept 30, Oct 1,2. Grace & Truth Chapel. See info above.

November 5, at Tom and JoAnne Hough's See info above.

December 3. Grace and Truth Chapel. See info above.

## IN ENGLAND.

**May 8th at 2 pm and 5:30 pm** The Bible Hall, Park St, Blackheath Birmingham. Further details contact Roy Reece, 0384-279781.

**August 19th-21st.** Annual Concordant Conference at Bramcote, Nottingham

Full board £50-00. for 2 nights accommodation. Conference now concludes on Sunday afternoon to allow travel home in daylight. For further details contact Mrs Joyce Orton on Nottingham (0602) 258425.

# OUR SECURITY IN GOD'S PURPOSE

By Andrew Maclarty.

*"Now we are aware that God is working all together for the good of those who are loving God, who are called according to the purpose that . . . ."*

The notion that salvation can be lost, or needs to be sustained by our own efforts, is common to many sects or denominations. Frequently we are met with such quotations as, "He that endureth unto the end shall be saved," or, "If we hold fast the profession of faith." Yet these statements of scripture are not found within a context which applies to the church (or ecclesia, the 'out-called') which is the body of Christ.

The strongest intimation of our security is that we are "in Christ." Our position before God is not "with Christ," but "*in Christ*." Immediately following the statement of justification in Romans 3:22 ("a righteousness of God through Jesus Christ's faith,") we are introduced to our security. In the next verse we learn that we are "Justified gratuitously in His grace through the deliverance which is in Christ Jesus." The expression "In Christ Jesus" is one which, apart from two exceptions, is exclusively used by the Apostle to the Nations. (Paul). Being "In Christ" is the basis of our security and all our blessings. We are not blessed in ourselves, but in Christ.

We did not come to be "in Christ" when we first came to a knowledge of God's saving grace, when we first believed the evangel (gospel). That may have been a momentous experience, yet it does not attain to the height of being "in Christ." On that occasion we were *sealed* with the holy spirit of promise—but we had been "in Christ" long before that.

The earliest point when we are "in Christ" is also the earliest point mentioned in Scripture. In Ephesians chapter one we read, in the fourth verse, that we were chosen "in Him" *before the disruption of the world*. That means we were chosen before there existed any reason for the choice, other than God's own counsels.

Not only were we chosen in Christ before the event of the disruption, but we were chosen in accord with God's purpose. And because we were to be a special people for God, a spiritual people, in contrast to Israel who are to be God's instrument on earth, we were declared to be "holy and flawless" in His sight. These words speak of justification. They describe the meaning of justification: ="holy and flawless in His sight."

It is the apostle Paul who explains the *meaning* of what God is doing. Other writers in scripture deal with the condition of mankind and God's provision for the sins of humanity. This is chiefly centred around the nation of Israel, and it is to them that the greater part of scripture is addressed. All the scriptures are *for* us, but not all are *to* us. For example, Isaiah's prophesy begins with the words: "The vision of Isaiah the son of Amos, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem." The epistle of James begins with the words: "James.. to the twelve tribes." Peter's epistle begins "Peter, ...to the chosen expatriates."

Just as the larger part of scripture is concerned with the nation of Israel, so also it is largely confined to the period of Israel's existence. From Genesis twelve up to the middle of Acts, the scriptures deal with Israel, and with other nations only insofar as they relate to Israel. The latter half of Acts, and Paul's letters relate God's dealings with the nations and with the calling out of a spiritual people who are blessed among the celestials, not on earth as guests at Israel's table. After Paul's letters, the scriptures from Hebrews onward once again return to God's dealings with Israel, and the fulfilment of His promises to Abraham.

Yet within Paul's writings we move from a period long before the first of Genesis, to the ultimate fulfillment of God's purpose, and the point where God is all in all. This is far beyond the end of Revelation 22. The translators of the Authorised Version caused great confusion among God's saints when they mistranslated the Greek AIONION as eternal, and thus hid from general perception that Paul, in 1 Corinthians fifteen, takes us far beyond the end of Revelation. Only within Paul's writings do we learn of the purpose of God. Without Paul's ministry we would not even know that God has a purpose, for no other writer mentions the subject.

We should also recognize that revelation is progressive. The whole of the scriptures are preparing for one book, and that book is Paul's letter to Ephesians. (This letter was not known by that name for several hundred years after it was written. Its original title probably was what is now the first verse —"Paul ...to all the saints who are also believers in Christ Jesus.")

It is in this letter that we learn most of God's purpose. Paul takes us back to the earliest possible moment comprehensible to our minds—before the disruption ! There we learn that God is operating all in accord with the counsel of His will. Within that counsel our lot was cast—and the term 'lot' shows that it is altogether outside of our will. From that point, in a few verses which detail our blessings in Christ—and the language is scarcely adequate to convey the privileges conferred—he takes us to the very consummation of God's purpose, in verse ten. There we read that God will have "an administration of the complement of the eras," and will "head up all in the Christ." The ultimate purpose of our existence is revealed in verse twelve. We are to be "for the laud of His glory." When we contemplate these matters, the peripheral matter of our security assumes its true significance, or insignificance !

In addition to Ephesians one, there are three scriptures where our relation to God's purpose is mentioned.

# "HOW PRECIOUS IS GOD'S WORD TO YOU ?"

By John M. Doe.

***"All scripture is inspired by God, and is beneficial for teaching, for exposure, for correction, for discipline in righteousness, that the man of God may be equipped, fitted out for every good act."***

What was it that Paul asked his friends to bring to him when he was in prison ? —The scrolls, especially the vellums (2 Tim. 4:13). When he told the Ephesian elders that they would not see him any more, to Whom did he commit them, and to what did he commend them ? To God—and to the word of His grace ! (Acts 20:32). When Daniel was in Babylon during the captivity, to what did he turn for light about his deliverance ?—To the writings of Jeremiah ! (Dan. 9:21). William Tyndale, languishing in the dungeon at Vilforde, had one special request among his modest list of requirements, his Hebrew Bible, grammar and study tools.

A lady who held scripture study meetings in her London home told how, during the 1939-1945 war she was a nursing sister, and wherever she went she always carried her copy of the Concordant Literal New Testament. One night the field hospital where she was working had to be hastily evacuated. In the ensuing chaos her New Testament was mislaid and lost. Needless to say she was not pleased, and when she replaced her Concordant Version she had a special case made for it. On the outside of this case she wrote "In emergency this is to be loaded first." The word of God was indeed precious to her.

Why is it that Satan hates and always attacks God's word in every way he can, whether it be the spoken word or the written word ? Because it is the living word, the sole basis for faith. And yet, do we really love His word ? So often we honour it with our lips, yet our minds are occupied with thoughts which are far from the contents. We say we love His word with all our heart and soul, yet refuse to love it with all our mind as well. Are we afraid to study the Word scientifically in case we find our intellect demolishing what our faith holds to be truth ?

Frequently our faith is not founded on the facts which God has revealed in His word. These alone should form the basis of our faith. Are the facts which faith accepts hostile to reason and at war with our intellect ? God made the eye for seeing, the ear for hearing, and the mind for-- what ?

The only way to truly honour the Giver and His gifts is to accord them the attention God says they must have. This is especially true of His word. Honouring it with our lips only can never take the place of letting it dwell in our hearts, seeking to master what it says, and then carrying it into practice. If we really believe that God speaks to us through His Word, then we should always believe it, even though we may not like what it says.

There are three things we need if we are to avoid the pitfalls of unbelief.

1. **A readiness of mind to receive.** A person can be taught nothing if he thinks he already knows it all. To be taught one must be teachable, reachable and flexible. The cliché, "My mind is made up, so don't confuse me with the facts," should have no place in our thinking.

## ***"God's inspired word is the sole ground of faith."***

2. **We should daily search to see if what we hear or read is as His word has it.** To search means to track out what is in the Word. It means to make diligent enquiry, to trace out, as the prophets did, the subject of salvation. Also we should do as one Bible teacher once said, "Read it and read it, and read it again."

3. **After readiness of mind to receive, and daily searching to find.** What will follow ? *Faith* ! "Therefore, many believed" (Acts 17:11,12).

Faith comes by hearing God's declarations. We do not live by every word that our friends may say, but rather by "every word that is proceeding out of the mouth of God" (Matt 4:14).

***"Faith comes by hearing  
God's declarations."***

When did you last feed on His living, active, powerful WORD ?  
When did you last check up on the sermon you heard, to see if you were misled about destiny, or death or salvation or soul, or about God's times, the eons ? When did you last examine the latest religious "best seller" against the inspired Word of God to see if it taught God's word or if it corrupted God's word ?

No one can be deceived unless they want to be. Only where there is no love of the truth, (for your salvation) is there a fatal capacity for strong delusion, which would allow you to embrace a falsehood.

To what shall we turn if we do not turn to the Word ? Shall we look to conscience or institution ? Or to one special magazine or the teachings of a particular denomination or to those claiming to have special revelations ? To a local church, or our own unaided reason ? To our own common sense, or the leadings of a devoted heart ?

No ! And a thousand times No! Only by turning to Holy Scripture, aided by His spirit shall we find the mind of Christ and learn about the things of God. To the Word of God, alone and only, should we turn. To the Word of God, which is reliable, authentic, accurate and inspired. To the Word of God, written. We need nothing else, and we need take notice of nothing else.

**"Sing of the great revelation,  
The secret more fully made known,  
Wonderful new dispensation  
Of grace abounding alone,  
God's riches of mercy,  
shown unto every race,  
Unto the praise of His glory,  
Wonderful glory of grace.**

**"Sing of the love that surpasseth,  
The love that will ever unfold,  
Its breadth and its length are  
unbounded, its depth  
and its height are untold,  
Oh ! fathomless, boundless,  
measureless love of the Lord  
We would know more of its fullness  
now in our hearts shed abroad.**

# *Ponderings*

## Extracts from the E. H. Clayton diaries

When filled full with the knowledge of God, then one begins to grow.

Thanksgiving signifies that we have peace with God.

In the inspired prayers God is bringing us to the fact that He has willed the spiritual need of the believer.

Prayer is both an exercise and a privilege of our relationship to God and to Christ.

The children's prayer gives a sense of reverence, as well as that there is Someone to Whom we should pray.

My life is not a blind "leading" though it is a life of faith. It is an intelligent co-operation with the will of God as revealed in His word.

Religious men who know not Christ are ever ready to pay for His betrayal.

Creation is to be brought back to Christ Who was its earliest Head.

God is actually and originally everything of which Christ became the Image. (Col.1:15)

When an explanation complicates and confuses, then it should be dropped.

A state of hope is one in which we are *apprehensive*, whereas a state of *expectancy* is one in which we rely or depend.

Faith does not hope for it is not apprehensive. Faith expects and thus it relies or depends.

The believer is not a spectator at the cross, but a participant, a sharer in the suffering.

There is equally the parallel of the miraculous in the birth and the resurrection of Christ.

God's love is not exhausted by the salvation of the chosen.

Purpose must mean that God has "made up His mind" concerning the outcome of creation.

The truth of His birth of a virgin, this requires the truth of His resurrection. Equally so, the truth of His resurrection requires the truth of His birth.

The practise of praise and prayer is the approximation in the present to the consummation when God fully becomes our All.

In our own ability we are unable to cope with any matter apart from God.

A revival will wear itself out, but teaching will always maintain itself.

Nothing can compensate for the lack of teaching in an address.

# In The Beginning

( A Series of Progressive Studies

By John H. Essex)

No 26

THE MEANING OF JEHOVAH.

In the fourth verse of Genesis 2, we are introduced to a new name for the Deity. Throughout the first chapter, we had the Hebrew "Elohim" (or "Alueim"), which, in the Authorized Version, is invariably translated "God." Now we have the phrase "Jehovah Elohim" (or "Ieue Alueim"), translated "LORD God," the word "LORD" being printed in capital letters, and this appellation of the Deity appears repeatedly all the way through the second chapter, and is continued intermittently in later chapters.

Now this change in the name of the Deity has caused many critics of the scriptures to jump to the conclusion that the book of Genesis was written by two different people. We maintain that there is absolutely no justification at all for such an idea; the addition of Jehovah is made at this point because God Himself intended it to be made here. In other words, God is now revealing Himself in a different or extended way from that in which He appears in the first chapter. To see what this is, let us look at the meaning of the word, Jehovah.

Actually, the word is made up of three tenses of the Hebrew verb, **to be** or **to become**. Literally, it means "Will be, being, was." In its Greek form it is translated fully in Rev 4:8, "Who wast, and Who are, and Who art coming." In Rev. 1:8, the three parts are put in a different order, "Who is, and Who was, and Who is coming." (In Rev. 11:17 and 16:5, the part "Who is coming" is omitted, because the One referred to is regarded as having come at that time).

So that here, in Genesis 2, where the word is used, we see that God is clearly indicating that there has been a past, and there is a present, and there will be a future, and that He spans them all. Though He is about to introduce features into His purpose that will be mortal and temporary, He Himself will still be God.

Moreover, the introduction of this name here would have no meaning if it did not indicate that God was in full control, and was, in fact, operating all in accord with the counsel of His own will. In view of what was shortly to happen to humanity, it is essential that creation should be constantly reminded that the same God, Who inaugurated it at the beginning will still be God at the consummation.

To anticipate future studies, humanity was to have a complete failure. Mans firstborn (Cain) was to become a murderer, and all Adam's progeny (with the single exception of the family of Noah) was to become so wicked as to merit complete destruction in a deluge. Yet, in spite of all this, God, Who was, and is, and is coming, is unthwarted in His purpose. Every time we read the word Jehovah (generally LORD or GOD in capital letters in the Authorised Version) we should be thinking of the One Who **was** there to create, **is** there to sustain, and **will be** there to bring to a glorious outcome His purpose concerning all His creatures. It will need the teachings of the New Testament (the Greek scriptures) to bring out these truths in all their grandeur, but their seeds are implicit in the name Jehovah (Ieue).

It may be objected that the quotations in Revelation refer to Jesus, and not to God, but let it not be forgotten that Christ, at one time or another, assumes every title the Father holds, even those of God and of Father (see Isaiah 9:6). In Isaiah 43:11, Jehovah is the Saviour, and there is none else, but, in the New Testament, it is Jesus Who is the Saviour. In fact, the name "Jesus" is a compound, signifying "Jehovah, the Saviour," That is to say, in "Jesus," the name "Jehovah" has taken on an added meaning, that of Saviour, and it is used nearly a thousand times in the New Testament.

**Jesus is "The Saviour Who was, and Who is, and Who is coming."**

In the Hebrew construction of the word "Jehovah" (Will be, Being, Was"), it is the future part of the name that is put first, and even in Genesis it is the prospect of "the Coming One" that is foremost. God is looking forward to the culmination of His purpose, which He will accomplish in the person of His Son, coming in the likeness of that creation which He has just brought in to being, humanity.

# HOW GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS COMES TO US

A.E. Knoch writes in his booklet "Justification —Abram's Faith, Abraham's deeds" (page 21/22): *"Much has been said and written concerning the righteousness which became Abram's . It has been called "forensic," as though the result of judicial procedure, which might be called a legal fiction. Bluntly stated, it hints that Abram did not do right, but God overlooked this and falsified the record. If you look too narrowly at it you are inclined to see things you do not like. It seems almost like a sort of deception. Indeed, some of the more enlightened translators reject this term in favour of 'imputed.' Theologians "explain" this as "to attribute or ascribe vicariously." The latter term is further defined as "substitutional." This again, is generally accepted to mean "the righteousness of Christ" "accepted by the Divine Father as a substitute for the righteousness of mankind." It will be seen that each new term, each new explanation, calls for another, because it not only fails to satisfy, but actually seems to imply unrighteousness on the part of God.*

***Every one of these non-scriptural, man made, theological expressions is contrary to the Scriptures and to the righteousness of God, the very foundation on which Abram's righteousness rests..."***

The foregoing quote is a comprehensive description of the problems arising from a lack of understanding concerning justification. By default, teachers try to explain justification in terms familiar to us, in an attempt to get close enough to grasp what it means. Yet this attempt will always fail when handling new terms resting on a foundation differing from our already familiar words. This manner of explaining can effectively stop our growing in realization in a very subtle way, which can go undetected for a long time. That is another reason why "a pattern of sound words" is so important.

As we know from the book of Acts, the apostle who wrote "for we are reckoning a man to be justified by faith apart from works of law" (Rom.3:28), was attacked several times because of his message and the effects it had on Jews who were zealous for the law.

The fact that Paul goes back to Abraham before circumcision, discarding all more recent events and situations, is an indication that he is taking up a completely new subject (Rom. 4), which can not be explained nor judged by that which lies between Abram and the time when Paul is preaching his evangel. This period *includes* the time when the law ruled the nation of Israel, and therefore cannot be used for an explanation of justification by faith apart from works of law.

Yet, even now, after discovering justification by faith, law is still very much in our minds. Not only in what different churches teach, but also in politics. Politicians are trying to rule their countries in a just way by use of their instrument: the making of laws. Often we find human laws are unjust or inadequate and keep asking for adaptation to the needs of our times. Our present day laws cannot compare with God's just law given at Sinai. This is the glory of God's law. Man's attempt to rule justly in man's day will not even attain to the rules needed to discriminate between just and unjust. Let us not be blinded by their attempts, nor be seeking justice at high costs when we are treated wrongly, for their failures are a necessary contribution to God's glory. This will be especially so in the Day of Jehovah when His law will go out from Zion in a time when Satan is bound. The statement Moses made when the law was given to Israel is still true: "What nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day ?" (Deut. 4:8)

In another letter Paul links the law that came in glory with the dispensation of death (2 Cor. 3: 7-16). He speaks of a fading glory of the law, because the law condemns those that are under it (cf Rom. 7:v7-25). Also by works of law no flesh at all shall be justified in God's sight, for through law is the recognition of sin (Rom. 3: 20). We also are included in the condemnation of Jew and Gentile in the first chapters of Romans. Those having the law we would be condemned; Those not having the law we would be perishing (2: 12). Yet God is able to justify. How can that be ?

To answer we have to distinguish between God's viewpoint and our viewpoint. Our view ends in condemnation, and we judge ourselves unworthy of God's favour. But God's view is absolute, He does not forget the origin, nor the way to our condemned situation and most of all He never loses sight of His purpose. The problem is that our viewpoint is only part of the matter, and a very small part indeed. Our knowledge is

relative, it feeds on contrasts. For us our condemned state brings home to our understanding that we have no right to live. God knew this all along, even when we boasted in our rights in ignorance. He created us not because of rights but because of love. All the righteousness we could possibly have would not counterbalance ignorance of His love. A condemned state does not fail to teach this lack of rights, and neither will salvation from a condemned state fail to teach His love. Such is also the reason He is testing us, His infinite wisdom already knows us better than we know ourselves, His testing is aimed at our understanding of ourselves, that we may trust Him rather than have confidence in ourselves. All failures on our side produce—in this period of grace—a greater longing for His strength with we are to be clothed.

Neither does God forget that we are dying creatures, who did not sin like Adam did, but were born already dying. Death operating in us produces sin. (Rom. 5:12). We sin because our parents were mortals. And they were thus because their parents.... We sin because Adam sinned a very long time ago. We never had power to say 'no' to sin, neither could we say 'no' to death. And these are still promises for the future, although a measure is already granted to our spirits. Now all humans are like helpless little babes, unable to defend themselves against that which is hostile. And it is only when the damage is done, that the need grows to counteract sin, death and injustice.

Neither does God forget that Satan is not bound now. And that that would be a helpful circumstance to live up to His standard. Now imagine there is a couple who are able to counteract death and sin in themselves, what would they have achieved? The laws of nature would suggest that then their descendants would also be free from death and sin, and, (unless they would reintroduce it) their descendants as well. These, then, would be those righteous according to law and the others would not be righteous. Therefore their achievement would be only of partial avail for humanity, splitting it into two groups. This has never been God's way. His way was the cross of Christ, and only in this way could sin and death be counteracted in God's wisdom, and only one person could provide, Christ in the form of humanity. When we think of righteousness, we can only associate it with a set of rules. If the rules are kept it is right, if they are violated one is found unrighteous. Paul summarises what he elaborately described before with:—

"Now we are aware that, whatever the law is saying, it is speaking to those under the law, that every mouth may be barred, and the entire world may become subject to the just verdict of God, because, by works of law no flesh at all shall be justified in His sight, for through law is the recognition of sin." (Rom. 3:19-20).

In this passage Paul use the word 'law' in two different ways: When applied to the Jews only, he uses it with the article "the". (The Jew being condemned by the law and the nations already perishing is resulting in the state "that every mouth may be barred, and the entire world may become subject to the just verdict of God"). When also the nations are brought in and he is speaking of the whole world and all flesh, then the definite article "the" is dropped. "Missing the mark" (= sin) is such a wide principle that it does not necessarily need a just law to be learned. Any set of rules used is transgressed, missing the mark is taught by all. "Missing the mark" needs a goal, an aiming mark, not necessarily a special mark; therefore it is teaching all, Jew and Gentile alike.

But the righteousness which is ours by faith is not tested by acts and rules. In fact I would like to think of it in the proper term, without applying it to myself. Paul calls it God's Righteousness and that is most accurate in every instance. First and foremost it is God's Righteousness, which has nothing to do with our righteousness in the way we are used to think of it; but God's Righteousness involves us.

God has been the acting One.

The way God counteracted sin and death, could only be done by Christ. We know that Christ came to be in the form of humanity and laid down His glory of being in the form of God. (Phil. 2:6-7). When He was in this form He communicated with Adam in the garden (Gen. 3:8). He was before Abraham (John 8:58). All things were created through Him (Col. 1:17). In short He was the Head of all creation. The cross of Christ meant that creation crucified its Creator. He was the Creator of Adam and humanity should have recognised Him as its Head, and be subject to Him, but instead it crucified Him, thereby destroying its origin. He was the Head of all creation, but it is obvious that not all creation acknowledged this, and accorded Him the glory of the position is submittance from the heart. True, nobody could touch Him as long as He was in the form of God and even Satan had to obey His direct orders. (Job 1&2); but what

were matters of the heart became evident when He became vulnerable. To our sense of justice this seems utterly wrong, the failing creatures should be condemned, not their Creator. But God way was for Christ on the cross to bear the curse which bound creation. This would thoroughly horrify every sensitive soul were it to stop at that point as the shattered disciples are witnessed. But it didn't and Christ's resurrection is full of promises awaiting fulfilment. Nearly all of them haven't started yet, but are stated in God's word to be believed and to form our expectation.

God's wisdom is concentrated in the cross. We have not the ability to see all its aspects now. But the cross is the vital solution of all problems. Let us look at some of them more closely. ♦

Where there was no human authority and humanity corrupted itself, then it was destroyed by a flood, except for Noah and his family. After the flood, the authority of human over human was given. When in the "last days," the days of Noah will return, we will not see a destruction of mankind as a whole, but the instalment of Christ as King of kings, to rule the earth justly. After the failure of all others in manifold ways, the Son of Mankind will take up the authority of human over human and bring it to completion. Christ had to be a man to execute and fulfil this grant to Noah after the flood.

In this first judgment on humanity, Christ was in the form of God and the only just judgment could be destruction. Yet after the curse has been borne on the cross, the proper place for humanity, even in enmity is under Christ Who suffered for all. God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, will be subjecting all to Him. (1 Cor.15:25-28). The cross has made a place for this humanity that should and could only be destroyed if judged by God's absolute righteousness without the cross. In that place it will eventually be ruled.

But more than this has been achieved. Not only the living but also the dead are Christ's (Rom. 14:9) Having borne the curse of the old creation, He is able to make all new, in the new creation. Moreover, the unrecognised Head will be recognised by all as Ruler. (Phil. 2:10-11). And when death will be abolished (1 Cor. 15:26), peace is made with all, and all are reconciled (Col. 1:20). (It is interesting to see the subterranean included in Philippians but not included in Colossians. This can only be because the dead as such cannot be reconciled as being dead; nor is peace made with the dead in death, because death itself is an enemy. Yet, in Colossians all are included; so even death will be abolished then).

Therefore we should not worry about the curse on the old humanity, for in love He bore it for all—not for them to pass it through at a later stage—but to reconcile all creation to His Father and hand it back to His Father (1 Cor. 15:28). And although we cannot see it now with our eyes, we can perceive by faith that what Christ has done will bring forth seed, and he will see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied (Is. 53:10,11). His love can only be satisfied in handing a new, reconciled creation back to His God and Father. With this Mediator we may be having peace with God and rejoice in His purpose.

As said earlier, humanity should have been condemned, and so it is ! But the execution was not on humanity itself, but in its Creator. If it had been executed on humanity itself, all would have been reduced to nothing and it would have meant the end of it. Yet now, humanity is still remaining in its state as we know it, subject to vanity as it still is, but with an outlook. Our old humanity was crucified together with Him (Rom. 6:6) and the new is created anew in accord with God, in righteousness (Eph. 4:24). So that, if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: the primitive passed by. Lo! there has come new. (2 Cor. 5:17).

One of the most wonderful things of God's wisdom is that the salvation of the sinner will justify God ! Therefore it is God's righteousness! Our salvation, when completed with the deliverance of our bodies (Rom. 8:22) will be so complete that we will be constituted righteous (Rom. 5:19). With sin condemned in the flesh, the enmity will be gone, God will be all in us, the knowledge of good and evil will result in an unending Sabbath of our minds, our strength will never forget the One Who graciously granted it to us. Death and sin having ended, giving way to life and praise, the recollection of the old can only enhance the realization of the new; we will justify God continually and admire His wisdom and love in the use of all instruments, both good and evil. Then we will fully see why they are necessary for His self-revelation. Our salvation will make it impossible for us to sin, but we will have more than Adam in his perfection. Our dearest treasure will be to know the love of God, and God will see the love returned. To be thus, is to be unimpeachable. To make us thus, Christ died the death of the cross according to God's will. Therefore it is God's righteousness in all aspects. We haven't got it now, physically, and many people will accuse us of big and small mistakes, and often these will be right. Yet, God promised to save us, so we may count on that, and reckon ourselves already living to

Him. It is in Christ that we are unimpeachable, separated from Him we are nothing, not even useful to the world. The world does not recognise Christ, so neither can it see that we are unimpeachable in Him.

"The righteousness of faith" is the scriptural expression closest to our righteousness. But let us not exchange it for the expression that "we become righteous through faith." The Scriptures use the word reckon, not become. Let us first look at Cain and Abel to see a special point, and then come back to "the righteousness of faith." God's word speaks of Abel being just, while Cain was not. There are only a few verses speaking about this incident, yet they are of special significance. This is because then the humans had direct communication with the Lord. Abel, being a keeper of sheep brought an offering of the firstlings of them; from Hebrews 11:4 we know this was by faith in accordance with previously given instructions, and was accepted by the Lord. Yet Cain's was not accepted: he brought of the fruit of the land, but this could not be accepted. Then the Lord appeared unto Cain to correct him, so that he could offer an acceptable offering, and said: "Why is your anger hot ? And why does your face fall ? Would you not, should be doing well lift it up ? And should you not be doing well, at the opening a sin offering is reclining, and for you is its restoration. And you are ruler over it." (Gen. 4:6&7 C.V.). (The Authorised Version has it: "...and if thou dost not well, sin lieth at the door, and unto thee shall be his desire..." From a study by A.E. Knoch we know that 'restoration' and 'desire' are very similar in Hebrew, which could explain the exchange and an incomprehensible translation, moreover, 'sin' and 'sin-offering' are nearly indistinguishable in Hebrew). The Lord brought Cain an offering which could be accepted had Cain offered it. He was no tender of sheep, no acceptable offering could be provided by himself. His bloodless sacrifice of the fruit of the land was not acceptable because it did not acknowledge sin, and could not be a sin-offering. Therefore it was provided, so that he could be restored. Yet even then, Cain did not acknowledge the reality of sin, nor the necessity of the offering, but killed his brother who did.

When we consider these brothers more carefully, we may know that Abel was righteous because he acknowledged the existence of sin and by faith offered of the firstlings, but Cain offered a bloodless sacrifice. Such a bloodless sacrifice can only be acceptable after the question of sin is settled. But Cain did not offer it as a thanksgiving to the Lord after the settling of sin, but instead of settling sin. Therefore Abel's is called a

better sacrifice in Hebrews. (See U.R. July 1944 "The First Evangel" for a more detailed discussion of this subject).◆

Cain was not righteous because his acts showed that he did not acknowledge sin. We should not forget that at that time there was no law. Sin, missing the mark, was related to him by his parents. His parents knew it by contrast with the garden, but it did not seem to be a deep part of his own consciousness, before he killed his brother. But Abel by faith acknowledged sin and the need for restoration in his sacrifice. Would Abel be righteous on his own? He himself would most likely not acknowledge that. Would Cain be righteous on his own? He himself probably thought so, judging from his acts. It is just of a sinner to acknowledge being a sinner. In our case we need not even bring a sin-offering, because He Who knew no sin has already been made sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21. When the sinner acknowledges the need for restoration by Christ, (Whom God purposed for it) he is "doing" something infinitely just although his position apart from Christ, measured according to any set of rules does not change at all.

Completely separate from us, Christ has done much on our behalf, to accept that is just, to reject that is more than unjust—it would be offensive. To think to achieve God's standard apart from Him is folly and infinitely overestimating human capacities. We need His sacrifice and it is righteous to believe that. In it we admit our state falls short and also we do realise something of the great lengths God and Christ went to, to give it in grace.

Paul also, when speaking of his own righteousness links it with rules: "because of the superiority of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, because of Whom I forfeited all, and am deeming it to be refuse, that I should be gaining Christ, and may be found in Him, not having my righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is from God for faith: to know him, and the power of His resurrection..."(Phil. 3:8-10) He accuses his zealous brethren according to the flesh with: "for I am testifying to them that they have a zeal of God, but not in accord with recognition. For they being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, were not subject to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the consummation of law for righteousness to everyone

who is believing." (Rom. 10:2-4). Our own righteousness can be a snare to us, bringing us back under law-like slavery and condemnation.

But faith knows that all was created in Him and all is through Him and unto Him, so how can we be separated from Him? Can we be separated from our parents, our culture, our language? These all have shaped us and their influence never disappears, far greater has been the influence of our Creator! Thinking of ourselves as separate from Him introduces all these problems of "obtaining" God's righteousness.

The present period which has shaped all of us to a great extent, is called the administration of grace. Grace, which has been brought about by God's accepting of Christ's sacrifice. God is now conciliated to the world, and in our time He is calling men "to be conciliated to Him for Christ's sake" (2 Cor. 5:20,21). And although God has not yet installed Christ as King of kings on the earth and Head over all in the heavens, He is pleading for our sakes now to the One Who operates all for the good of those loving God. And when the times come that God's self-revelation demands stepping out of the hidden and taking control in full view of the whole universe, Christ, Who is the Image of the invisible God, will take that place of authority. Now He is just as much in control as He will be then, but at present it is hidden and it is difficult to see His use of many enemies in His self-revelation. But now His control consoles our spirits and by faith keeps them from despair. So, we may know that both time and circumstances are His instruments which He uses to reach the consummation.

Maybe a good example concerning our righteousness is the situation when one sits at a table as an invited guest. Has such a one a right to eat? No, because the food is not his. To claim a right to it in another's house would be offending! Still he is invited and, sitting at the table, whether or not he will eat entirely depends on the righteousness of the one who invited him in the first place. He eats by the righteousness of his host.

God has promised to save us. Christ has made this possible. Yet even now creation groans in vanity, and nothing (except Christ Himself) has been saved in tangible evidence. If this moment in time would be the end of God's purpose — He would be unrighteous — and the greatest wrong would be Christ's still unrewarded sufferings. And His faith in the Righteousness of His Father would be in vain. But thanks be to God that the Firstfruit will save those who are His, thus proving that God is

righteous. Our salvation will be this proof ! When we are conformed to the Image of His Son, the proof of what we now believe is there —that God can justify sinners and reach His goal in both mankind and the universe. We may be this proof !

We may be God's righteousness in Him (2 Cor. 5:21).

What a high calling !

H.V.

**O Blessed God ! How kind  
Are all Thy ways to me,  
Whose dark, benighted mind  
Was enmity with Thee.  
Yet now, subdued by sovereign grace,  
My spirit longs for Thine embrace.**

**How precious are Thy thoughts  
That o'er my spirit roll !  
They swell beyond my faults,  
And captivate my soul.  
How great their sum, how high they rise  
Can ne'er be known beneath the skies.**

**Before Thy hands had made  
The sun to rule the day,  
Or earth's foundations laid,  
Or fashioned Adam's clay,  
What thoughts of peace and mercy  
flowed  
In Thy great heart of love, O God !**

**A monument of grace !  
A sinner saved by blood.  
The streams of love I trace  
Up to the fountain —God !  
And in His sovereign counsels see  
Eternal thoughts of love to me.**

**John Kent**

# JOHN BUNYAN

(1628 - 1688)

By David Osgood.

**JOHN BUNYAN** was an English religious author and preacher, whose most notable achievement was the writing of "The Pilgrim's Progress" in **1678**. This book is the most characteristic expression of the Puritan religious outlook, and was used as a text book in schools, being widely read for over three centuries.

Bunyan was born at Elstow in Bedfordshire on 30th November, **1628**, the first child of a local tinker Thomas Bunyan, whose ancestors had been small landholders in the region for over 400 years. John had only the briefest of schooling in reading and writing, before taking his place beside his father at the anvil and cart to serve his apprenticeship. At the age of 15 he lost his mother and younger sister, and his father soon remarried.

During his formative years he became acquainted with a wide variety of popular literature of the English Puritans. Plain speaking sermons and books of melodramatic judgements and acts of divine guidance all

played their part in formulating his thoughts. Above all, he steeped himself in the English Bible, the Authorised Version, which was only 17 years old when Bunyan was a lad of twelve.

As a child whose parents were of the "state church," he was not indoctrinated by a narrow piety, but brought up on the country life of folklore and tradition. Bunyan speaks in his autobiography of being troubled by terrifying dreams, and his sense of guilt took on the form of delusions. Perhaps his sensitivity and exaggeration caused him to regard his own life as totally iniquitous and full of all manner of ungodliness.

In **1644** he was drawn into military service, the Civil War having broken out. He was enlisted in Cromwell's army and sent to reinforce the garrison at Newport Pagnell. His military service, even if uneventful, brought him in touch with the seething religious, left-wing sects within Cromwell's army, whose Quaker and Puritan background was questioning all

authority except that of the individual conscience.

Sometime after his discharge from the Army in **1647** Bunyan married. His wife came from a family conversant with the Bible, and she brought to him as her dowry, two evangelical books - Arthur Dent's "The Plain Man's Pathway to Heaven," and Lewis Bayley's "The Practice of Piety." The next five years determined the direction of Bunyan's life. A home made anvil, a tinker's cart, a thatched cottage of his own and three children brought independence. Reading the two religious books awakened his conscience. He began to see much of the world's pleasures as "sinful" and a great spiritual struggle began within him. He joined a Baptist congregation in Bedford in **1653** and, after his wife died in **1657**, he took his first assignment as a field preacher.

Around this time scores of men, learned and unlearned, were preaching to small groups of non-conformists all over England. Many of the Anglican clergy disapproved of this activity and, after the restoration of the Roman Catholic King Charles II in **1660**, the government made many arrests, and required all clergy to accept

the book of Common Prayer and the Conventual Act of **1644**, forbidding Nonconformist gatherings, suspecting these people of sedition.

Bunyan was fully aware of the danger and possible consequences, but kept on preaching. He was eventually arrested and at his trial he was promised release if he would leave off preaching. This he refused to do, and was subsequently imprisoned in Bedford County Prison for almost 12 years.

Being denied the privilege of preaching, he began to write, and to minister to his fellow prisoners. He was allowed to make tagged laces and send them out in order to support his second wife and children.

Whilst in prison Bunyan wrote approximately sixty works. The most notable was "The Pilgrim's Progress," which was not published until **1678**. A virtual epic of the Christian life couched in Puritan ideas, the story is of Christian's struggle from the Slough of Despond; of personal encounters with allegorical figures such as Mr Worldly Wiseman; Apollyon the Demon; Vanity Fair; the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and the Delectable Mountains, which

one was supposed to cross before eventually entering the Celestial City, where the journey of Christian ceases.

**This book has had a very substantial influence on orthodox Christian belief. Many of the allegorical ideas have been passed down as fact, the book often being regarded as a parable of the Christian life. But it is not the Scriptures, and any interpretation of them is found in pictures which represent the views of the teachers of Bunyan's time.**

One of the other remarkable books written by Bunyan is "Grace, Abounding to the Chief of Sinners." This spiritual autobiography tells of the mental torment he had suffered. He was obviously very much aware of the scriptures, and particularly with portions regarding the period when God's wrath will be meted out on this earth. Bunyan is continually plagued with a sense of guilt, that not only is he a gross sinner, but that by his temptation to blaspheme Jesus Christ, he had committed the "unpardonable sin" (Luke 12:10). Had he understood his standing in Christ, he would

have known that this particular passage could never apply to believers, in this age of grace.

Here is a quotation from page 97 of "Grace Abounding:"

"At the apprehensions of these things my sickness was doubled upon me. I was clogged with guilt in my soul. Now I sunk and fell in my spirit, and was giving up all for lost; but as I was walking up and down my house as a man in a most woeful state, that Word of God took hold of my heart; *'Ye are justified freely by His Grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.'* (Romans 3:24)

"I was as once awakened out of some troublesome sleep and dream; and listening to this heavenly sentence; 'Sinner, thou thinkest that because of thy sins and infirmities I cannot save thy soul; but behold, My Son is by Me, and upon Him I look, and not on thee, and shall deal with thee according as I am pleased with Him !'" "At this," says Bunyan, "I was greatly enlightened in my mind, and made to understand that God could justify a sinner at any time; it was but *His looking upon Christ, and imputing His*

*benefits to us, and the work was forthwith done."*

"Not by works of righteousness that we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us" (2 Tim. 1:9) Bunyan declared on realising this, that "God Himself is the portion of the Saints !"

Bunyan had no access to concordances. He had naturally been confused by reading *all* scripture as applicable to himself. He had not realised how vitally important it is to 'rightly divide' and apportion the scriptures, remembering that most of the Bible refers to the past or future for the *nation of Israel*. Our evangel and hope is based totally on Christ crucified and the power of His resurrection, and we indeed are separated to the evangel of Paul for the nations. Only by understanding these precious

truths, and rightly dividing (correctly cutting) the word of truth (2 Tim. 3:15), can we glory and thrill in the knowledge that *Christ is the Saviour of all mankind, especially believers !!*

We need not suffer the heartache and deception that comes from priests and pastors who are ignorant of God's change in His dealings with mankind. He is now conciliated to the world (2 Cor. 5:20), and we stand unimpeachable and beyond condemnation because of Christ's one act of total selflessness in obedience to His Father.

May our loving Father help us all to grasp maturity, to revel in the delights that Bunyan found so difficult to fathom. We have an evangel based on ***God's*** righteousness through Christ, and never on our own

***"And you, being once estranged and enemies in comprehension by wicked acts yet now He reconciles by His body of flesh, through His death, to present you holy and flawless and unimpeachable in His sight."***

Colossians 1:21,22.