

GREAT REVIVAL PREACHERS

What were the distinctive approaches of great revival worthies in their sermons? What were their characteristic texts and arguments?

In 1856 Henry C. Fish produced a book entitled Masterpieces of Pulpit Eloquence. This was the same Henry C. Fish who had produced a work on revivals. In his work on Pulpit Eloquence he lamented the fact that while in so many other areas of life, students of the various disciplines went out of their way to study the great works of their predecessors, as far as he could observe preachers did all too little of this.

He quoted from a lecture given by Sir Joshua Reynolds before the Royal Academy where he remarked:

Invention is one of the great marks of genius, but if we look into this we shall find that it is being conversant with the inventions of others, that we learn to invent; as it is by reading the thoughts of others, that we learn to think.

He goes on to say that it was by studying Homer and Thucydides that the great Athenian orators acquired their vehemence and power. It was said of Cicero, that he incorporated into his manner, the strength of Demosthenes, the copiousness of Plato and the delicacy of Isocrates.

On this principal Fish continues, the Gospel minister acts wisely who studies the great sermons of the past. No honourable preacher he says, would do so simply to imitate, or merely to plagiarise them, but to learn from them and be inspired by them as an artist, might do by looking at the frescoes of the Vatican or the galleries of Florence or the Louvre.

It is clear that this is what the great preachers of the past did. J.C. Ryle is known for his great clarity of style and simplicity of presentation, his spiritual content and practical application, and yet one only has to look at the footnotes in his commentary's on Luke and John to see the vast amount of reading that lay behind his ability.

It is therefore in this sort of way that we do well to look at and learn from the great preachers whom God used so powerfully in the days of revival. We are in these two sessions particularly looking at what they said, what were their

characteristic texts, what sort of Gospel arguments did they use, how did they from the reformed theological perspective call upon sinners to repent and believe? We will be trying as time permits to look at some of the ways they ended their Gospel sermons. There comes to mind a saying from T.S. Eliot (*The Communication of the dead is tongued with fire beyond the language of the living*. T.S. Eliot)

Some general observations by way of introduction

It is sometimes said that many of the sermons that have come down to us in printed form from these periods seem rather ordinary and un-compelling when read today. It is remarked that their power consisted simply in the fact that they were preached with the special unction and anointing of the Holy Spirit. No one can argue that they were preached with a special anointing of the Spirit these things are the essential characteristics of times of awakening and revival, (we need this today, I am taking it for granted that we know it). But if we think these sermons were simply ordinary and commonplace, we need to look at them again more carefully. It is true that many of these written sermons were edited for publication, certainly in the case of George Whitfield many of his colourful and at times dramatic illustrations, and perhaps powerful repetitions edited out.

It is said Wesley's sermons were heavily edited by himself after preaching, and the collection we have today was adapted in order to be used as the standard theological benchmarks for future Wesleyan preachers.

We also perhaps need to have in mind something about the 18th and 19th Century background in which the sermons were set.

As far as the 18th century was concerned, certainly in country districts, the preaching of the parson in the parish church was largely moralistic. Though it was generally lacking in Gospel light ordinary people did have a marked sense of right and wrong and something of the basics of Christian teaching.

In contrast of this in the burgeoning industrial towns, there was widespread immorality, drunkenness, brutality and ignorance and an alienation from the church.

The 18th century was also characterized by the fact of a largely decadent upper-class. Very few politicians attended church. Walpole the Prime Minister had very few if any moral principles.

This was the dawning of the Age of the Enlightenment. Rationalism, scepticism, and atheism was increasing it was an age when a growing number came under the spell of men like Voltaire , Thomas Paine and later in the century the leaders of the French Revolution. *Johann Albrecht Bengel* - the famous Bible-Commentator- (1687-1752) *foresaw the long term result of this being an increasing scepticism and naturalism. The powers of nature and reason will be so extolled that men will lose sight of the supernatural; people will be paid for attacking with their pens the bases of Christianity.*

Lectures On Preaching. John Ker page 239

Some have said that in the 18th century there was an underlying, though slumbering sense of the obligations of true religion and the value of the soul which is lacking today. I think there is some truth in this. Although we must not forget that Calvin says that there is a sense of God in every man as there is also an in built sense of right and wrong.

It was different when we turn to the 19th century, certainly by the time we come to the 1859 revivals there was a general understanding of Christian teaching and a high level of public morality could be assumed.

However just three sample quotations from the early 18th century should encourages us and help us to realize that similar difficulties pertained then as we face now, and that the remedies that were used then can be just as effective today under the power of God.

The first quotation:

... That zeal for godliness looks as odd upon a man as the dress of his great-grandfather.

Weekly Miscellany 1732

Archbishop Butler complained in the preface of his famous Analogy of Religion:

It is, I know not how, come to be taken for granted by many persons that Christianity is not so much a subjective inquiry, but that it is, now at length

discovered to be fictitious. And accordingly they treated as if in the present age this was an agreed point, among all people of discernment, and nothing remained but to set it up as a principal subject of mirth and of ridicule as it were by way of reprisals for having so long interrupted the pleasures of the world.

It was unquestionably the most un-evangelical period that had ever occurred since the Reformation.

Thomas Jackson The Centenary of Wesleyan Methodism. Published 1839

The same open disregard for religion led to the same open disregard for morals. In 1736, every six house in London was a grogshop and the purveyors of cheap gin hung signs outside their shops advertising, "drunk for Penny – dead drunk for tuppence – clean straw for nothing".

It is estimated that during the period 1694 – 1734 the yearly distillation of alcoholic liquor rose from 810,096 gallons to that of 6,074,762 gallons. This figure had risen in 1750 to something like in the region of 11 million gallons per annum.

Gangs of youths' roamed the streets of London and made it unsafe to be out at night. One such group who call themselves " The Mohocks Club" distinguished themselves by squeezing their victims noses flat on their faces, and boring their eyes out with their fingers.

Not only among the lower ranks of society did immorality prevail. One French observer commented on the fact that in England, not more than four or five of the members of Parliament were regular attendance at church.

Green in his "Short History of the English People adds..

Of the prominent statesman of the time the greater part were unbelievers in any form of Christianity and distinguished themselves by the grossness and immorality of their lives... Purity and fidelity to the marriage vows was smeared out of fashion, and Lord Chesterfield instructed his son in the art of seduction as part of polite education.

As is invariably the case the full extent of the ages moral degradation was reflected in its treatment of children. Illegitimacy was rife, and unwanted

children ruthlessly destroyed. In 1739, the petition was launched seeking a charter for the creation of the *Foundling Hospital*, within the petition following statements are found.

The prevailing murder of poor miserable infants; the inhuman custom of exposing newly formed babes to perish in the streets; to the placing of unhappy foundlings with wicked and barbarous nurses, who for a trifling sum suffer them to starve for want of sustenance or care... And to the fact that the few who survive are generally turned into the streets to beg or steal.. Some being blinded or maimed or distorted in their limbs in order to move pity and become fitter instruments for gain.

Now it is against this background that we are looking at the Gospel they preached. A message as relevant for today as it was then.

In 1871 CH Spurgeon made these comments in a sermon on 1 Corinthians 1:30, 31. Entitled The Fourfold Treasure.

There are those who will have it that the Gospel – the simple Gospel – such as might have been preach by John Bunyan or Whitfield, or Wesley, and others, was very well for the masses, and for the dark times in which they lived – the great mass of mankind would be helped and improved by it; but there is wanted, according to the wiseacres of this intensely luminous century, a more progressive theology, far in advance of the evangelism now so generally ridiculed. Men of mind, gentleman of profound thought are to teach us doctrines that were unknown to our fathers; we are to go on improving in our knowledge of divine truth as we leave Peter and Paul, and those other old dogmatists far behind. Nobody knows how wise we are to become. Brethren, our thoughts loath this; we hate this cant about progress and deep thought; we only wish we could know as much of Christ as the olden preachers did. We are afraid that instead of getting into great light through the thinkings of men, the speculations and contemplations of the scribes, ancient and modern, and the discoveries of the intellectual and eclectic, have made darkness worse, and have quenched some of the light that was in the world.

Let is then begin to look at some of the sermons from these times of great blessing

We are looking at the predominant themes,

How they dealt with their texts and passages Scripture

How they manage to preach evangelistic sermons so regularly without becoming predictable or repetitive.

How they amassed a wide range of Gospel arguments.

Particularly how they applied their messages, and set before their hearers the urgency and need to close with Christ. We are familiar with Joseph Harts hymn.

Come ye sinners poor and wretched

Sick and wounded by the Fall.

If ye tarry till you're better,

You will never, come at all.

How did they apply this message in their sermons, how from the Reformed perspective did they call men and women to repentance and faith.

Firstly.. The themes of their preaching

Elliot in a funeral sermon preached on the death of George Whitfield, summarized Whitfield's preached doctrines as follows:

Original Sin, The new birth and its necessity, Justification by faith in Christ, The final perseverance of the saints, and eternal and unconditional election.

We might sum up all the preaching of this period under the famous headings of the Sola's (alones) of the Reformation.

Sola Scriptura

Sola Christo

Sola Fide

Sola Gratia

Soli Deo Gloria

(In regard to the latter that is the worship, and the working out of our faith to God's glory in family life, culture, commerce, the arts and society in general.)

We may note that this was not merely doctrinal preaching but the persuasive, searching, loving, urgent application to the mind and heart of the hearers with the desire and aim that under God they would be converted.

What strikes us is that the preaching is very much God Centred. These people were fully aware of the fact that man without God is no longer man. They were fighting a godless strain of humanism which was blighting Europe at that time, and they knew it.

The famous Dr. John (Rabbi) Duncan (1796-1870) expressed the same truths in devotional terms:

Zeal for God's glory should ever be uppermost in the minds of preachers. When they urge sinners to repentance, the character and claims of Jehovah should be laid as the basis for it. This was the basis of all revelation – Jehovah, He is God.

The doctrine of man's fall – his total fall, not merely from virtue and righteousness, but his total alienation, from Jehovah, and the consequent loss of all internal good, – his entire separation from Jehovah God, out of which came the doctrine that the fall was a total ruin,- ought not only to be referred to, but set forth in the whole preaching, in its relation to the manifestation of God's glory in the salvation of sinners.

Our preaching should be the Gospel of the Triune God. The manifestation of God's glory in the salvation of sinners. The doctrine of the Trinity should be ever taught, though not always formally taught. (NO TRINITY NO GOSPEL)

The doctrine of the Person of Christ, which gives glory and excellence to the work of Christ, should be brought forward, – not salvation merely, but that glorious Saviour Himself, and that not only for the sake of guilty sinners salvation, but for the exhibition of the Divine character-that it was worthy of God to save sinners for such a Saviour.

Man's total apostasy from God – his total depravity – would lead to the exhibition of what alone can be, in an apostate's condition, any comfort or support – the love of Jehovah. It opened such a deep wound that nothing but a Saviour – as a Saviour for an absolute sinner, dead in trespasses and sins – could heal it.

Rich Gleanings from Rabbi Duncan pp. 390 – 391

They made no attempt to tailor or modify the Gospel according to the spirit of the age.

I am emphasising this because there has been a tendency through the centuries to try and mould the teaching of the Gospel into various patterns of secular thought. Paul in his day had to resist the Gnostics who were trying to do this. William Tyndale in his day said, Scripture was being poured into the mould of heathen philosophy and resisted it. Spurgeon resisted the down grade of his day. The same is happening today, preachers are abandoning the Biblical concepts of sin, righteousness, redemption etc. Instead of faith they talk of, spirituality, or instead of Revelation, they talk of, God consciousness etc.. Is our Gospel so weak and transient that it cannot frame or sustain a permanent terminology for its message? Are we to abandon and jettison the classic language and terms whereby we conceive of and explain our message and the essential content of the Gospel and adapt it to the prevailing culture and philosophy of the day. No! our fathers didn't and neither must we. Of course we must preach as to be understood, we are not to be obscurantist, but to trim and accommodate our message to the prevailing philosophical wind will never do. Yes we must apply it, expose the shortcomings of the godless philosophies and outlooks of our day, but to accommodate them, never.

They set out to dispel the profound spiritual ignorance of their day.

It is extraordinary how widely the modern world has forgotten what Christianity really is. The blame for this must largely fall on the church herself, her message has long been confused and indistinct.

Again, looking from the perspective of the hearer of the message; there is the fact that many of those who criticise and oppose Christianity, do so without ever taking much trouble to discover what it is about.

Another point is that those who seek to adopt some belief system other than that of Christianity, often do so without really understanding the nature of what they are committing themselves to. We need to help to see through the emptiness and barrenness of those so-called religious alternatives to Christianity.

T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*.

*Here is no water but only rock
Rock and no water and the sandy road
The road widening above among the mountains*

*Which are mountains of rock without water
If there were water we should stop and drink
Amongst the rock one cannot stop or think
If there were only water amongst the rock...*

What the Christian must do, then, in attempting to defend the faith against his own and his neighbours unbelief, is to bring to bear upon the issue the strongest and most merciless possible illumination, so that both faith and unbelief shall be clearly shown up for what they are.

Some say; "*Being a Christian consists in the docile and unintelligent acceptance by a man of antiquated dogmas; and having said that, they think they have disposed of God.*"

Invitation to Pilgrimage John Bailie page 20

Our task is to show them this is not the case.

They set out to challenge the intellectual pride that blinded the minds of many in their day.

Much of the unbelief of the day centres in the delusion that Christianity is outmoded and irrelevant, and that all modern philosophies are more sophisticated and vastly superior.

When John Wesley visited the newly opened Octagon, Unitarian Chapel in Norwich, he made a remark that revealed that he knew people in his day, thought also that biblical Christianity was finished, outmoded and redundant, and that a vastly superior form of belief and outlook had now emerged.

He said with sardonic tone:

How can it be thought that the old coarse Gospel should find acceptance here.

Wesley's Journal, quoted in Invitation to Pilgrimage John Bailie p. 33

What he meant was, these people think the Gospel, is primitive, coarse and outmoded. My task is to show that it is not. But more than that, to show that it is vastly superior to any "gospel" they may imagine they possess.

In preaching these great doctrines we are clearing away any ignorance, prejudice, and misunderstanding and showing what these, so-called worn out doctrines really mean.

Perhaps Spurgeon's well-known story about one of his fellow ministers who went to the house of the poor old woman with a contribution of money for the payment of her rent, is a good illustration of this misunderstanding that needs to be cleared away. He knocked again and again at the door, but failed to get any response. Nevertheless the old woman was all the time at home, and her explanation afterwards was, "I heard the knocking, but I thought it was the man come to ask for the rent."

The 18th and 19th century preachers were aware of the way people in their day were thinking, they were not blind to the anti-Christian philosophies of their age; but they were not intimidated by them. They were aware of the need to have a sensible apologetic for the faith, but they did not go around apologising for the faith, but rather confronted their hearers with the searching message of the Gospel.. Their approach was to preach the great doctrines, but not just dogmatically repeating the same old form of words in some cold and lifeless way, but in such a manner as confronted, challenged and enlightened and showed the urgent far reaching implications of these truths to the hearts and lives of those who listened.

That is why I am reminding myself and all of us, that they preached the great doctrines of the Reformation, the essentials of Christianity as revealed in Scripture.

The sola's of the Reformation help us to focus on what these are. might add however this is not to say not that they never strayed out of these areas, We find John Fletcher of Madeley in Shropshire, preaching a sermon entitled, A eulogy on Christian Philosophers, A sermon on The Trinity, in which he is seeking to counter the teachings of Deists, Materialists and Fatalists. Wesley preached on the moral and spiritual questions raised by the Great Lisbon (Portugal) Earthquake of 1755. He preached on the Use of Money, on the Education of Children and many practical subjects. Nor should we forget the Lectures that

were given especially in the 19th century alongside the regular preaching. These ranged over a wide range of some very demanding subjects and were intended to counter the arguments of scepticism. *The Supposed Collision between Science and Religion, The Contrast between Pagan and Christian Society*. To name but a few.

However we need to recognize that the preaching of this period was predominantly grounded on and founded upon the great fundamental truths of Biblical Christianity. A brief glance at the Sermon titles on the Contents pages of a volume of Whitfield sermons, or the 19th century volumes of *The Penny Pulpit*, or of course the volumes of Spurgeon's Sermons will amply illustrate this point.

Quote examples from the 1858 Penny Pulpit.

But let me add this comment made by Prof. William Garden Blaikie published in *The Quiver*, Magazine March 1892.

Two things occur to us in the case of Wesley's preaching which may materially help us solve the present problem of reaching the masses. In the first place, he had the power to tune his message to the actual conditions of his hearers: he got in among their living feelings, knew how to touch the most sensitive areas of their minds and hearts, how to commend himself to thoughts that were stirring more or less consciously in their souls. Little personal impression is made by abstract statements – by merely proving the existence of original sin, or showing that punishment must follow actual transgression; but the case is different when you call a man up and ask him to name anything he has ever done simply to please God; when you ask him whether he has not spent days and weeks together without thinking of God, and in neglect of all his claims as Creator, Lord, Father or Redeemer; and when you begin to think how he will feel when God calls him to account, and reckons with him for every talent, and for every day in and hour of his life. We include Wesley among the preachers who have systematically tried to get into touch with all that is most sensitive to the soul, and stir it up. It is marvellous what interest such men have for the masses, because it is felt that they are dealing not with sham or sacred conventionalities, but with the dread realities of human life – with interests that come home most closely to the business and bosoms of men.

ADD FROM p401-402 -OXFORD HISTORY OF PREACHING

If we want to illustrate the effectiveness of such preaching, there is ample material on the effects of the 18th century revival on society at that time. I recommend the reading of the most inspiring preface to Fish's work alluded to above. It is available on the Internet, and refers to the remarkable widespread effect of one sermon on Dr. John Owen, and how being converted through that sermon he went on to live a life of immense usefulness.

John Livingston's sermon at the Kirk of Shotts in 1630.

Jonathon Edward's sermon 1741, *Their Foot Shall Slide in Due Time*. Duet 32:35. The sermon often referred to by its title, *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*. Fish claims that there were nearly 30,000 instances of spiritual Reformation arising out of the preaching of that one sermon.

See Barrie Trinder's book on The Industrial Revolution in Shropshire. Here he highlights that it was largely the preaching of the Baptists and Methodists in the area and the civilizing effects of the Gospel which prevented the effects of the social upheaval caused by the changes not to descend into an anarchy of violence and chaos.

Let us for convenience look at some sample sermons, expressions and arguments probably using the headings of the Reformation Solas

I

Scripture Alone (*Sola Scriptura*) preaching and hearing God's Word

Ad fontes (back to the source). These men preached the Scriptures, the Gospel as set out in Scripture. This may seem an obvious point, but do we really preach the Scriptures and bring before this generation the whole counsel of God? Hugh Latimer (1485-1555) in his famous *Sermon on the Plow (Preached at St. Paul's Cross)* challenges us on this in a powerful, striking, original and memorable way.

The preacher is compared to one who ploughs and plants a field. Latimer was a farm boy, long before he became a bishop and preacher before Kings. Long

before he became associated with Cambridge University, and was used to being involved in the complex weighty political and religious matters of his day.

In preaching he was natural, homely, direct and to the point. He deplored the fact that those called to preach in his day were involved in every activity under the sun except preaching, that is the ploughing and planting of the field of the Gospel.

He asks the rhetorical question, who is the most diligent Bishop and preacher in the land?

This is how he answers:

There is one that passes all the other, and is the most diligent prelate and preacher in all England. And will ye know who he is? I will tell you – it is the devil. He is the most diligent preacher of all others; he is never out of his diocese; he is never from his flock: you shall never find him unoccupied; he is ever in his parish; he keeps residence at all times; you shall never find him out-of-the-way; call for him when- ever you will he is ever home. He is the most diligent preacher in all the realm; he's ever at his plow; no lording or loitering can hinder him; he is ever applying his business, you shall never find him idle I warrant you. And his office is to hinder true religion, to maintain superstition, to set up idolatry, to teach all kinds of popery. Where the devil is resident and has his plow going, there away with books and up with candles; away with Bibles and up with beads; away with the light of the Gospel, and up with the light of candles, yea, at noon day.

Some may say Latimer had the advantage of it being manifestly clear to his hearers, i.e. the ruin caused by not preaching the Word of God.

But is it not clearly manifest today?

He warns his hearers that they are being deceived, mislead and cheated through satan working through the powerful influences of their day, as we are today.

Oh that our prelates would be as diligent to sow good doctrine, as Satan is to sow cockle and darnel.

He warns his hearers that many of the church leaders are not preaching the Gospel

Let us preach Christ as Paul preached who. "By Himself, and by non-other, made purgation and satisfaction for the sin of the whole world.

Let us trust upon His death alone, and look for no other sacrifice propitiatory, than the same blood sacrifice. For Christ Himself said, "It is perfectly finished:"

I have taken at my father's hand the dispensation of redeeming mankind, I have wrought man's redemption and have dispatched the matter."

Friends we need to be at our business of ploughing, the devil is as active today (especially in the media, and sadly in many pulpits) as he was then. God has given us a sphere of labour a field to plough, and indeed there are treasures hidden in this field yet to be discovered.

The Great Necessity to Hear God's Word

Take for another example a typical 19th century sermon on the subject of the Scriptures. **The Bible the Guide to Heaven** is the title of the sermon preach by the Rev. J Sherman, Surrey Chapel October 19, 1834. The text:

Wherewithal shall I young man cleanse his way, by taking heed thereto according to thy word. Psalm 119:9

This was an address to young men; more particularly to medical students.

Young men, you are travellers to eternity: you are travellers either to eternal happiness, or to eternal woe. There is a strait gate, and the narrow way that leadeth unto life; and few there be that find it: and there is a wide gate and a broad way, that leadeth to destruction; and many that be which go in thereat.

(He is causing them to think about the purpose of their lives- why they are in the world.)

Let me deeply impress on your minds, that God has not placed you in this world simply to attain that knowledge which might fit you for benefiting your fellow creatures, or by which you might gain wealth, or by which you might attain respectability in society. That is not the great end of existence;(He is aware of the creeping materialism of the age) that can never be to a moral agent; that can never be to an immortal mind: there must be something higher in the end and design of God than all this, in putting you in the path of life which you now tread. That in which he has designed is, to obtain likeness to himself, a fitness for heaven, and, finally, a residence with him in glory.

Let me warn you of some of the dangers that will try and hinder us in the seeking of this way. Original sin is a great hindrance, and our own proneness to commit our own actual sins is another.

In Scripture there are ample warnings of this, in childhood I see numbers mocking a venerable prophet of God, saying, " Go up thou bald head; go up,

thou bald head:" and God for this lack of respect for His prophet, sent bears out of the wood who devoured them alive. (He is emphasising the dangers and opportunities of youth-it is a key time of life)

At 12 years of age I see Manasseh commencing a course of impiety which was strewn with crimes of the most dreadful kind-murder, idolatry, sorcery, adultery, and every foul vice. (Sin can make a ship-wreck of our lives)

At 16 years of age I see Uzziah first walking in the fear of God, and then filled with pride through the prosperity which God had bestowed upon him; scorning God's prophets: and God smote him with leprosy.

At 17 years of age I see Joseph sent by his father to visit his brethren; and these young men first cast him into a pit, and then sold him to the Ishmaelites as a slave. (Remember now thy creator in the days of thy youth)

At 20 years of age I see Ahaz beginning with evil, which increased with his years in malignity and horror; till, with impunity, he burned his own children as sacrifices to his gods, and banish the worship of God out of his land.

At 23 years of age I see Jehoahaz doing "evil in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father's had done," and God giving him, as a prisoner into the hands of it even came for his impiety.

At 25 I see Jehoickim violating the principles and practice of probity falling a sacrifice to his own vices.

O young man every stage of life has its dangers.

The only mode of cleansing this way of life effectually is by paying devout attention to God's Word.

He then goes on to explain what exactly the Bible is and its inspiration and reliability. And then to explain its message, i.e. the message of salvation through Christ.

Taken from The British Pulpit vol II 1835

Interestingly the next sermon in this volume is entitled **The Fallibility of Human Judgement** by the Rev. E Craig, preached in James's Chapel, Edinburgh September 14, 1834.

But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh upon the heart.

1 Samuel 16:7

(He is posing the question 'Can you trust your own judgement?')

This sermon again is a challenge to take stock and reassess our lives, are we going in the right direction, are we making the right assessment in our lives of what is of worth and value, right and wrong, true or false. Indeed human judgments are fallible, we need to see ourselves as God sees us. We need a moral compass a reliable guide, the infallible Word of God gives us this. The preacher then describes how God sees us and our urgent need of Christ.

.....

II

Christ alone (*Sola Christos*)

The great preachers of the past said that Scripture alone teaches us the way of salvation. The question then is where does Scripture lead us?

Does it leads us to the church, to ministers of the church, to the sacraments of the church? No, not primarily.. The Scriptures leads us to Christ the only Saviour. It teaches us that,

Christ the only begotten Son of God.

Christ the only sacrifice for sin.

Christ the only Mediator between man and God.

Christ the only Saviour.

This was powerfully illustrated in the ministry of Daniel Rowlands. J.C. Ryle comments in *Five Christian Leaders of the Eighteenth Century*

Of all the spiritual champions of the Eighteenth Century, none appear to have brought Christ more forward more prominently than Rowlands. The blood, the sacrifice the righteousness, the kindness, the patience, the saving grace, the example, the greatness of the Lord Jesus, are subjects which appear to run through every sermon, and to crop out at every turn. It seems as if the preacher

could never say enough about his Master, and was never weary of commending Him to his hearers. His divinity and His humanity, His office and His character, His death and His life, are pressed on our attention in every possible connection.

page 101

I have here a list of sermon titles taken from the Penny Pulpit 1851 – 52. the period leading up to the 1859 revival. Out of the hundred sermons recorded 21 proximately 1/5 on the Person of Christ or the Character of Christ.

The Increase of the Redeemer's kingdom	Henry Melville
The Redeemer's Tears	Henry Melville
Christ the Pearl of Greatest Price	Henry Melville
Christ Compared to the Serpent Lifted Up in the Wilderness	William Chalmers
Christ Head Over all things to the Church	J. C. Harrison
Life in Christ	T. Archer
The Truth as it is in Jesus	J.B. Brown
Christ Receiving Sinners	J. Weir
Christ and the Tribune Money	Henry Melville
Christ the Receiver of Sinners	R. Hamilton
Life in Christ	Henry Melville
The Loveliness of Jesus	J.H. Hinton
Christ the Messenger of the Covenant	John Cumming
Christ the Believers All	H. Allen
Christ, the capstone which the Builders Rejected	J. Beaumont
The Advent of Christ	Henry Melville
Christ and Example of Humility	John Angel James
Christ's Glorious Appearing	Henry Melville

Christ the Light of the World

Henry Melville

Christ the Believer's Life

T.B. Baker

Christ the Paschal Lamb

Baptiste W. Noel

This section reminds us of the exhortation we noticed earlier given by Dr. John Duncan ... *The doctrine of the Person of Christ, which gives glory and excellence to the work of Christ, should be brought forward, – not salvation merely, but the glorious Saviour Himself, and that not only for the sake of guilty sinners' salvation, but for the exhibition of the Divine character.*

I want to use here the example of another sermon from this period , not in the list above , but a sermon preached by the famous Thomas Raffles LL.D at Great St. George's Street Chapel, Liverpool.

Sermon title..

Right Apprehensions of the Character of Christ, Essential to Salvation

But who say ye that I am? Matthew 16:15

This my brethren, is a very important question on a most vital subject: and although it was originally addressed to the immediate disciples of our Lord, for the purpose of eliciting from them an expression of the opinion which they entertain concerning the character of their Master, yet it is as truly addressed to us, and to everyone who comes under the sound of the Gospel as it was to them. It is a question of infinite moment, personal concern, of individual interest, to each and every one of us: it is a question of some pressing nature, whether we are disposed to entertain it or not, it must be answered by us, now or at the Judgment Day.

Real religion – to which correct views, suitable conduct, with regard to Christ are indispensably necessary – it is a personal thing: it is each one's individual concern. Our Lord first asked the disciples what others said concerning Him..... Then He brought the matter a little nearer home: Whom say ye that I am? What think ye of Christ? What are your opinions concerning my character and my

claims, my Person, and my work, the truth and the design of my mission to this world?

Whatsoever may be the case with respect to others it is of the utmost moment, that the opinions which we entertained concerning Christ should be correct.

Dr. Raffles then proceeds, giving the following headings.

1. Whom say ye that He is? *As regards his Person?*
2. Whom say ye that He is? *Concerning the nature of the work he came to accomplish?*
3. Whom say ye that He is? *In regard to his requirements and his claims?*

He then draws the sermon to a close by reminding his hearers that, *it is of the utmost importance that they form correct and decided opinions on the subject.*

He reminds them that opportunities for doing so is very great... The Bible is in their hand..read it!

The cup of life and salvation is handed round amongst you..dash it not away!

The living waters are flowing; stoop down and drink and live, for he that drinketh of this water, it shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

Final exhortation.

Put not, then, from you this solemn, momentous question. Seek not to bury in oblivion the rising suggestions of conscience at this solemn hour: say not "Tomorrow, and tomorrow I will hear thee: at a more convenient season I will attend to these things." Never can you have a more convenient season than the present. You are now where the Son of Man has power to forgive sins; and the ear of the Eternal is open; and the gates of the city of refuge are thrown wide to welcome you; and the Intercessor pleads for you; and the arms of the Redeemer are stretched out to you; and the Angels are waiting to exult over you, and to tell the glad tidings to the realms of glory, that you have repented and returned to God.

Hasten O sinner is to be wise;

And stay not for tomorrow's sun.

May God impress these things upon your hearts for Christ sake Amen.

The British Pulpit Vol II pp.305-

See also, *The Name that is Above Every Name*, Marcus Rainsford

p.7

The Need of Christ

Under this heading of Christ Alone we may also emphasize the need of Christ.

Evidences of Christianity; I am weary of them. Make a man feel the want of it, rouse him, if you can, to the self knowledge of his need of it, and you can safely trust to its own evidences.

Coleridge, quoted in Oxford Book of Preaching. p 401

Here again is one of the distinctive elements of all the great preachers of the past especially those preaching at times of revival.

Both Whitfield and Wesley aimed to "deeply wound" their hearers before they sought comfort them.

Whitfield commented: *The new generation of preachers had risen who "wound deep before they heal, they are careful not to comfort over much those who are convicted... I fear, I have been too in cautious in this respect and have often given comfort too soon. The Lord pardon what is past, and teach me rightly to divide the Word of Truth for the future.*

Quoted by Iain Murray. *The Old Evangelicalism and the New*. p25

Wesley spoke of self styled Gospel preachers who denied this approach, saying that they *"corrupt their hearers; they vitiate their taste so that they cannot relish sound doctrine.*

ibid p.26

We do need to know how to get under the skin of the indifference and Gospel hardness of our age. People will not be interested in the message of forgiveness unless they know that they have something that needs forgiving.

The reason why the Gospel of justification by faith is to such an extent a meaningless sound in the world and in the church of the twenty first century, is that we are not imbued with the profound sense of the reality of God, and

of his Majesty and holiness. And sin, if reckoned with at all, is little more than a misfortune or maladjustment.

If we are to appreciate that which is central in the Gospel, if the Jubilee trumpet is to finding its echo again in our hearts, our thinking must be revolutionised by the realism of the wrath of God, of the reality and gravity of our guilt, and of the Divine condemnation.

John Murray. The Origin of the Banner Leicester Conference 1962

To the modern mind the idea that God can be angry is as intolerable as the idea that He exercises punishment and judgment. Both these expressions, however are intolerable because the modern man, through the influence of the thought of the Enlightenment, is so accustomed to think that God's function is to stand surety for human purposes. It is the genuinely theocentric idea of God that men find intolerable. Actually, their resistance is directed against the Will and the Majesty of God.

Because the thought of the Holiness of God, and the gravity of the idea of law, is no longer understood, men seek for such biological – psychological explanations. Superficiality makes its own God – a God who is of the kind it likes. So long as we continue to reject the Scriptural ideas of Divine Holiness of divine wrath, and of divine righteousness and punishment, the process of decay within the Christian Church will continue.

See also Brunner The Mediator p.468-9

We have to be aware of these thoughts in the minds of many of the people to whom preach. We have under God to use ways, and Scripture gives us these ways of breaking through this barrier, bringing man to see his utter need. In a moment we will look at some examples of how the great preachers of the past did this.

Note...

One is markedly struck reading the sermons of the great revival years just how much emphasis is given to man's sinfulness, God's wrath against sin, and man's utter and urgent need of the atoning sacrifice of Christ. Having read so many of these sermons from this period in preparation for this lecture I half understand the comment made by the Quaker statesman, John Bright, when having heard the Congregationalist preacher G. B. Bubier preaching on one

occasion is supposed to have murmured beneath his breath, *The atonement, always the atonement! Have they nothing else to say? Sin and the atonement! have they nothing else to say?*

And of course others challenged these teachings at a much deeper level. Jean Jacques Rousseau said that in 1749 travelling on the road from Paris to Vincennes,(pronounced Vansen) he experienced a vision by which he said he learned that *man is naturally good and that it is our institutions that make us wicked*. If you like Rousseau had discovered a way of excusing the guilt and personal sinfulness of man. (T S Elliot said 'By the modern mind, I mean, those who have read Rousseau')

The evangelical preachers of the day however knew that sin must be challenged and exposed. Isaac Watts preaching for one of the Religious Societies earlier in the century was clear on the issue. *'When a war with sin is begun in a nation, it must be carried on without ceasing, or iniquity will prevail. Sin will prevail if the war be neglected.'* Society for the Reformation of Manners, Salters Hall, Oct. 1707

Now let me give you some examples of the way they preached on the need for Christ and his salvation.

Let me first give you the example of Henry Melville (1799-1871) preaching on the nature of sin. This is taken from his sermon Ezekiel's Vision of the Dry Bones. Ezekiel 37:3.

Henry Melville was one of the foremost members of the evangelical party in the Church of England. He was regarded as one of the best of the London preachers of his day. John Ruskin and Robert Browning admired him greatly. When Gladstone, a high church, went to hear this famous low church preacher, he declared that he was the greatest of living preachers. Spurgeon compared him to Demosthenes. He said that he prepared his sermons with great care, and wrote them out in full two or three times before he preached them.

Comparing the dry bones to man's state without Christ, he comments:

*You know what is the foundation truth of the whole Christian system, that which is taken for granted in every part of the Gospel and to disprove which would be to disprove the necessity for a Mediators interference, it is the **truth of human corruption and helplessness.***

It would not be easy to exaggerate this truth, to overstate its emphasis in Holy Writ, though erroneous inferences may be deduced from it, or false representations given of its character. The important thing is that we carefully distinguish between man as the citizen of this world, and man as the citizen of another world; for unless such distinction be kept in mind, we may easily advance statements in regard of human degeneracy which men will justly reject as unfair and overcharged. So long as man is viewed only as a member of society, he is undoubtedly capable of much that is noble and excellent; it would be absurd to make the sympathies which he can display, and the virtues which he can cultivate, the subject of one sweeping and indiscriminate censure. If he did not belong to two worlds if he owed everything to his fellow – creatures, and nothing to his Creator, we should be met on all hands by fine instances of what is generous and upright and amiable in man, which would tell strongly against our theory of the corruption of nature, and almost force us to confess that man cannot be "very far gone from original righteousness." But when you survey the human race in relation to its Maker, then it is that the corruption may be proved radical and total.

If the body be reckoned dead, because it can no longer see, nor hear, nor speak, nor move, there are the same reasons why the soul in her natural state should be reckoned dead; for she has no eye for the light of heaven, no ear for its melodies, no taste for its pleasures, no energy for its occupations. The soul is as insensible and powerless with regard to the world of spirit as the dead body with regard to that of matter.

Page 67-68 Melville's Sermons

Another way of approaching the same subject i.e. the spiritual deadness of man and his utter contempt for the inward nature of the commandments God, is taken from Alexander Whyte's (Free St. George's Edinburgh) sermon on Joel 1:4 and 2: 25. Locust Eaten Years Restored.

That which the palmer worm hath left, hath the locust eaten; and that which the locust hath left hath the cankerworm eaten, and that which the cankerworm hath left hath the caterpillar eaten....

And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten.

He debates the nature of this locust plague. He comes to the conclusion that this is far more than the natural phenomenon of a locust plague. He concurs with Pusey's Commentary on the Minor Prophets, that these are figurative locust describing the plague of Satan in the human heart.

He recognizes that Pusey's High Churchmanship led him far astray in many important matters, nevertheless he was right in this.

Dr. Pusey went far wrong and he led his Church far wrong on some most essential matters, but he never went far wrong in his doctrines of sin and holiness. And he was wholly right, – as wholly right as the Holy Ghost and a whole life could make him, – in his final and full explanation of this prophets terrible locusts. "Let my readers take my word for it," he said. All this power and passion repentance and remorse comes from a far deeper source than any plague of locusts. No! This is no locust. This is no deadly insect with its shining wings. There is only one thing on the face of the whole world that this can be. This is Sin!

The first thing that aroused the great scholar suspicion that the prophet was setting a deep riddle to his readers was this terrible passage:

"Hear this, ye old men, and give ear, all ye inhabitants of the land. Tell your children of it, and let your children tell their children, and their children another generation. That which the palmer worm hath left hath the locust eaten; and that which the locust hath left hath the cankerworm eaten; and that which the cankerworm hath left hath the caterpillar eaten."

In all his immense apparatus of authors the old Hebrew Professor could find no breed of locust that ever came up, scourge after scourge, on any land, in that fashion. As far as he could read or hear, one descent of locusts is enough to make any land a desert. No. It clearly cannot be literal locusts. It is some deep riddle of desolation that the sorrowful prophet sets to us under the name of locusts.

And no sooner had the same scholar tried the key of sin than the prophet's sacred lock flew open; and the riddle was as clear as day. Try that key yourselves, my brethren. You have a great scholar's word for it that that key fits, to perfection, the most inward and intricate parts of Joel's inward and intricate prophecy. Well, – try that same key upon your selves. Try it on your own desolate life. Try it on desolation after desolation of your utterly

desolate life. Try it year after year. Take sin after sin, sin after sin, and see if sin is not the true key of your desolate life.

With Mercy and with Judgment p.96..

Sin destroys layer upon layer of our lives, character, conscience, integrity, relationships with God and with our fellow men. It blights and destroys all it touches.

Then of course turning to the restorative power of the Gospel.

Those unfamiliar with Augustus Toplady's famous sermon based on *The National Debt* might look it up in his works. Here is a very telling if not unusual means of speaking of the enormous debt of man's sin and its deadly effects.

Examples of sermons on the utter desolation sin brings can be found in sermons on Ezekiel's dry bones, Joel's locusts, and of course Paul's famous description in the first chapter of Romans.

Of course man's need of salvation manifest itself in varied ways as James Stalker brings out in his sermon, Christ and the wants of Humanity. based on 1 Cor. 30. *In him are wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption.* Found in sermon volume entitled *The Four Men*.

Take another sermon on the theme of the Wrath of God against sin.

It is difficult to speak with sensitivity, and not to be misunderstood on this theme, or to produce a caricature of the real nature of God.

It is true also that some churches and preachers have been guilty of a pharisaic censoriousness and almost delighted and threatened people with God's judgments. No one would want to recommend that kind of thing.

It is however very necessary to preach on this theme.

Dr. Martyn Lloyd Jones makes some good points on this subject in his work *The Plight of Man and the Power of God*. He reminds us for instance that the older type of preaching, we are told, would drive people away from our churches; whereas if we emphasize and stress the love of God it would appeal to people. The simple answer to that is, that the facts indicate the

exact opposite. It is as the idea of judgment and the wrath of God has fallen into the background our churches have become increasingly empty.

He also reminds us that the wrath of God has nothing to do with the impatience of uncontrolled anger. There is nothing arbitrary or unjust about it. It represents, rather, God's hatred of sin and wrong-doing, the utter antagonism of his holiness to sin, and his righteous anger against this rebellious power that has entered into the world and life, and which has wrought such havoc among his creatures.

He further comments that one of the ways God's wrath is revealed is when he, removes the restraints against sin, and allows it to take its own course and work itself out. He gave over the people to a reprobate mind. The more they denied him and ignored him, the more, in a sense, were they proclaiming his being. Sometimes the wrath of God is revealed by just allowing sin to run riot.

Here is part of a 19th century sermon by R.W. Dale of Birmingham on this subject. (We know of course that he was not altogether orthodox in all things, John Angel James however said, '*the root of the evangelical faith was in him*'. And he is certainly orthodox on this point.)

*Although the temper of our times makes it difficult for us to believe that the anger of God against sin, and against those that are guilty of sin can ever become "a consuming fire," it is **perhaps easier for us to believe that he is angry with the sinful and impenitent than to believe that, in any real sense, he is hostile to them.** Anger within certain limits is not inconsistent with love.*

Indeed, the measure of our love for others is often the measure of our anger against them when they do wrong. A comparative stranger may tell us a lie, and we feel nothing but contempt and disgust; but if our own child, or friend for whom we have strong affection, tells us a lie, there is often intense anger as well as intense grief. That God should be angry with us though he loves us, is perfectly intelligible; and we may even find it possible to believe that his anger may at last become so great, that if it were revealed, the revelation would utterly consume and destroy us.

Now having said that, men refuse to believe that God should be hostile to them on account of sin... but unless we believe this we must suppress and

reject a large part of the teaching of the New Testament. God has a great love for mankind. This is the central truth which has given light and glory to the long succession of his supernatural revelations to our race. It has received its highest proof and illustration in the Life, Death and Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the blessings which God has conferred upon mankind in him. For eighteen centuries the Church has proclaim this truth, with unequal earnestness, but with a firm and invincible faith. The gloomiest theological systems have never been able altogether to obscure its brightness.

But to deny that he can be hostile to men on account of sin, is to emasculate and degrade our conception of him. He is not a mere "good natured" God. He is righteousness as well as his love is infinite.

Take a case: – you have a child who is the light and joy of your home; her voice is sweeter to you than any music, and her face is fairer than a summers morning. Her thoughts are as pure as mountain air; her life is as stainless as a mountain snow. She is on the threshold of womanhood, the very flower and perfection of her loveliness and beauty have come. And the wretch, whose crime human language has no terms strong enough to describe, and human laws no punishment terrible enough to avenge – deliberately, by hypocrisy, by lying, by a deep laid scheme, worked out with elaborate cruelty – betrays her trust, ruins her virtue, and then flings her from him on to the streets of a strange city. He has no compunction for his crime. If the opportunity comes to him again he will repeat it. Tell me now – What ought to be God's relation to such a man is that? Ought God to be at peace with him? God forbid! If he were, there would be no justice in the universe. My hope and strength and consolation in the presence of such a crime is this, come from the certainty that wherever that man goes, under whatever disguises he may live, whatever his wealth may be, whatever is rank, he is pursued by One who is the relentless enemy of his sin – and who will be his relentless enemy if he will not renounce his sin – an enemy from whose grasp he cannot escape, whose justice and wrath if he does not repent will inflict upon him an awful penalty. Even to the worst of men indeed God manifests patience and long-suffering. The Divine mercy clings to them while there is any hope, and endeavours to redeem them. It is better, infinitely better, that they should repent them that they should suffer. But the Divine hostility becomes more intense as the Divine grace is resisted, and if they refuse to

repent they are treasuring up unto themselves "wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God."

R.W. Dale The Atonement 343..

How often do we with such sensitivity and solemnity speak of the wrath of God like this.

Reasoning with men about their lost condition is also a feature of the sermons we are looking at under this heading of preaching our need for Christ.

I want us to turn our attention now to a sermon by George Whitfield with the title. *The Seed of the Woman and the Seed of the Serpent*. Incidentally I think a useful exercise in helping us to see the usefulness of these sermons for today and how we can adapt them to our own contemporary ministries, is to go through some of the volumes and give these old sermons modern titles. For example, Whitfield's, *Walking with God*, could become *Getting our Priorities Right*. Again Whitefield's, *Thankfulness for Mercies Received, a Necessary Duty*, could become *What is the Purpose of Life?*

This sermon, *The seed of the woman* etc. Could be, *The Answer to Your Greatest Problem*. It is about the Fall, and the fallenness of mankind.

This sermon which we have not time to analyze in any detail is full of examples of how to make a sermon interesting and informative, and from a human perspective to hold the attention of the listeners. It is at the same time full of teaching, I mean general Christian teaching, for example, his opening remarks inform us how to read the Bible, and what its main theme is, i.e. that Christ is present from the very opening pages, and that through the law and the Prophets Christ's coming is foretold, His character gradually revealed, until in the fullness of time he becomes incarnate and dwells amongst us. When he speaks of man's fall in the garden of Eden, he touches on the interesting question of how long after man's creation, did he fall, was it on the same day or sometime afterwards? This sermon is plain and intelligible but it is not bland nor predictable.

What I really want to draw attention to however, is the way that he uses the account of the serpents beguiling of Eve, as an illustration of the way he beguiled us. (Owes something to Milton's *Paradise Lost*)

Whitfield relates Satan's approach to Eve:

Yea, hath God said, "ye shall not eat of every tree in the garden?"

The first thing he does is to persuade her, if possible, to entertain hard thoughts of God. This is his general way of dealing with God's children. "Yea, hath God said, "ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" What! Has God planted a garden and placed you in the midst of it, only to tease and perplex you? Has he planted a garden and yet forbid you making use of any of the fruits of it at all? It was impossible for him to ask a more ensnaring question in order to gain his end. For Eve was here seemingly obliged to answer and vindicate God's goodness. And therefore, verses 2 and 3. The woman said unto the serpent, "We may eat of the fruits of the trees of the garden. But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, "ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die."

The first part of Eve's answer was good, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden. God has not forbidden us eating of every tree of the garden)

Note; what trees of the garden these were.

See David Thomas The Homilist -

- the tree of vocation, industry, commerce
- the tree of invention, creativity, science
- the tree of service, sacrifice
- the tree of love, friendship and social life
- the tree of thought and intellectual pursuits
- the tree of literature, arts and music
- the tree of true religionetc etc.

No, we may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden (and, it should seem, even of the tree of life, which was a sacrament to man in the state of innocence) there is only one tree in the midst of the garden, of which God has said, "ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die." It is here she begins to waver and sin begins to conceive in her heart. Already she has contracted some of the serpents poison, by talking with him, which she ought not to have done at all. For she might easily suppose, that it could be no good being that could put such a question into her and insinuate such dishonourable thoughts of God. She should therefore have fled from him and not stood to have spoken with him at all..... Immediately the ill effects of it appear, she begins to soften the divine threatening. God had said, "the day

thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die, or, dying thou shalt die. But Eve says, "Ye shall not eat of it, neither shalt ye touch it, lest ye die." We may be sure we have fallen into or are beginning to fall into temptation, when we begin to think God will not be as good as his word, in respect to the execution of his threatenings denounced against sin.

Satan is suggesting to Eve that she shall not surely die. It is all a delusion, a bugbear, to keep you in servile subjection. For (verse 5) "God doth know, that in the day ye eat thereof, then shall your eyes be opened and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."

He makes an aside here..... What child of God can expect to escape slander, when God himself was thus slandered even in paradise?

Surely the understanding of Eve must have been, in some measure, blinded, or she would not have suffered the tempter to speak such perverse things. In what odious colours is God here represented! (As the militant atheists today try to paint God in odious colours) " God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, ye shall be as gods"(equal with God). So the grand temptation was that they should be hereafter under no control, and equal, if not superior, to God that made them, knowing good and evil. Eve could not tell what Satan meant by this. But, to be sure, she understood it of some great privilege which they were to enjoy. And the Satan now points out a way which seems right to sinners but does not tell them the end of the way is death.

To give strength and force to this temptation, in all probability, Satan or the serpent, at this time took an apple from the tree and ate it before Eve, by which Eve might be into used to think that the sagacity and power of speech which the serpent had above the other beasts must be owing in a great measure to his eating that fruit. And, therefore, if he received so much improvement she might also expect a like benefit from it. All this, I think, is clear. For, otherwise, I do not see with what priority it could be said, "when the woman saw that it was good for food." How could she know it was good for food, unless she had seen the serpent feed upon it?

Satan now begins to get ground apace. Lust had conceived in Eve's heart. Shortly it will bring forth sin. Sin being conceived, brings forth death. verse 6, "and when the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was pleasant to the eyes and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof and did eat and gave also unto her husband and he did eat."

Our senses are the landing ports of our spiritual enemies. How needful is that resolution of holy Job, "I have made a covenant with mine eyes!" When he began to gaze on the forbidden fruit with her eyes, she soon began to long after it with her heart.

"She gave also unto her husband with her and he did eat." What a complication of crimes was that in this one single act of sin! Here is an utter disbelief of God's threatening. The utmost ingratitude to that Maker, who had so lately planted this God and placed them in it with such a glorious and comprehensive charter. (She implicates him in her crime and hence thoughtlessly perhaps, all her posterity)

And the utmost neglect of that posterity, who they knew were to stand or fall with them. It was the utmost pride of heart. They wanted to be equal with God. Here was the most utmost contempt put upon his Law. It is the devil believed and obeyed before him. Never was a crime of such complicated nature committed by any here below. Nothing but the devil's apostasy and rebellion could equal it.

Whitefield then turns to consider **the consequences of disobedience, the free grace of God, the continued struggle of the Christian life.**

We now might consider another sermon on the consequences of sin, but turning from Whitfield now to a lesser-known preacher. The sermon is 'The Man with the Withered Hand.'

The Withered Hand Restored

And looking round about upon them all, He said unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he did so: and his hand was restored whole as the other.'

Matt. 12:9-13, Mark 3:1-6, Luke 6:6-11.

We believe that all the miracles are at the same time parables and illustrations illustrating man's spiritual state of corruption and loss, and its remedy in Christ.

This preacher: Arthur Roberts, Rector of Woodrising, Norfolk uses the case of the man's withered hand to show man's utter inability to remedy his fallen situation, or to fulfil the purpose for which God created him, or to enjoy the fullness of life that God intended for him.

The man's hand – and his right hand to – was withered so that he was totally disabled from employing it. And if he was a man whose bread depended on his labour, this case was the more peculiarly distressing. Work to do, and no right hand to do it with me: bread to earn, and no right hand to earn it with –.

This man nevertheless was seeking a remedy. We find him in the house of God on the Lord Day. Those who seek a remedy will find a remedy in Christ. Seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you.

Thinking first of this man's malady. In a certain respect he is suffering from the disease of human nature. Man's hand – the working hand of duty with which he is to serve his God, is spiritually withered. It was sound and strong in the day when God first created it, but in the day when that hand was put forth to the forbidden fruit, the spiritual hand withered and shrank up. Mankind ever since has been without spiritual ability. Cannot save himself. He is expert enough in sin, and in many things, but he has a right hand of wickedness which is ever actively at work in what is evil, he has no hand nor heart by nature for any spiritual employment.

Give him any work in which his soul's interest is concerned, and alas, he has no hand, no heart for what he is engaged in.

The man that was so expert at his trade, so dexterous in business, but what is that man before God?

Then can be listed the type of sins of which that hand is capable of performing, for all it be withered.

The typical sins of men, are thatthey are, *lovers of their own selves, ...covetous, boasters.. proud... blasphemers... disobedient to God... unthankful.... unholy.* etc. etc see II Timothy 3:3 –5.

Our Lord calls upon the man with the withered hand to " *stretch forth his hand.*"

Though in and of ourselves we are without strength, yet in the Lord's command is the ability to perform.

What the preacher has done is by using the illustration of the parable, is to depict man's fallenness, his loss of dignity, true freedom, his loss of capacity to serve God, or to find the purpose for which it was made, or to become the man he was intended to be.

Then to show that his only remedy is to repent, to believe and obey the Gospel, and to cast himself on the mercy of Jesus Christ.

.....

Certainly the Preachers of the 18th and 19th centuries highlighted the specific sins of their age and preached against them.

We live in a period of extreme apostasy - the sins of our age are not unlike the times in which the Apostle Paul and the others ministered in, the days of the New Testament.

The preachers of the great days of revival though they may have not been preaching against exactly the same kind of sins as we are faced with today, yet as we have seen particularly in the 18th and early 19th century there are marked similarities..

New Testament examples would of course be Romans I, 1st Corinthians,

II Timothy 2:3-4

In the last days perilous times shall come... Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse

Let us take some examples from the sermons of Charles Simeon

These sermons are taken from volume 4 of his Helps to Composition or Six Hundred Skeletons of Sermons. Dated 1808.)

I first of all give some typical titles.

The destructive influence of sinners *One sinner destroyeth much good*
Ecclesiastes 9:18

The wickedness and madness of unregenerate men *The heart of the sons of men is full of evil; and madness is in the heart while they live; and after that, they go to the dead.* Ecclesiastes 9:3

The danger of disregarding the Word of God *He that feared the word of the Lord amongst the servants of Pharaoh, made his servants and his cattle flee into the houses; and he that regarded not the word of the Lord, left his servants and his cattle in the field.* Exodus 9:20, 21

The sinfulness of confounding good and evil *Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter.* Isaiah 5:20

The Vanity of a sinful life *They have sowed the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind* Hosea 8:7

The Certainty that Sin will Find us Out *Behold ye have sinned against the Lord; and be sure your sin will find you out.* Numbers 32:23

The Commonness and Folly of Atheism *The fool hath said in his heart, that is no God.* Psalm 14:1

Simeon also has a series of sermons on such subjects as:

The Evils of the Tongue *The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. So is the tongue amongst our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.* James 3:6

Supineness (or want of inclination to serve God) *They will not frame their doings to turn unto their God: for the spirit of whoredoms is in the midst of them, and they have not known the Lord.* Hosea 5:4

The Friendship of the World *Ye adulterers, and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God! Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God.* James 4:4

Living after the Flesh *If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. Romans 8:13*

Covetousness *And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them; for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. And lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear my words, but they do them not. Ezekiel 33:31, 32*

Sloth *The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold; therefore shall he beg in harvest, and have nothing. Proverbs 20:4*

Murmering Against God *The foolishness of man perverted his way, and his heart fretteth against the Lord. Proverbs 19:3*

Pride *Be not high-minded, but fear . Romans 11:20*

False Confidence *Israel shall cry unto me, My God, we know thee. Israel has cast off the thing that is good: the enemy shall pursue him. Hosea 8:2, 3*

The sinfulness of confounding good and evil. *Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter. Isaiah 5:20.*

Inattention to the Voice of Conscience *If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Brethren, if our heart condemn us not then have we confidence in God. I John 3:20, 21*

Example from Simeon on Dangers of Living a merely self-centred life

(Original title The Extent and Importance of Christian Duty)

Let me read you some lines from Simeon in which he speaks of the danger of merely living for self. This is a very relevant subject for our self pleasing, self-seeking age. The sermon is taken from Matthew 16:24, 25.

Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life, shall lose it; and whosoever will love his life for my sake, shall find.

Simeon says:

Since the first introduction of sin into the world men have cast off the love and fear of God, and have subjected themselves to the dominion of self – instead of conforming themselves to the will of their Maker, and living wholly for his glory, they have made their own will, the principle, and their own honour, or interest, the end of all their actions – Christianity is indeed to bring those back to the state from which we are fallen – The very first step towards our restoration is, to deny self, and to restore to God the dominion of which we have robbed him – Our inquiries must henceforth be, not what do I choose? Or, what will gratify self? But what does God command? And will glorify him? – To "put off the old man," to "mortify the deeds of the body," to "crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts;" in a word, to deny self in all its actions, is the course on which every Christian must enter, and which she must resolutely follow to the end of life.

This sermon is in the first place addressed to Christians, its title is *The extent and importance of a Christian's duty*. But it is not only an important exhortation and clear direction to Christians about how they should live, but I think it makes plain to unbelievers, the totally unsatisfactory nature of living a purely selfish life and the wholesomeness and purity and the deeply satisfying, ennobling and liberating experience of living life to the glory of God.

We now pass on to looking at another area that was strongly emphasized by preachers in the period we are looking at today.

III

Sola Fide, by faith alone. That is faith in Christ's atoning sacrifice.

We are justified by faith alone in Christ alone.

'The doctrine of justification by faith alone, the principal hinge on which true religion turns.' John Calvin

'The article by which the church stands or falls.' Martin Luther.

'The doctrine of justification by faith only is absolutely essential. There has never been a revival but this has always come back into great prominence. 'Martyn Lloyd Jones.

'If I make self the centre of my life I have gone wrong: God must be the centre. If I am trying to save myself - now in my fallen state, I am again putting self at the centre. True goodness is a forgetfulness of self. ' John Baillie.

Our forefathers knew this, right well.

The ground of our justification is Christ's once and for all atoning sacrifice on the cross.

It is faith/ trust in that sacrifice/ atonement that saves, *not of works lest any man should boast.*

In the 19th century we have some critics saying, that the evangelicals preached nothing, but the cross of Christ, and his atoning work.

The Quaker statesman John Bright after hearing one evangelical preacher, complained. *'The atonement, always the atonement! Have they nothing else to say'.*

Another example of this is Anne Arnot looking back on her Brethren upbringing, recalled trying at a Brethren Meeting on Christmas Day, to pass in her imagination to Bethlehem, from the ministry which always centred on the atonement.

(Quoted in Evangelicalism in Modern Britain. Bebbington pp 14-15)

While we must be aware of this kind of criticism, it is also true that has never been the revival yet, when these great themes have not been to the fore.

Let us turn to a sermon by Isaac Watts, entitled The Atonement of Christ. Justification by Faith Alone.

Based on the text *'Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation'*

Romans 3:25

Isaac Watts sets out the doctrine, included a systematic order, reminiscent of the Puritan preaching of the previous century. Like the Puritan style it is expositional and then applicatory at the end.

The order of the sermon is first of all.

1. Introduction.
2. He then states the nature of the doctrine is about to describe, a simple straightforward summary.
3. He then states that he will cover three main aspects of this doctrine in three sections.
4. But he will do this by ten propositions.
5. He will then bring out the application.

He piles up argument on argument answering every objection as he goes. An illustration of the fact that these preachers applied to their preaching fervent prayer and deep devotion of mind.

These were the men that made the doctrine of justification by faith as well known and as every day knowledge as that women did the washing on a Monday and men went to the football match on Saturday afternoon. (Illustration given in Bernard Lord Manning's book, The Hymns of Watts and Wesley).

Some words from the Introduction:

It is one of the chief glories of the Gospel, that it sets before us a full atonement for sin by the blood of Christ, it makes known to us the reconciliation of sinners to an offended God, by the death of his own Son.

One would be ready to wonder that any of the guilty race of Adam should be so unwilling to receive so divine a revelation, or should refuse a blessing so important.

But such unhappy principles prevailed over the minds of some men,..... that they have been content to venture their eternal hopes on the mercy of God, without a dependence on the satisfaction made for sin, by Jesus the Saviour.

(Here he is exposing socinianism, prevalent in his day, clearing away misapprehensions)

They imagine Christ the Son of God came into our world chiefly to be a teacher of grace or duty, to be an example of piety and virtue, or to plead with God for sinners, and in short, to do little more than any other divine prophet might have been employed in, if the wisdom of God had so appointed it.

They suppose he yielded to death that he might seal his doctrine with his blood, and might set us a glorious pattern of suffering and dying, and then lead the way to our resurrection, by his own rising from the dead.

It is granted indeed, these are some of the designs of the coming of Christ, some of the necessary parts of the blessed Gospel: but it seems to me, that this blessed Gospel is shamefully curtailed, and deprived of some of its most important designs and honours, if a proper atonement for sin by the blood of Christ be left out of it.

He then says that in contrast to these mistaken ideas of the Gospel he is going to set before his congregation the true meaning of Christ's atonement and how by faith in that atonement we may find peace with God.

His three points and 10 propositions

His three points were:

1. To explain more fully the manner in which I conceive Christ to become an atonement or propitiation for our sins.
2. To give some reasons to prove, that he is ordained of God, and set forth or offered to the world under this character.
3. I shall show what glorious uses are made of this doctrine throughout the whole Christian life.

To go through the whole argument of this sermon would, by simply reading his points and statements be exceedingly tedious and demanding. I will just touch on his points, but I want to do this as an example of the way many of these preachers piled up, layer upon layer, of powerful and reasoned arguments, to make their points.

Proposition 1.

God has set forth his righteous and holy Law.

This law in a great measure is engraved on the hearts and consciences of all men by nature.

Proposition 2.

All mankind have broken this Law.

Proposition 3.

God will not pardon sinful man without some compensation for his broken Law.

He goes on to explain why this is so.

a. Because it would suggest that God's Law is of little consequence and therefore not worth the vindicating. It becomes a wise lawgiver to see that his wisdom in framing his laws, be not exposed to dishonour; therefore his laws must be vindicated, when they are broken.

b. Men would have been tempted to persist in their rebellions, if there had been no vindication of the honour of the law. It is of great mercy to mankind that God's laws are present to restrain evil.

c. If his laws are not vindicated it might appear that God's form of government is of little importance. *God is not mocked: he that soweth to the flesh shall reap destruction.*

d. God had a mind to make a very illustrious display, both of his justice and of his grace among mankind, which should be the solemn spectacle and the wonder of other worlds beside this, even the world of angels, principalities and powers; and therefore he hath designed that his grace and his justice should mutually set forth each other, in his transactions with sinful man.

These, and other reasons, infinitely superior to all our thoughts, might be in the divine mind, why God would not pardon sinners without a satisfaction.

(Many might have suggested the character of God himself, he cannot deny his holy nature.)

Proposition 4.

Remember, that sinful man, was not able to make any satisfaction to God for his own sins, he can never make adequate recompense for his debt is too great.

Proposition 5.

The guilt of sin is infinite; and therefore the punishment due to a sinning creature is everlasting, because God cannot in any other way sustain punishment equal to his infinite demerit of sin.

Among men the crime is always aggravated in proportion to the person, against whom it is committed: therefore any offense against a father, or King, has much more guilt in it, and is much more severely punished, than the same offense committed against an inferior, or an equal.

(Isaac Watts spent some time on this point, and it is obvious that he has thought about it deeply.)

He ends with one final point.

I beg leave to add this one thought more, and that is, if sin has not a sort of infinite demerit in it, I cannot see why man himself, by some years of penal sufferings, might not make full atonement for his own sins: But the language and current of Scripture seems to represent sinful man as forever lost to all hope in himself, and then the necessity of a Mediator appears with evidence and glory.

Proposition 6.

Man cannot save himself but God has appointed his only begotten son Jesus Christ to be the Saviour of sinners.

Proposition 7.

Because God intended to make a full display of the terrors of his justice, and of his divine resentment for the violation of his Law; therefore he appointed his own Son to satisfy for the breach of it, by becoming a proper sacrifice of Expiation or Atonement.

Proposition 8.

The Son of God being immortal, could not sustain all these penalties of the Law which man had broken, without taking the mortal nature of man upon

him, without assuming flesh and blood: Thus the Incarnation was necessary, that he might be a more proper surety, substitute, and a representative of man who had sinned: and that he might be capable of suffering pain, and anguish, and death itself, in the room and stead of sinful men.

Proposition 9.

God, the great Ruler of the world, having received such ample satisfaction for sin, by the sufferings of his own Son, honourably forgave his creature man, who was the transgressor.

Proposition 10.

God in the days of the gospel has, in the most plain and explicit manner, offered this reconciliation to sinners who return to him by the mediation of Jesus Christ: he has proposed peace to those who sincerely desire to be reconciled to God, and to have all enmity done away with on both sides; to those who trust in the virtue of the blood of Christ, as the foundation of this divine peace between God and them.

And then there follows what Isaac Watts calls the reflection, but is a reflection on all that is being said.

Inquire now, O my soul, dost thou believe in Christ? Hast thou seen the heavy guilt, the danger of eternal death? Hast thou been weary and heavy laden with a sense of thy passed iniquities? Hast thou been pained of the heart under the present power of indwelling sin? And hast thou fled for refuge to the hope set before thee in the Gospel? Hast thou joyfully received Jesus the Saviour by faith in his blood? By a living and active faith? As thou committed thyself to him, to be delivered from the reign of sin, as well as from the condemnation of it? Then mayest thou join with the blessed apostle and speak in the language of faith, "he loved me, and gave himself for me," in Galatians 2:20.....

My soul looks up to thee with an eye of humble confidence, and my faith and hope rests on thy everlasting love. Amen

Sermons of Isaac Watts. Sermon 34 page 57 Vol. II Williams and Smith London 1806.

I have used this sermon as an example of setting out plain statements of doctrine. It is perhaps worthwhile repeating the words of William Garden Blaikie quote earlier. *Little personal impression is made by abstract statements, we need to adapt the message to the actual condition of the hearers and get among their living feelings and know how to touch the most sensitive areas of mind and heart.*

The Importance of preaching the Love of God.

In the preaching of this doctrine we can give full vent to our emphasis on the love of God for Fallen man.

Let us be very clear also that as George Smeaton put it.. *The atonement is the principle matter of the Gospel, and here the highest exhibition of the united wisdom, love and faithfulness of God is seen.... in a word, the greatest act in the universe.*

Or as Augustine put it .. *The cross was a pulpit in which Christ preached his love for the World.*

As B. B. Warfield put it regarding the love of God seen at the cross... *It is not that it is so great that it is able to extend over the whole big world: it is so great that it is able to prevail over the Holy God's hatred and abhorrence of sin. For herein is love, that God could love the world - the world that lies in the evil one: that God who is all holy and just and good, could so love the world that He gave His only begotten Son for it, - that He might not judge it, but that it might be saved.*

The Saviour of the World *God's Immeasurable Love* page 120 quoted in *The Pulpit of God's Love*, Ian Murray p.15

Or as John Duncan put it... *Men evangelized cannot go to hell but over the bowels of God's great mercies. They must wade through the blood of Christ.*

Just a Talker The Sayings of John Duncan quoted Murray p. 19

IV

We turn now to the fourth of these sola's that is sola gratia, Salvation by grace alone

'Only the Maker can remake us' - Augustine

An old-time preacher who was especially good at getting in amongst the innermost thoughts and feelings of his hearers was George Burder. An Independent minister, we would say today 'Congregationalist'. (1752 – 1832) Ministered in Lancaster,; Coventry, and Fetter Lane, London.

Hear from his sermon on Super abounding Grace. *Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.* Romans 5:20.

Grace signifies "the free favour of God" towards sinful and undeserving creatures; and it stands opposed in Scripture to the merit or wages of works performed; as in Ephesians 2:8, 9, "By grace are ye saved; not of works, lest any man should boast." It is carefully distinguished from that which might be thought meritorious; as in Romans 6:23, "the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." The doctrine of human merit it is indeed flattering to the pride of man; but it is totally contrary to the grand principle of the gospel, which forbids all flesh that glory before God, and requires us to ascribe the whole of salvation to pure, unmerited mercy.

In the whole business of salvation, from first to last, grace abounds. It originated in the heart of God, who pitied us in our low estate; and devised the plan of salvation; to us perfectly easy, but to himself highly costly. It was God who, unasked, presented to the world that 'unspeakable gift,' his only begotten In Human Nature; for "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son." Herein is love; Not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

Let us be concerned above all things, to be partakers of this grace. Be not content to hear of it, as persons unconcerned, but seek to be personally partakers of it. Shall we neglect it? Shall we suffer any of the concerns of this life, however pressing, or any of its enjoyments, however pleasing, to divert our souls from this greatest of all concerns? God forbid!

Village Sermons Volume VII. page 9-10

We cannot believe, or repent, or understand, or take even the smallest steps towards God apart from his grace. Grace alone is the message of the Gospel, Salvation is "of the LORD" (Psalm 37:39; John 2:9) from first to last, from top to bottom, from beginning to end. It is utterly by the Lord's doing that we

are saved in Christ Jesus (1 Corinthians 1:30.) Grace is first and foremost the determination of God to look upon us with favour and deliver us from our folly and sin. It is not something separate from God , but it is "God himself in his merciful disposition towards sinful men."

We need to remind our congregations and ourselves as our forefathers did, that God is under absolutely no obligation to save sinners. By our sin and rebellion we have forfeited all favour from God and deserve nothing but his wrath.

Spurgeon reminds us of this in his sermon entitled Amazing Grace Vol. 22 page 103

The sinner is the object of divine mercy to an extraordinary degree.

He is preaching on Isaiah 57:18.

I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners.

Notice how God speaks. Observe the tone and spirit of his declaration. "I will," says he: "I will, I will, I will." Now "I will" and "I shall" .

"I have seen his ways", he says "I know what a rebel he is, but I will heal him. I know how sick he is, for from the crown of his head to the soul of his foot, nothing but bruises and putrefying sores are to be seen, but I will heal him." He speaks like a God – "I will." There is no condition expressed, and that is no "peradventure" or "but," because that is no condition. He does not say, "if he will." No, when God says "I will," man will be made willing: be sure of that. He does not say, 'I will, if man will do a part of it.' No, but 'I will.'

The Lord knows how, without violating the human will (which he never does), so to influence the heart that the man with full consent, against his former will, yields to the will of God, and is made willing in the day of God's power.

There is a higher power than the human will, whatever power then maybe in that, and this certainly is a very great power, neither do I wish to deny the fact; but that is a higher power than the will of man, else man were God, and the will of man would be omnipotence. The Lord knows how, by sacred arts

of wondrous grace, to make the stout free will of man yield itself to the perfect free will of God and thus he takes the sinner captive and leads him in triumph to the feet of Christ. Glory be to God for this. If the salvation of men depended upon that being willing, and no prevenient grace ever came to unwilling sinners, there is not one soul in all our race that would ever be saved, but we have erred and strayed from God's ways like lost sheep, and if God waited till we came to him of ourselves, he would wait forever in vain. No. The good shepherd goes after the sheep – follows it, tracts it, seizes it, throws it on the shoulders, and carries it: rejoicing.

Then from Spurgeon's Sermon on Grace for Grace volume 35 1889 page 299.

Eternal life is the gift of God, in its first breathing; and it is still the gift of God in its highest development. When you stand before the throne of the Most High, you will stand there through grace alone. All along, from sins pit to heaven's gate, without a break, the whole road is paved with grace. We do not begin with grace, and then go on to trust in works: we do not at first received freely, and then afterwards have to live, upon a hard earned wage. No: still, still, still he worketh in us to will and to do, and we lovingly work under his divine guidance, as we are strengthened by his divine power. Grace lays the foundation stone, and

*Grace all the work shall crown,
Through everlasting days;
It lays in heaven the topmost stone,
And well deserves the praise.*

V

Soli Deo Gloria.... For the Glory of God.

We might read Jonathan Edwards' great sermon on The Glory of God or his funeral sermon on the death of David Brainard.

My heaven is to please God, and glorify him, and give all to him, and to be wholly devoted to his glory. That is the heaven I long for; that is my religion; and that is my happiness; and always was, ever since I supposed I have any true

religion: and all those that are of that religion, shall meet me in heaven. I do not go to heaven to be advanced, but to give honour to God. It is no matter where I shall be stationed in heaven, whether I have a high or low seat there, but to love, and please, and glorify God. If I had a thousand souls, if they were worth anything, I would give them all to God: but I have nothing to give, when all is done.

It is impossible for any rational creature to be happy without acting all for God. God himself could not make me happy any other way. – I long to be in heaven, praising and glorifying God with the holy angels; all my desire is to glorify God..... there is nothing in the world worth living for, but doing good, and finishing God's work, doing the work that Christ did. I see nothing else in the world that can yield any satisfaction, besides living to God, pleasing him, and doing his whole will.

David Brainard

We might here, as time is short, just read an interesting paradox noted by the French writer Emile Doumergue (pronounced *Domerg*) in his biography of John Calvin.

It is the theologies of the en-slaved will which have saved liberty; it is the theologies of salvation by Another than man which have saved human morality; it is the theologies of renunciation of the world which have saved man's mastery over the world; it is the theologies of man's renunciation of itself which have saved human personality; it is the theologies that have preached love towards God alone which have saved love towards all men; it is the theologies of eternal predestination which have saved progress – even political and social progress; it is the theologies of heteronomy which have conferred on man an autonomy so fully master of itself as to be the master of all else; it is the theologies that said "God is all, man is nothing" which have made of man a force, an energy, a power incomparable and divine!

There may be some tendency to overstatement here, yet it is claim which I think is capable of large substantiation.

We can also include here J. H. Overton's Summary of the Effects of the 18th Century Revival

'Of the faith which enabled a man to abandon the cherished habit of a lifetime and to go forth ready to spend and be spent in his Master's service: which

nerved him to overcome the natural fear of death, and indeed, to welcome the last enemy as his best friend who would introduce him to the better land he had long been living for; which made the selfish man self-denying, the discontented happy, the worldling spiritually-minded, the drunkard sober, the sensual chaste, the liar truthful, the thief honest, the proud humble, the thriftless thrifty, the godless godly.'

The Evangelical Revival in the 18th Century p131

Looking now at some of the ways the great preachers of the past concluded their sermons, urging their listeners to repentance and faith.

First I quote from the end of George Whitefield's sermon on Justification by Christ. I Corinthians 6:11

And can any poor truly – convicted sinner, after this, despair of mercy? What, can they see that Saviour hanging on a tree, with arms stretched out ready to embrace them and yet, on their truly believing on him, doubt of finding acceptance with him?

No, away with all such dishonourable desponding thoughts. Look on his hands, pierced with nails of iron. Look on his side, pierced with a cruel spear, to let loose the sluices of his blood and open a fountain for sin and for all uncleanness. And then despair of mercy if you can! No, only believe in him and then, though you have crucified him afresh, yet will he abundantly pardon you. "Though your sins be as scarlet, yet shall they be as wool; though deeper than crimson, yet shall they be whiter than snow."

What is clear from these men is that they truly did plead with sinners whilst acknowledging in every way, and making it absolutely plain that salvation was by grace from start to finish. They believed in a particular election but they also believed in a free offer of the Gospel to all. They believed that by Christ crucified the love of God and his willingness to save is to be made known to all people.

Calvin writing on John 3:16 says:

Although there is nothing in the world deserving of God's favour, he nevertheless shows that he is favourable to the whole lost world when he calls all without exception to faith in Christ, which is indeed an entry into life.

Commentary on the Gospel according to John quoted in The Old Evangelicalism and the New page 112

Here is John Bonar coming to the end of the sermon on Proverbs 8:4, 6

Unto you, O man, I call; and my voice is to the sons of man.

Hear: for I will speak of excellent things; and the opening of my lips shall be right things.

All the words of my mouth are in righteousness: there is nothing froward or perverse in them.

The call to come is thus itself an assurance of welcome. As it would be presumption to come without an invitation, so it is presumption to hesitate when that invitation is sent... Yes, Christ is God's gift to mankind sinners. The cross is God's ordinance for the salvation of men, Christ has died for you to come to – for you to live by. God calleth you by ten thousand expostulations and entreaties which he sends in his Word. Christ calleth you by his sufferings – by his death – by his tears of compassion – and by his entreaties of grace. The Holy Spirit calleth you by everyone of those words of mercy and of warning, and by every conviction and impression which they awaken in the heart. Thy God hath found thee out, not with words of condemnation, but with words of mercy. His words are all as fresh and full of love as if first now, and first by you, they have been heard in human language. With these words of gracious compassion doth he once more overtake you – beseeching you to turn and live – assuring you that in no wise you shall be cast out O ye sons of men, his words mean all that they say, they are drops of the compassion of God... God directly, personally, and earnestly beseeches us to be reconciled to him – eternal life in offer, Christ in offer, everlasting blessedness in offer and everyone either receiving or rejecting these offers. Rest not until the voice of Christ to the sons of man be answered by you in the first breathings of the Spirit of adoption, "I will arise and go to my Father."

The Free Church Pulpit 1844. Quoted in The Old Evangelicalism and the New p.132

Take another example from Thomas Binney of the famous Kings Weighbridge Chapel London. (Remembered today as the author of the hymn, Eternal light, eternal light

Preached at Exeter Hall July 1851

Text: *Children of God: and if children, then heirs ; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.* Romans 8:16, 17.

The cross of Christ is, at this moment, "the power of God unto salvation," as it is ever been; and the regenerating Spirit it is at present with the Word as in the first age, and is ready to renew and sanctified, if not repelled by hard and contemptuous or impenitent resistance. There is not a sinner in his sins, however numerous or aggravated they may be, but may come, by repentance and faith, for pardoned and be saved – a child of God, by adoption, and grace, through the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. Men, as men, are not in this state; all who are so, had to enter into it from the condition in which the sinner at present stands. The door which admitted them, is open for others; and there is one standing at the door, crying to all that have ears to hear – "him that cometh, unto me, I will in no wise cast out," whosoever will approach, I will by no means close the door against him. The very object of the gospel, the aim and purpose of the Lord's death, the travail and labour of his life in heaven, the end to be achieved by the ministry of the Word, and the means of grace, all merge and terminate in this – to change rebels into obedient children, and thus to enlarge the family of God and to accomplish the number of the elect. It is the pleasure of Jehovah to see this prosper, in the world, the satisfaction of Christ, the joy of angels, the happiness of the church, "the Spirit and the Bride say come; and let him that heareth come; let him that is athirst, come; and whosoever will, let him come, and take of the waters of life freely." "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

Sermons Preached on the Occasion of the Great Exhibition of 1851 .page
142

or take another example from the sermons of Marcus Rainsford curate at St. Matthews, Brixton... 19th century.

He ends a sermon entitled God Calling to Man based on Genesis 3: 9 *And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, where art thou?*

May some wanderer, this night, return to his Father; some hiding soul, this night, come forth from his lurking-place; some builder upon the sand lay, this night, his foundation upon the rock; some trifler be made serious; some worldly man turned heavenward – so that all may have cause to bless God for his Word here spoken, and ascribed to him, through eternal ages, thanksgiving, and blessing, and praise!

Sermons page 86

The example of the Queen of Sheba from a sermon by John Fletcher

Here we see a very fine example of preaching the gospel from the Old Testament.

If the Queen of Sheba went from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon – probably from Ethiopia, then deemed the uttermost part of the earth from Jerusalem – that she might obtain instruction as to her own duties and obligations and that her own mind might be impressed and informed; what ought be our feelings in relation to him who is greater than Solomon.

She went, notwithstanding the distance of her residence. She had a long journey to perform, with little of those facilities and accommodation for travelling which we enjoy. And yet she went all the way to Jerusalem that she might hear and witnessed the wisdom of Solomon. Will not this procedure on her part condemn those of us to whom God has brought nigh his word? You have his ordinances; his Sabbaths are every week enjoyed by you – his house is open for your reception – his word given in a language which you can understand. That word is nigh you, and the Gospel is brought near to you. All you neglecting it? Are you taking no pains to understand it? The Queen of the South will rise up in the judgment against you.

She went, notwithstanding all the anxieties of her public station. She might have pleaded, "I have so much to do so many cares devolving upon me that I cannot go." But she acted on different principles, and was well rewarded for labour. Can you, then, plead any cares, any anxieties, any occupations, as a reason why you should not make every effort, submit to every sacrifice, go through every necessary difficulty, in order to attend to the wisdom of the Son of God – in order to listen to the oracles of truth – in order to seek the things that belong to your everlasting peace? Say not, "what shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed?" Your attention to these things will not be interfered with by your supreme attention to the things which belong to your everlasting peace. "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.

She went, though uninvited. There was no offer, no appeal made to her. Mere report, general testimony that she heard, induced her to go. Can you say you are uninvited? What is this Word but the record of invitation, full of mercy and love? What is the ministry but the ministry of reconciliation, exhibiting inducements and considerations to bring you to seek at once the knowledge of this greater than Solomon? Will she not rise up in the judgment against you?

She went to hear the wisdom of a mortal, at best fallible, and who after all was guilty of sad and criminal defection. But you are invited to listen to, and to receive the instructions of heavenly wisdom, of eternal life. Then recollect how the Queen of the South will rise up and judgment against the men of this generation; because a greater than Solomon is here – in the Bible, in the testimony of heavenly wisdom, in the mistress of divine truth.

Quoted in the British Pulpit 1835 page 216

Let us come to an end by quoting a description of the great sermon preached by Dr. Thomas Chalmers (1718 – 1847).

Chalmers is preaching on the text Rom. 5: 17

For by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.

The description is given by John Brown, the great Edinburgh essayist, in his *Quiet Hours*.

We remember well of first hearing Dr. Chalmers. We were in a Moreland district in Tweed-dale, rejoicing in the country after nine months of the High School. We heard that the famous preacher was to be at the neighbouring parish church, and off we set, a cart full of irrepressible youngsters... The moor was stretching away in the pale sunlight – vast, dim, melancholy, like a sea; everywhere were to be seen the gathering people,.. The countryside seemed moved to one centre.

As we enter the Kirk, we saw a notorious character, a drover, who had much of the brutal look of what he worked in, with the knowing eye of a man of the city... He was our terror and we not only wondered but were afraid when we saw him going in. The Kirk was as full as it could hold.

The minister came in, homely in his dress and gait, but having a great look about him, "like a mountain among hills." He looks vaguely around upon his audience, as if he saw one great object not many. We shall never forget his smile – it's general benignity; he shed the light of his countenance upon us! He read a few verses quietly, then prayed briefly, solemnly, with his eyes wide open all the time, but not seeing. Then he gave out his text; Death reigns.....

He started slowly, calmly, and simply explaining the meaning of the words: what death was, and how and why it reigned; then suddenly he started and looked like a man seen some great sight, he was breathless to declare it. He told us how death reigned – everywhere, at all times, in all places; how we all knew it, how we would yet know more of it. The drover, who had set down in the table-seat (square-pew) opposite, was gazing up in a state of stupid excitement; he seemed restless, but never kept his eye from the preacher. The tide set in; everything added to its power; deep called to deep, imagery and illustration poured in, and every now and then the theme- the simple terrible statement- was repeated in some lucid interval. Death reigned.

*After overwhelming us with the proofs of the reign of death and transferring to us his intense urgency and emotion, and after shrieking, as if in despair, these words, 'death is a tremendous necessity!' He suddenly looked beyond, as if into some distant region, and cried out, '**Behold! A Mightier! Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah?*** (Garments dyed

red from Bozrah) This that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Isaiah 63:1,2

Then in a few plain sentences he stated the truth as to sin entering, and death by sin, and death passing upon all. Then he took fire once more, and enforced with redoubled energy the richness, the freeness, the simplicity, the security, the sufficiency of the great method of justification.

How astonished and impressed we all were! He was at the full thunder of his power; the whole man was in an agony of earnestness. The drover was weeping like a child, the tears running down his ruddy coarse cheek, his face opened out and smooth like an infants, his whole body stirred with emotion. We all had insensibly been drawn out of our seats and were converging towards the wonderful speaker; and when he sat down, after warning each one of us to remember who it was and what it was that followed Death on the pale horse, and how alone we could escape, we all sunk back into our seats. How beautiful to our eyes did the thunderer look!- how exhausted, but sweet and pure. How he poured out his soul before his God, in giving thanks for sending the Abolisher of Death, Jesus Christ! Then a short Psalm and all was ended.

A History of Preaching p294

Preach the Word, be instant in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. II Timothy 4:2

Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. John 1:29

(Papers given at Metropolitan Tabernacle School of Theology, July 2013)