

# Churches of the New Testament Received, Excluded and Restored Members \_\_\_\_\_

James Madison Pendleton  
From the book, *Distinctive Principles of Baptists*, 1888

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In proof and in illustration of this proposition the following facts are submitted:

In Rom. 14:1 it is written: "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations." What is the meaning of the first clause of this verse? Its import is obviously this: Receive into your fellowship, and treat as a Christian, the man who is weak in faith. The paraphrase of Mr. Barnes is, "Admit to your society or fellowship, receive him kindly." There is unquestionably a command: "RECEIVE YE."

To whom is this command addressed? To bishops? It is not. To the "Session of the church," composed of the pastor and the "ruling elders"? No. To whom then? To the very persons to whom the Epistle was addressed; and it was written "to all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints" (Rom. 1:7).

No ingenuity can torture this language into a command given to the officers of the church in Rome. The members of the church—whose designation was "saints"—were addressed, and they were commanded to "receive the weak in faith." It was their business to decide who should be admitted into their brotherhood; and Paul, under the impulses of inspiration, says, "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye." It was, of course, their duty to withhold their fellowship from those who had no faith.

The right of the apostolic churches to withdraw their fellowship from unworthy members (II Thess. 3:6) plainly implies their right to receive persons of proper qualifications into their fellowship. It is inconceivable that they had the authority to exclude, but not to receive, members.

I now proceed to show that the New Testament churches exercised the right of excluding unworthy members. In I Cor. 5: 1-5 we read as follows:

"It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you. For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that

hath so done this deed, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus."

It is quite worthy of remark that, while Paul "judged" that the incestuous member ought to be excluded from the church, *he* did not exclude him. He had no right to do so, and did not claim the right.

The same apostle said to the "churches of Galatia," "I would they were even cut off which trouble you" (Gal. 5:12); but he did not cut them off, though he desired it to be done and advised that it should be done.

It is worthy of notice too that the members of the Corinthian church could not, in their *individual capacity*, exclude the incestuous man. It was necessary to their action in the premises that they should be "gathered together." They must assemble as a church and exemplify the doctrine of a pure democracy. Thus assembling, "the power of our Lord Jesus Christ" was to be with them. They were to act by his authority and to execute his will; for he makes it incumbent on his churches to administer discipline.

In the last verse of the chapter referred to, Paul says: "Put away from among yourselves that wicked person." Here is a command, given by an inspired man, requiring the exclusion of an unworthy member of the church at Corinth. To whom was the command addressed? To the officials of the church?

No, but "unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints."

The right of a church to exclude disorderly persons from its fellowship is recognized in these words: "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly" (II Thess. 3:6). This command was addressed "to the church of the Thessalonians." To "withdraw" from a "disorderly brother" is the same thing as to exclude him. There is a cessation of church fellowship.

I have not referred to Matt. 18: 17, because I shall notice it in another place. The reader will see on examination that the passage clearly shows the power of "the church" to perform the act of excommunication by which the member cut off becomes "as a heathen man and a publican."

It is not more evident that New-Testament churches received and excluded members than that they restored excluded members who gave satisfactory evidence of penitence. In II Cor. 2:6-8 the "incestuous man" is again referred to, as follows: "Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many. So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him."

Paul manages this case with the greatest delicacy and tenderness. He refers to the excluded member without the least allusion to the disgraceful offence for which he was excluded. "Sufficient," says he, "is this punishment"—that is, the object of the exclusion had been accomplished.

The church had shown its determination not to connive at sin, and the excluded member had become penitent. But the point under consideration is that the apostle advised the restoration of the penitent offender. Paul could no more restore him to the church than he could exclude him from it; but he says, "I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him."

The power and the right to restore were with the church, and Paul solicits an exercise of the power and of the right. The great apostle, in saying "I beseech you," bows to the majesty of the doctrine of church independence. He virtually admits that nothing could be done unless the church chose to act.

In this connection one fact should be carefully observed: The power of the Corinthian church to restore this excluded member is unquestionable. The fact which deserves special notice and emphasis is that the power, in apostolic churches, to restore excluded members implies the power of receiving members, and also of expelling the unworthy.

Without a first reception there could be no exclusion, and without exclusion there could be no subsequent restoration. Thus the act of restoration irresistibly implies the two previous acts of reception and exclusion. Now, if the New-Testament churches had the power and the right to do these three things, they must have had the power and the right to transact any other business coming before them.

Nothing can be of more vital importance to the welfare, and even to the existence, of a church than the reception, the exclusion, and the restoration of members. There are no three acts whose influence on the organic structure and prosperity of a church is so great; and these acts the churches of the New Testament undoubtedly performed.

Here I might let the foundation principle of church independency rest; but there is other proof of the New Testament recognition of that principle.



## Baptists Under Other Names

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Roy Mason

From the book, *The Church That Jesus Built*, 1923 (Chapter 9)

"This church was not swallowed up by the Catholic Church and ceased to exist in the Dark Ages, as Protestantism teaches, but in fact has a continuous line of churches through all these centuries, under various names, but holding the same principles as the church founded by Christ and true Baptist churches hold to-day. There were no real Protestant churches until the sixteenth century. Who furnished the millions of martyrs, who were cruelly put to death by the Catholic Church? There is but one answer: they were Baptists."

T. Moore, in *Why I Am a Baptist*

**W**e have touched on the fact that from the time that corruption began to gain the ascendancy and God's order began to be perverted and changed, there have been dissenters—those who protested against the evil and corruption, and banded together to live and act in accordance with the teachings of the Scriptures. Those who maintained the New Testament form, doctrine and teachings were termed by the corrupt churches "sects," and were denounced as "heretics." All historians admit that these "sects" or "heretics" existed all along down through the ages.

In these churches which stood for the New Testament teaching against corruption, there were leaders and learned men who became extremely well known and well hated because they dared to champion the cause of truth against apostasy. In many instances a large number of those holding the true faith had applied to them the name of the leader. When a new name came to be applied to those holding Baptist beliefs, historians often write as though a new sect originated. In truth it was only a new name that originated, and out of the mouths of enemies at that. A new name applied to the same people, holding the same peculiar beliefs, in no wise changed them.

Now, before I begin to suggest some of the peoples of ancient times through whom Baptists may properly claim historical continuity, let me re-emphasize two points which I request the reader to bear in mind throughout the reading of the entire chapter. First, all I am seeking to establish is that there has always from the time of Christ, been groups of individuals who held on essential points the New Testament faith, and who handed together in churches that were essentially Baptist in faith and practice. Second, only two doctrines are essential to a New Testament church: The way of salvation and the way of baptism. If a group of churches are sound on these two cardinal points they may properly be called Baptist churches.

There is no doubt that, clue to circumstances that prevailed and which we might profitably dwell upon if space permitted, some of the "sects" had irregularities existing among them. Some of the peoples whom I shall mention held erroneous ideas and indulged in some extravagances.

However, if I can show that they held pure the two cardinal doctrines mentioned as essential to a Baptist church, I shall have proved my contention that they were Baptists. It is held against some of the "dissenters," for instance, that they had extravagant ideas about the Second Coming of Christ. That does not disqualify them from being Baptists. So did the Thessalonians have these erroneous views, and Paul had to write 2 Thessalonians to correct them. So do some Baptists today go to extremes in making programs and placing the events connected with Christ's return.

But let us proceed to very briefly notice some of the "sects" that maintained separation from the movement that came to be known as Catholicism. We may well begin with the:

### 1. MONTANISTS

I am well aware that a few Baptist historians hold up their hands in horror at the thought of Baptists claiming kin with the Montanists. (Cf. Newman and Vedder) With preconceived antipathy for the Baptist continuity idea they seek to draw as dark a picture of the early "sects," as they call them, as is possible. From many historians I have gleaned information concerning the Montanists. My conclusion is that their irregularities have been greatly exaggerated. In some of the churches there were irregularities, no doubt, but I am convinced that on the whole they were a great and good people holding the doctrines essential to a Baptist church. Let us notice the admissions of historians concerning them:

Vedder says (*Short History of the Baptists*, pp. 58, 62):

"They clearly apprehended the truth that a church of Christ should consist of the regenerated only...Of course the Montanists immersed—no other baptism, so far as we know, was practiced by anybody in the second century. There is no evidence that they baptized infants, and their principle of a regenerate church membership would naturally require the baptism of believers only."

Should we be ashamed to claim kinship with these churches, composed of regenerate people, duly immersed upon profession of faith in Christ?

But let us read further the testimony of historians:

"'Montanism' was a protest against corrupt and sinful living and lax discipline. The substance of the contention of these churches was for a life of the spirit. It was not a new form of Christianity; it was a recovery of the old, the primitive church set over against the obvious corruption of the current Christianity. The old church demanded purity; the new church had struck a bargain with the world and arranged itself comfortably with it, and they would therefore break with it." (Moeller, "Montanism", in *Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia*)

"As there was at that time...no essential departure from the faith in action, the subject of baptism, church government or doctrine, the Montanists on these points were Baptists." (Darrel, *Perpetuity*, p. 69)

"Montanism continued for centuries and finally became known under other names. (Eusebius, *Church History*, p. 229, note by Dr. McGiffert)

"The severity of their doctrines gained them the esteem and confidence of many who were far from being of the lowest order." (Mosheim, *Eccl. History*, Vol. 1, p. 233)

"Montanism...is best understood as a reaction against a condition of the church and of the Christian life, which seemed to the Montanists to be pitched too low and also to have decayed from an earlier and purer standard." (*The Ancient Catholic Church*, by Rainy, p. 130)

"Montanists held that membership in the churches should be confined to purely regenerate persons; and that a spiritual life and discipline should be maintained without any affiliation with the authority of the state." (Armitage's *History*, p. 175)

"Montanus was charged with assuming to be the Holy Spirit himself; which was simply slander." (Armitage, p, 175)

"History has not yet relieved the Montanists of the distortion and obliquity which long held them as enemies of Christ; while in fact they honestly, but in some respects erroneously, labored to restore that Christ-likeness to the churches which had so largely departed." (Armitage, p. 176)

## 2. THE NOVATIANS

These were so called because of the leader of the puritist movement who bore the name Novatian. He was a member of the Church of Rome planted by Paul, but which became so corrupt that separation was necessary in order to preserve the faith.

Of Novatian, Dr. J. B. Moody says, "He neither began nor propagated a sect. Others followed his example in separating from the corrupt churches and thus followed the divine command, and thus their walk was orderly. The disorderly constituted the apostasy."

Robinson says (*Eccles. Researches*, p. 126):

"A tide of immorality pouring into the church, Novatian withdrew and a great many with him...Great numbers followed his example, and all over the Empire puritan churches were constituted and flourished through the succeeding two hundred years. Afterwards, when penal laws obliged them to lurk in corners and worship God in private, they were distinguished by a variety of names, and a succession of them continued until the Reformation."

Vedder says (*Short History*, p. 64), "The Novatians were the earliest Anabaptists; refusing to recognize as valid the ministry and sacraments of their opponents and claiming to be the true church, they were logically compelled to rebaptize all who came to them...The party gained great strength in Asia Minor, where many Montanists joined them."

Dr. J. T. Christian, in his recent Baptist history, shows that the Novatians held to the independence of the churches, and recognized the equality of all pastors in respect to dignity and authority.

Dr. J. B. Moody, after having studied the Novatians in the light of a dozen or more historians, says of Novatian, "He contended that...salvation...was of the Lord, by grace through faith."

Without multiplying quotations we find that the Novatians were Anabaptists, holding the scriptural view on the way of salvation, pure in life and scriptural as regards their conception of the ministry and church government. I see no reason as to why Baptists should not trace continuity of existence through them.

## 3. THE DONATISTS

Dr. J. B. Moody, who read widely on subjects pertaining to church history, says relative to the Donatists, "Those who contended earnestly for the original pattern were called in some countries Novatians and in others Donatists. These men did not originate sects, but separated from the growing apostasy and perpetuated the true churches."

In the case of the Donatists, separation from the corrupt occurred in the year 311 A. D.

The French historian Crespin gives the following as the view held by them:

"First for purity of church members, by asserting that none ought to be admitted to the church but such as are true believers, and true saints. Secondly, for purity of church discipline. Thirdly, for the

independency of each church. Fourthly, they baptized again those whose first baptism they had reason to doubt. They were consequently rebaptizers or Anabaptists."

From this it is apparent that they held the doctrines essential to a Baptist church.

Curtis says (*Progress of Bapt. Principles*, p. 21): "Donatists...seem to have formed the germ of the Waldenses."

Benedict says (*Church History*, p. 4), "After the Donatists arose they (the Montanists) were often called by that name."

Jones says (*Hist. Chris. Church*): "There was hardly a city or town in Africa where there was not a Donatist church."

#### **4. THE PAULICIANS**

Dr. J. T. Christian says in his *Baptist History*, pages 76 and 77, "The Paulician churches were of apostolic origin and were planted in Armenia in the first century."

An old book of the Paulicians, called the *Key of Truth*, was discovered a few years ago by Dr. Coneybeare of Oxford. In this book the Paulicians claim for themselves apostolic origin. Dr. Coneybeare, who translated the *Key of Truth* and who is probably the greatest authority on the Paulicians, tells us that the Paulicians and Bogomils were persecuted but persisted here and there in many hiding places until the Reformation, when they reappeared under the form of Anabaptism.

Mosheim says, "They baptized and rebaptized by immersion. They would have been taken for downright Anabaptists."

Dr. Christian says, "Baptist views prevailed among the Paulicians. They held that men must repent and believe, and then at a mature age ask for baptism, which alone admitted them into the church."

Adeney says (*Greek and Eastern Churches*, page 217), "There it is quite arguable that they (Paulicians) should be regarded as representing the survival of a most primitive type of Christianity."

From the references above it may be seen that the Paulicians claimed apostolic origin, held Baptist doctrines and persisted until they were absorbed in the Anabaptist movement.

#### **5. THE ALBIGENSES**

Many historians, such as Mosheim, Gibbon, Muratori, Coneybeare and others, regard the Paulicians as the forerunners of the Albigenses, and indeed the same people save only for name. Dr. Christian states in his history, previously referred to, that recent writers hold that the Albigenses had been in the valleys of France from the earliest ages of Christianity. Because of persecution they left hardly a trace of their writings, so that our knowledge of them is not as full as we could wish. Jones, in the history already quoted from, says that they held the two doctrines necessary to a New Testament church. He also tells us that they rejected infant baptism.

Other "sects" holding these New Testament doctrines in common, but called by such names as Petrobrussians, Henricans, Arnoldists, existed, but space does not permit a detailed account of them. Of these Dr. A. H. Newman says (*Recent Researches Concerning Med. Sects*, p. 187), "There is much evidence of the persistence in Northern Italy and Southern France, from early times, of evangelical types of Christianity."

#### **6. THE WALDENSES**

The close connection of the Waldenses with the peoples whom I have previously mentioned is recognized by historians. Jones says (*History*, Vol. 2, p. 4), "When the popes issued their fulminations against them (the Albigenses) they expressly condemned them as Waldenses."

Some have tried to begin the Waldenses with Peter Waldo and to make of him the founder, but without success. Peter

Waldo did not start the Waldenses, neither are they called after him, for he and the Waldenses have their name from the same origin. On this point Jones says (*H.*, Vol. 2), "The words simply signify 'valleys,' inhabitants of valleys, and no more." Peter Waldo was so called because he was a 'valley man,' and he was only a leader of a people who had long existed. The Waldenses held the opinion that they were of ancient origin and truly apostolic.

In regard to some historian's way of dealing with them, Jones remarks, "The very generic character of the Waldenses is overlooked by most writers respecting the wide-spread community to whom it applied...They were spread all over Europe for many centuries...Whatever local name they bore, the Catholics called them all Vaudois or Waldenses."

Of their origin, Vedder says (*Short History*, p. 122), "The Waldenses, in their earlier history, appear to be little else than Petrobrusians under a different name...The doctrines of the earlier Waldenses are substantially identical with those of the Petrobrusians, the persecutors of both being witnesses."

Some have tried to make it appear that the Waldenses practiced infant baptism. Of course, as I have previously pointed out, a people so widely scattered, with churches in many sections, may have in some of their churches had heretical practices. But my study of the Waldenses from many sources has led me to conclude that to charge the Waldenses generally with having practiced infant baptism, is a base slander. I concur with Dr. Christian when he says, "There is no account that the Waldenses proper ever practiced infant baptism."

Of the doctrines held by the Waldenses, Vedder has this to say (*S. Hist.*, pp. 123, 124):

"Roman writers before 1350 attributed the following errors to the Waldenses:

1. They assert that the doctrines of Christ and the apostles, without the decrees of the Church, suffice for salvation.
2. They say that baptism does not profit little children, because they are never able actually to believe.
3. They affirm that they alone are the church of Christ and the disciples of Christ. They are the successors of the apostles."

Vedder also goes on to give a list of other beliefs held by them and similar to those held by Baptists today. Then he adds, "Also, we find attributed to them certain tenets which were afterwards characteristic of the Anabaptists...Maintaining these views, they were the spiritual ancestors of the Anabaptist churches."

The historian Keller has this to say, "Very many Waldenses considered, as we know accurately, the baptism on (profession of) faith to be the form which is conformable with the words and example of Christ."

No one can make a study of the Waldenses and fail to see very rapidly that they held the two doctrines essential to a Baptist church. They were a great and noble people, who maintained the true faith in the face of bitter and almost continuous persecution. Baptists need feel no shame in claiming kin with them.

## 7. THE ANABAPTISTS

There is much evidence that the Waldenses came to be known later as Anabaptists. The Reformation gave opportunity for the various "sects" in hiding, which we to-day identify as Baptists, to come forth and declare themselves. These hated, so-called "sects" came to be known by the general name "Anabaptists."

Dr. Vedder says:

"It is a curious and instructive fact that the Anabaptist churches of the Reformation period were most numerous precisely where the Waldenses of a century or two previous had most flourished...That there was an intimate relation between the two movements few doubt who have studied this period and its literature. The torch of truth was handed on from generation to generation."

Similarly Dr. Christian says, "In those places where the Waldenses flourished, there the Baptists set deep root...Many able preachers of the Waldenses became widely known as Baptist ministers...Many details marked the Waldenses and the Baptists as of the same origin."

Again, he says, with reference to the Waldenses and Paulicians, "In my judgment both parties were Baptists."

If we ask the opinion of those hostile, we find Baronius, the learned Roman Catholic historian, saying (*Danver's Baptism*, p. 253): "The Waldenses were Anabaptists."

Again, Vedder, who, let us remember, is hostile to the idea of Baptist perpetuity, has this to say (*S. Hist.*, p. 130):

"These Anabaptist churches were not gradually developed but appear fully formed from the first...Complete in polity, sound in doctrine, strict in discipline. It will be impossible to account for these phenomena without an assumption of a long existing cause. Though the Anabaptist churches appear suddenly in the records of the time contemporaneously with the Zwinglian Reformation, their roots are to be sought further back."

Further, he says on pages 136, 143:

"The Anabaptists, like Baptists of today, argued that, there is no command or example for infant baptism in the New Testament, and that instruction and belief are enjoined before baptism...The teachings of the Swiss Anabaptists are accurately known to us from three independent and mutually confirmatory sources: The testimony of their opponents, the fragments of their writings that remain, and their Confession of Faith. The latter is the first document of its kind known to be in existence. It was issued in 1527...It teaches the baptism of believers only, the breaking of bread by those alone who have been baptized, and inculcates a pure church discipline...The...Confession corresponds with the beliefs avowed by Baptist churches today. It is significant that what is opprobriously called 'close communion' is found to be the teachings of the oldest Baptist document in existence."

I shall close my discussion of the Anabaptists with a quotation from Dr. W. D. Nowlin (*Fundamentals of the Faith*):

"As to the origin of the Anabaptists, church historians differ, but it is probable that in many instances they were the revival of the remains of the earlier sects or at least of their sentiments, which still lingered in many localities. Undoubtedly it was the quickened life and thought of the Reformation that brought them again into notice and resulted in the vast increase of their members.

"Anabaptists held to the complete separation of Church and state, liberality of the individual conscience and the Bible as the only rule of faith and practice. They opposed infant baptism; admitted none but regenerated persons to baptism and church membership; and practiced immersion only for baptism.

"As a result they were bitterly persecuted and outlawed. Nevertheless they greatly increased in numbers and extended over a large part of Europe...The Baptists of the last three hundred years are the direct descendants of the true Anabaptists of the period of the Reformation; perhaps we might more correctly say, the Baptists were then called Anabaptists.

"So we find Mosheim, whose authority is great as a church historian, saying: 'The true origin of that sect which acquired the name Anabaptist is hid in the remote depths of antiquity, and is consequently extremely difficult to be ascertained.'"

I have been dealing with so-called "sects" more commonly dealt with by church historians, and have shown that they held views in the main - essentially Baptist. I have also indicated by historical quotation the connection that the peoples had with each other. However, there are several bodies of Christians through whom we could trace continuity of organized Baptist life if space were available. I shall take time to barely indicate these Christian bodies through whom Baptists connect

with apostolic times.

There are, for instance **THE WELCH BAPTISTS** who make well authenticated claims to apostolic origin. I can do no better than to state the facts concerning them in the words of a writer to the *Religious Herald* of some years ago:

"The Welch Baptists claim their origin direct from the apostles, and their claim has never been successfully controverted. They maintain that the light of a pure Christianity has been preserved among her people during all the 'Dark Ages.' They were a pastoral people, dwelling in their mountain homes. They were subjected to almost constant persecution, and therefore sought to conceal themselves in their mountain recesses, that have been so appropriately styled 'the Piedmont of Britain.' And yet the fact of their early existence is placed beyond peradventure or doubt. They attracted the attention of the Romish Church, and as early as the year 597 a monk visited them, by the name of Austin, and sought to win them to his views."

Dr. J. T. Christian, in his recent *Baptist History*, presents an abundance of historical evidence which proves Welch Baptists of apostolic origin. He is well worth reading on this point.

Benedict, in his *History of the Baptists* (page 343f), shows most convincingly that Welch Baptists are of early origin. According to him, they were ancient in Wales in 597. He shows that at that date they had a college and at least one association of churches.

Further, the history of **IRISH BAPTISTS** is very interesting, reading in connection with the thought of Baptist perpetuity. Baptists had churches in Ireland at a time not vastly remote from the days of Paul. Patrick, the great Irish preacher, was born about 360, but according to historians, Christianity in Ireland antedated Patrick's arrival by a long period.

Of Patrick, Dr. Vedder writes as follows:

"Rome's most audacious theft was when she seized bodily the apostle Peter and made him the putative head and founder of her system; but next to that brazen act stands her affrontery when she 'annexed' the great missionary preacher of Ireland and enrolled him among her 'saints'...From the writings of Patrick we learn that his teachings and practices were in many particulars at least evangelical. The testimony is ample that they baptized believers...There is no mention of infants...Patrick's baptism was that of apostolic times...immersion."

Of the churches of Ireland, Vedder further says, "The theology of these churches up to the ninth century continued to be remarkably sound and scriptural."

I could go on to cite historical references to show that these Irish Baptists sent missionaries to Northern France and Southern Germany and in that way are related to the "Baptists under other names" that I have already mentioned.

Surely I have presented evidence ample to prove my claim that from the days of Christ there has always been in existence churches holding the two doctrines essential to a New Testament church. I have been able to give only a scrap of the historical evidence at my command.

The more one studies on this question the more dogmatic they are forced to become in the belief that history justifies the Baptist claim to continuity of Baptist church life throughout the ages. History indeed vindicates the Master's promise that the gates of Hades shall not prevail against His church!



# The Riches and Poverty of Christ

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J. L. Burrows, D.D.

From the book, *What Baptists Believe and Other Discourses*, 1887

*For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich. - 2 Cor. 8:9*

There is music in these words—plaintive as a dirge, exulting as a paean. What glorious symphonies might a skillful hand, educated by a holy heart, strike out from these chords. But alas! Our harps hang on the willows and their strings are broken. In this strange land we can sing the Lord's songs but stammeringly at best, interrupted by many a jarring discord. But oh! What ravishing harmony must the mighty choir of the New Jerusalem evoke from such a theme, from harps of gold with strings attuned by perfect love, and practiced hands guided by holy, happy hearts. The chorus of those heavenly songs runs in the same strain as this text, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches, wisdom, strength, honor, glory and blessing."

Oh! that we may in spirit get so near to heaven this day as to hear one strain of that ravishing melody pour through its golden gates to give key-note to our praise. It needs affinity of heart with Heaven to apprehend aright a theme like this. Just listen to it again: "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich."

Let us strive to gain some just idea of the AMAZING CONTRASTS expressed in the text: "*He was rich, became poor—we poor, are made rich.*" And here at the outset we are lost. What does the word "rich" mean, when applied to the Lord Jesus Christ? Ye who doubt the pre-existent divinity of Jesus, what meaning is there in this passage for you? When was he rich?

The first you know of him he is very poor, a stable his birth-place, a manger his bed. If he was only a man, then when was he rich? Certainly, never while he was upon earth. It must, therefore, have been before he came into this world. Nothing is taught clearly in Holy Scripture, if the fact of our Lord's pre-existent divinity is not taught clearly. "In the beginning was the word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." He shared "glory with the Father before the world was." He was "God manifest in flesh." (Read Col. 1:12-20)

It was before he came into this world, then, that he was rich. But when we try to conceive what his riches were, as the only begotten and well-beloved Son of the all-creating God, we are bewildered and lost.

What constituted his wealth in heaven? What were the treasures he abandoned?

Can we conceive that his riches consisted in gold, silver and precious stones, piled up in treasure chambers of heaven? Can we imagine that his riches consisted in mines and masses of solid gold, forming ranges of huge mountains, bounding and crossing every celestial landscape? We instinctively feel that this would be but a degrading conception. Gold is trampled upon in the heavenly city like common stones. It forms the pavement. "The street of the city is pure gold, as it were transparent glass." What would gold or silver be to him, at whose omnific word the yellow metal flowed in molten veins through all the granite fissures whence men dig it out with toil? He could create a world of it with a word. What to him who made them all and who could with a word multiply each one by a million, would be the "cattle on a thousand hills?" What to him would be mansions, who by speaking, so multiplies them as to give a separate one to each of his saints?

No, my brethren, not this palpable sort of wealth constituted the riches of Christ. We feel that we must rise to a higher idea than any associated with what the world calls wealth in order to gain any adequate notion of the riches of Christ Jesus.

All these he possessed, it is true, but as the ready Creator of all, we are sure that all are too insignificant to be named, except as the smallest item in the inventory. Let us climb a little above this.

He was rich in the felicity which infinite love receives and imparts.

In heaven he looked upon none whom he did not complacently love, in whose holy character and conduct he did not delight. Every angel and seraph was as worthy of affection as his capabilities would permit. How rich is he who looks upon everything within his survey with pleasure and finds all worthy of his love. There was no being, nor thing in all heaven, to excite a pang or a frown. And then he was himself the centre in which concentrated the love and adoration of all celestial intelligences. He was himself beloved of all.

St. John tells us that Isaiah saw his glory and spake of him. And what was it that Isaiah's piercing eye beheld, long before Christ's coming to the earth, and which the inspired evangelist assures us refers to Jesus? Listen to it:

"I saw also the Lord upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphim, each one had six wings, with twain he covered his face, with twain he covered his feet and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts. The whole earth is full of his glory." (Isaiah 6:1-2)

Was he not rich? The love of one pure heart is a treasure which we could not buy and which we would not sell for all the material stores of earth. And here was our Lord, beloved, adored of all heaven. What ineffable opulence was his!

Even the Eternal Father concentrated all the love of his infinite heart upon Jesus, "his well-beloved Son." Is he not rich whom God loves? And our Lord "was as one brought up with him daily, his delight, rejoicing always before him." The little of God's love which we can take in enriches us more than all earth could give. But the great heart of Jesus could take it all in and absorb it, understand it, enjoy it all. Lazarus, ulcer-eaten, hungry, in rags, the salve for whose sores was the tongue of a dog, was rich compared with the sumptuously-faring, purple-arrayed Dives, because God loved him. How infinite, then, must have been the affluence of the Son of God, into whose soul was poured the full stream of the everlasting Father's love.

He is rich whose treasures are so abundant that he can dispense the means of subsistence and comfort to a hundred, a thousand of his fellow-creatures, and who has the heart to do it. How rich must he have been whose benefactions could supply the wants of all creatures and make all happy! From Christ's exhaustless treasures, ministered by his loving heart, millions of myriads were supplied with all they needed to sustain and bless them. "He opened his hand and supplied the wants of all living things."

In everything to which the word can be applied, literally or metaphorically, was our Lord rich beyond what fancy in its highest flights can conceive. He was rich in wisdom, in power, in goodness, in love. Rich in all that beings mighty and holy could bring to him and lay at his feet. Rich in all they could ask, which they could need, or which they had capacities to enjoy. They wanted nothing, could imagine nothing which he had not in abundance to bestow.

Brethren, if you can stretch your conceptions wide enough to embrace the thought that absolutely all the wealth of all the universe, material, emotional and spiritual, was in the actual possession of Jesus, and at his complete disposal, you will gain something like a just idea of his riches.

He was rich enough to give away all that all creatures could receive or appropriate of good and yet diminish nothing of the treasures he still held in possession. No amount of giving could impoverish him or lessen his stores. The full, broad currents, rivers, oceans of his beneficence, flowing profusely and perpetually over every section and to every individual of his vast universe, never lowered the springs whence they all issued. When he had given all away which all creatures could appropriate, he had fully as much left. He could fill up all capabilities without reducing his treasures. No profusion, no waste of beneficence could decrease his riches.

But I must stop here; I can go no further, though I painfully feel that I cannot gain for myself nor give to you anything like an adequate idea of the riches of Christ.

Now contemplate the contrast. "*He became poor.*" Brethren, did you ever apprehend this thought?

It is no strange sight to see human fortunes topple and crash! Rich men are ejected from mansions and creep into hovels and alms-houses. Kings have become beggars and lived upon charity. These are small and not infrequent changes. Dives loses but little in passing to the condition of Lazarus.

But how was it possible for Jesus to become poor? "Giving did not impoverish him." No benevolence could ever exhaust or decrease the wealth. No fraud nor robbery nor violence could deprive him of his treasures. How was it possible for him to sink into poverty? Ah! he *became* poor. Voluntarily he gave up all his riches, abandoned all his wealth, exiled himself to a remote corner of his dominions and wandered in deepest humiliation and poverty, a homeless, often a weary and often a hungry man.

Oh! What a change! Talk of reverses, of contrasts of condition. The worst of them conceivable are equality and permanence compared with this. An angel digging ditches, Michael working as a scavenger, Gabriel serving as a scullion, Lucifer hurled into hell, all are nothing as compared with this transformation. The only begotten and well-beloved Son of God became poor. And how poor!

The mother of Jesus found shelter in a cold stable when the Christ was born. All she could do in her weakness and poverty was to "wrap him in swaddling bands and lay him in a manger."

Mother, your heart was glad, even in the hour of your anguish, when you saw your little one lying in the arms of tender nurses and provided with everything that could insure its comfort. Think of that birth of the heavenly babe in a rude stable, and the straw of the manger its first bed. Why, even the poorest beggar and outcast might creep into a stable and lay her new-born babe in the manger. We can scarcely imagine a scene of sadder destitution. And this first hour of Jesus' poverty was but a type of his whole earthly life.

The beneficent provider of food for all creatures was himself often hungry.

He who "giveth his beloved sleep" and assures to all the heavy-laden rest, was himself often weary.

He who had studded space with grand star-worlds, listen to his own touching plaint as the chill shadows of night fell upon his homeless path: "The foxes have holes, the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head."

The bread he ate and probably the coat he wore were gifts of loving disciples. "Certain women, Mary called Magdalene and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna and many others ministered unto him of their substance." He had no money with which to pay a trifling poll-tax.

When a furious mob raged for his murder, no counselor pleaded for his life, no friend sustained or comforted him.

He could not obtain a cup of water with which to moisten his fevered lips when in the dying agony he cried, "I thirst." And when he was dead charity furnished him a winding-sheet and a tomb. He was very poor.

But as such material resources had been the least of his riches before he came to earth, so the want of them was the least of his poverty while here. His pure heart still yearned for the love of the holy, and it was hidden from him.

He whose richest treasure had been the adoring and concentrated love of all the myriads of the celestial hosts was now so poor that he rarely heard an expression of affection save from the rude lips of a few humble fishermen and lowly women, who often themselves scarcely knew whether they ought to cling to him and love him or not; one of whom traitorously sold him to his enemies for thirty pieces of silver, another of whom denied him, and all of whom in his bitterest extremity "forsook him and fled." At his trial before Pilate and Caiaphas he stood without a friend.

The one treasure richest of all, the sustaining consciousness of a Father's love, was withdrawn from him. Brethren, there is a depth of mystery here which we cannot fathom. That the Father loved him during all his awful trial we cannot doubt. But that the assurance—the consciousness—of this love was withdrawn from the soul of Jesus, we must also believe.

The most agonizing wail of bereavement which this earth ever heard was that which burst from his soul as he hung on the cross, when nothing but scowls of human hate and the vengeful mockery of demon eyes met his gaze; when he sought in vain for one glance of an angel's pitying face, and could not see a Father's loving eye, nor feel a Father's supporting hand, then broke from his bursting heart that woeful cry at which the solid earth groaned and trembled and at which the very sun grew black, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

That was an hour of poverty, of stark, dolorous beggary, of which the universe could furnish no parallel. *He became poor.*

*Now let us look a little at the reasons given for this poverty of the Son of God. Why did he thus become poor? What necessity compelled this humiliation?*

*Only the necessity of benevolence.* It was "for your sakes." Not to gain new glories, felicities or treasures for himself, except the glory of redeeming man, the felicity which their happiness might reflect upon his own loving soul, the treasures of their grateful affections. "For your sakes."

And what were you that Jesus should submit to such poverty for you? -Hear how this same Jesus describes your condition: "Poor and wretched, miserable, blind and naked." "Dead in trespasses and sins." "The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men to see if any did understand and seek God. All gone aside, all together became filthy—none that doeth good, no, not one." In such a race Jesus felt no complacency. There was no joy to him in coming among them or mingling with them. Everything associated with them was hateful and repulsive to his holy nature.

Why then did he come? He pitied us. A condition so degraded, guilty and ruined awakened compassionate love. You may well say, "This is very strange;" with difficulty can you conceive of it. It is impossible to understand it. It is not at all like man; it is only like God.

There *was* only one way in which his pitying love could be made effective. He must himself become man ; get beneath men in his humiliated humanity, and then, rising, bear them up with him, securing to them pardon, purity and heaven.

We are so poor that we are famishing. He gave his heart to the spear and impoverished himself of his own blood that it might flow out for us as the water of life.

We are so poor that we are starving. Jesus gave his own body that it might be "broken" and become for us the bread of life. We are so poor as to be naked. Jesus gave his own flesh to be rent into fragments from which might be constructed "robes of righteousness" to clothe us. In our deep poverty we are loathsomely diseased, "from the head to the sole of the foot." Jesus parted with the very blood of his heart, that it might be the balm of Gilead for our healing.

Between us and heaven was a deep, impassable gulf, which we were too poor and weak to bridge. Jesus prostrated his own body across that gulf to furnish a bridge for our feet.

*Through his poverty we are made rich.* You are rich, very rich, my brother, if you have availed yourself of the benefits of Christ's sacrifice. But oh! Never forget that Jesus made himself very poor to secure these riches to you.

You are rich! For the debts contracted by your sins, owed to the divine law, have all been paid. But in order to pay those debts your Lord stripped himself of all his riches.

You are rich! For you have a robe of righteousness, spotless as an angel's garment. But Jesus wrought up all his wealth into that robe, which he has given to you. And when there was no other dye that could give it the purple lustre of heaven, he drew the blood from his own heart and dyed it in that. When the Lamb had nothing else to give, he gave his blood, that in that we might wash our robes and make them white.

You are rich you have obtained a pardon. But to secure that pardon your Lord gave up his throne, and toiled as a servant and lived as a pauper.

You are rich! For you have peace with God. But to gain you that peace Jesus alone and in want fought for you a terrible battle—nay, a prolonged war.

You are rich! You are an heir of God and have a title to a heavenly inheritance. But to purchase for you that inheritance Jesus expended all his riches and subjected himself to all the wretchedness of the deepest poverty.

*"Through his poverty you are made rich."* You have not a blessing, a joy, a comfort or a hope which the Son of God did not buy for you, at an expense which deprived him of every joy and comfort and left him destitute, the victim of direst want.

There is a story told in fiction (it could hardly be true in fact) of an orphan girl who lived very happily with kindred whom she dearly loved and who cherished her very tenderly. She one day accidentally discovered an old will, by which the head of the family, long dead, had so disposed of his large estate that it was legally settled upon herself.

If it was discovered, as it soon must be, she would be enriched. But the family, who had given her a kind home as a poor orphan, would be impoverished. She could not bear the thought of becoming rich at their expense. She would not make them poor. And so she stole away from her happy home, sought a place as a servant among strangers, labored with her own hands for daily bread, hid her retreat from the loving ones who anxiously sought for her, and submitted to a life of poverty and toil rather than take from them the wealth to which they had been accustomed.

Noble disinterestedness and love! you say. She made herself poor, that those she loved might be rich. You can scarcely conceive such self-sacrificing love among mortals to be possible. You think that human affection could scarcely go farther than this.

But oh, how feeble an illustration is this of the sacrifice which Jesus in his love made for us!

He sought to make us rich, though we had no claim upon him, though we loved him not, though we hated him. Not for those who had done him favors, but for savage enemies, did our Lord part with all his own treasures and subject himself to penury and wretchedness.

My brethren, if I only could do justice to this theme, if I only could make you see it. Nay, if I could only see it myself, clothe it in such burning words, enforce it by such irresistible appeals as should enable you to comprehend it, as should fasten it forever in your hearts, it seems to me you would never need another argument or motive to excite your profoundest and most constant love or to induce entire and unwearied consecration to his service. If such love cannot move and perpetually control our spirits and lives, then have we the saddest evidence of the power of depravity that this world can furnish.

Do not let us try to divide out the gratitude and service which should respond to this great love, by saying that it was for all, and therefore mine is only one little share of the return. The whole that Christ did was necessary for the redemption of your single soul. You have all the benefits and blessings of his whole atonement. Have you given or are you giving a whole love service to Jesus your Redeemer? He did not give a half devotion to you. Will you give a half devotion to him?

But let us endeavor to give a little more emphasis to the prominent word in this text. It is GRACE! "Ye know the grace!" Grace! Grace! What does that mean? It means favor unmerited, undeserved by us. It was not compulsion; it was not unavoidable necessity that induced our Lord to submit to this stupendous sacrifice for our redemption. It was Grace. He was not even invited to it by us.

He was not even welcomed when he did come. "He came to his own and his own received him not." He was rejected, despised and murdered. And he foreknew that it would be so. Yet out of heavenly compassion, resolved to bless us against our own will, to save us in spite of our insane opposition, Jesus undertook this mighty work of redemption, though he knew that we deserved nothing but damnation. He knew that we would receive him ungratefully, with enmity and hatred, and yet, uninfluenced by any motive save the benevolence of his own loving heart, be abandoned heaven and all its felicities and endured earth and all its wretchedness.

*This was grace.* It was virtue bending in pity over vice. It was holiness throwing its arms around guilt in order to raise it to

purity. It was happiness lying beside misery to minister to its anguish. It was health forcing its way into a pestilential lazaretto to relieve and heal loathsome and ungrateful disease.

It was more than an angel giving up bowers of paradise for a home in a Dismal Swamp. It was more than a seraph abandoning a celestial mansion for an abode in a Hottentot kraal. It was infinitely more than this! It was a God descending from his glory to hide himself for a season in stables and deserts. This was grace which it is impossible for any but a God to propose or express. It requires the mind and heart of a God even fully to comprehend it. We must know all that a God could enjoy, and then all that a God could suffer before we can understand all that is involved in this sacrifice.

My brethren, let me ask in closing, do ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ? I do not mean in all its mysterious fullness. That has never yet been comprehended even by angels who have long "desired to look into these things." Much less do I mean in its mere surface theory, which even Sunday-school children and ungodly men may learn. But do you know the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ by a spiritual apprehension?

Has your heart, as well as mind, become engrossed in its wonders? Has it won your love as well as admiration? Do your affections apprehend it better than your intellect? For, after all, this whole subject is more clearly to be understood by the heart than by the mind. Faith comprehends it better than reason. Do you dwell in heart upon this grace as your support, reliance and hope? Does your soul fix upon it and cling to it as your only solace and promise? Have you wept over guilt that rendered such grace necessary? Have you felt some of the "joy unspeakable and full of glory" which its special revealing has inspired? Does your daily experience test the blessedness of this grace?

Do ye know the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ as the most effective motive to holiness? The most effective! It is the only effective motive to holiness. We may talk of danger and awaken fear—of guilt and excite sorrow—of ingratitude and induce shame—but it is only the sacrificing, loving Jesus that can so move our hearts as to incite disgust and loathing of sin because of its own inherent hatefulness, and infuse heart-longings after holiness.

Do you feel this, my brother? Do you hate sin because it murdered Jesus for your sake? Do you hate your own sins because they were a part of your Lord's sufferings? Are you striving after conformity to God's law because this brings you into closer affinity of nature with the Lord Jesus Christ, makes you more like him, multiplies the points of sympathy between your soul and him?

Brethren, if the love of Christ for you cannot impel you to pursue after holiness, then nothing can. If you can look upon his cross and still love sin, if you can think of a bleeding Saviour and still cherish iniquity in your heart, then there are not influences and motives left that can make you pure. But you cannot! If ye know his grace, you are longing and striving after holiness. Do ye know the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ as the *great argument and motive for beneficent and munificent liberality*. If you notice the whole chapter, you will observe that the apostle is treating of giving money; he is pleading for contributions to the poor.

His reasoning is simply this: if our Lord Jesus Christ in his grace has done all this for you, then should you not always be ready to contribute? Should not the measure of his grace to you be the measure of your grace to others? This is the burden of the whole chapter. Giving is a grace to be cultivated—exercised. If ye know the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, can you be satisfied with giving nothing, or only a little of a surplus which you can conveniently spare, without any sacrifice? Can you withhold any possible contribution or influence from the cause of him who withheld nothing from the cause of your salvation?

Do you ask why you should be wholly devoted, mind and spirit and soul, to promoting the interests of his kingdom? Here is the reason: ***Jesus sacrificed and died for you and expects you thus to express your love for him.*** Is not this enough? Do your sluggish graces require any other stimulus? Oh, that our souls may be always so absorbed and controlled by this grace of the Lord Jesus Christ that we shall deem no labor too hard, no gifts too precious, no sacrifices too exacting, no devotion too intense to render as the returning proof and expression of our love.



# The Sin of Bribery

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Richard Glover

An Address at Colston Hall, Bristol, on September 21st, 1880  
From *The Baptist Magazine*, 1881

*"Then Judas, which had betrayed Him, when he saw that He was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver, saying, have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood.' And they said, ' What is that to toll See thou to that' And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself."—Matt. 27:3-5*

**T**ake this subject because I think some recent events prove the necessity for a more earnest consideration of the question than is usually given to it. The disclosures that have been made of the corruption practised in so *many* cities of the land prove that bribery is a sin which easily besets us. The amusement inseparable from the unveiling of futile knavery tends somewhat to dull the edge of the disgust we ought to feel, while the high character of many drawn into the commission of these crimes, instead of quickening our watchfulness, is apt to produce a feeling that there can be nothing very wrong in what is done by men so respectable.

I know there is a danger always attendant on preaching on the sins of absentees. We deal best with those sins committed by the sinner in the pulpit, and next best with those of the people in the pews. There is a danger of gathering complacency under protests against others' wrongs. Still this fault lies palpably before *us* all—a fault of huge dimensions, marking both of the great parties in the State, and threatening, if it extend itself, the gravest injury to our national well-being. It is well that the pulpit should speak on such *a matter*, and endeavour to turn the interest existing in it into some line of meditation which would prove useful to replace corruption with patriotism.

I wish to lay before you, first, some general considerations on the sin of bribery; and, secondly, the great illustration of it furnished by the text.

## I. THE SIN OF BRIBERY IN GENERAL

I can quite understand that there are many amongst the two or three millions of voters in the United Kingdom who have never thought of the duties and responsibilities of an elector. They do not know why they have a vote, or what they should do with it; and, finding many anxious to get it, they not unnaturally set themselves to sell it to the highest bidder. Doubtless, He who makes all proper allowance for our faults will find some receivers of bribes of whom He will say, "They knew not what they did," and on that score will more easily "forgive them." But if you cannot blame the ignorant and the degraded, the case is different with those possessed of mental and moral intelligence.

*What is an elector?* What is this vote about the giving of which such fuss is made? It cannot be too clearly recognised that every elector is one of the rulers of this great empire, and that his vote is something by which he helps to determine what the policy of England is to be. We have inherited from the patriotism and energy of our forefathers a well-conditioned State; laws fairly equal for rich and poor; liberty so perfect that it leaves us free to do whatever we desire, so long as we do not injure others; and an order so calm that it permits the development of national wealth and prosperity in the highest degree.

Each elector has in his keeping the charge of the national well-being. According as he votes carefully or carelessly, he will confirm the well-being of the people, or will enfeeble it. There is no blessing to the people greater than a wise Parliament; there is no curse more grievous than a foolish one. According as the body of electors shall use their power well or ill, we shall have a Parliament able to aid the progress of the people, to remedy injustice, to restrain vice, to foster trade, and to preserve the incalculable blessings of peace; or a Parliament incompetent, and perhaps indifferent, to accomplish these great things.

A vote, therefore, is *a trust committed* to us by the nation, to be used for the nation's good. It is not ours to do what we like with it; it is ours as trust-money may be ours—something of which we have the care, but of which those for whom we keep it are to have the benefit. If a judge sold his verdicts, there would be but little difficulty in seeing at once the wrong of that offence. Everyone would feel at once the crime of such a violation of an honourable trust—the wickedness of deciding on any considerations excepting the right and the wrong of the case before him.

Every voter is a judge, and every vote is a verdict; and to give, for money, a vote thoughtlessly or against the conscience, is a crime of the same kind as the selling of a verdict to one who wants more than justice would allow him.

To those men who have taken bribes recently, it was nothing what might become of their country—whether legislation was to be just or unjust—whether the well-being of the people was to be advanced or curtailed. They gave their verdict in that great Court in which the electors of England were a jury sitting on one of the gravest causes that ever came for judgment before a people, not to the party which in their judgment had justice on its side, but to plaintiff or defendant indifferently, according as one or other was most inclined to buy the verdict to which he feared he was not in justice entitled.

If a vote is thus a trust with which we are charged for the well-being of the nation, and if to give it carelessly or against our convictions is a crime the same in kind as, and differing only in degree from, that of selling verdicts in a court of law, the greatness of that sin will be still more clearly seen by observing how many are affected by what is done.

Our English empire contains somewhere about 320 millions of souls; our electoral constituency consists of a body of about 2½ millions. So that, taking the empire through, there is only one voter to every hundred subjects of the British Crown.

Every elector, on the average, can affect by his vote the well-being of a hundred of his fellow-subjects. He is the mouth-piece of a hundred persons who have no other representative. If he addresses himself to the discharge of his duty aright, informing himself of all that bears on the questions submitted to him, he has the satisfaction of doing what tends to promote materially the welfare of, on the average, a hundred human beings. If, thinking only of guzzling and drink, or moved only by greed, he votes without thought, or against his judgment of what is right, he has the blame of having acted in a way which tends directly to injure, and may injure materially, the well-being of a hundred of his fellow-men.

If we knew the abject poverty in which hundreds of millions in India exist, who have no vote of their own by which to influence the administration of their affairs; if we knew the abject poverty of millions in Ireland who are in the same case; and if we knew how much it can be proved by experience that a Parliament of wise, honest, courageous men may do to improve the condition of their fellow-subjects, and how much a foolish Parliament can add to their misery, I believe there are very few even of the most corrupt of our electors who would not, from very compassion, repent of their levity and greed, and address themselves to the discharge of a voter's duty with the most careful and honest resolve to help their suffering fellow-men to better laws.

I have spoken of the sin of receiving a bribe to violate a trust. If it be a sin to receive a bribe, what must it be to *offer* one? Here it is well to tread humbly. Perhaps, had we been tempted, we would, like others, have fallen—have fancied, like Herod when he ordered John to be beheaded, that really such a sin was an absolute necessity. At the same time, if we have to judge those gently who commit the crime, we must not call evil good, or blind ourselves to the greatness of the crime which they have committed. To give a man money to tell a lie—how dark and guilty a thing is that! To become seducers—to use our influence and wealth to get men to be less honest, less truthful, less patriotic—to lower their self-respect—to help them on the way to the hell which is the special doom of the liar—what an atrocity!

Gold is given men to do good with—to lessen misery, not to destroy virtue—to multiply the joys of men, not to increase their vices. Leave the devil unhelped. He is a seducer sufficiently strong without respectable men enlisting in his service and doing his work. If we cannot reach title or place without corrupting the morals of another, let us remember that it is an honest man's part to go without it, and that he will do so. If, for the sake of adding two letters to his name, a man does that which makes people liars by the score, no kindness of natural disposition, no respectability which in other directions he exhibits, ought to keep us from branding his action as one of the greatest crimes which a man can commit.

It will not do to say, "We are not our brothers' keepers." In a world where conflict is stern—where it is hard to rise, and

easy to go astray—our fellowmen have a right to all the help we can give them in the attainment of whatever is honest and just and good. If, on the contrary, we help them to be liars and hypocrites—to neglect the interests of those for whose good they are entrusted with political power—to debauch themselves with drink,—however painful the judgment of the human tribunal may be at which we have to avow our faults, there is another tribunal at which all the moral injury we have inflicted will find a more searching scrutiny, and, if unrepented, a more terrible award.

There is one other consideration which may not add much to our-impression of the sin of bribery, but which will suggest the mischief of it. *They who corrupt others must be themselves corruptible.* It may be that they would not take a money-bribe; they may have too much self-respect, or too much wealth, for that. But it is obvious that they who have so slight a conception of the duties of the voter, and such a contempt for the idea of his honesty, will not have a very exacting sense of the duty of their representative. They will represent the looseness and indifference of their constituency better than its interests.

General corruption in the constituencies of any land has always been faithfully reflected in the general corruption of the governing bodies of that land. Men who have bought parliamentary power will never feel much responsibility as to its employment, and will probably feel that they have a right to sell it—it may be for place, it may be for title it may be simply to keep the favour of their party—but for some such price they will always be ready to sell the verdict they should pronounce according to truth and justice.

We want men who will go to Parliament, not to air their dignities, but to take a grave and enlightened part in furthering the good of those who compose this great empire. Let bribery flourish, and it is simply an impossibility that such an empire as ours can thrive or even endure. Should corruption become the general characteristic of the constituencies of the land, there will be folly in our legislation, recklessness, neglect, needless wars—the absence at once of the effort and the power to promote the moral well-being of the people.

Put all these considerations together, and there will be little need to add more to demonstrate that bribery is one of those sins which are demoralising to individuals and dangerous to the community in such a degree that all honest persons should visit them with the severest reprobation.

But a general discussion does not strike the imagination with the force of a fact. I would therefore seek to enforce my general argument by drawing your attention to:

## II. THE GREAT ILLUSTRATION OF BRIBERY FURNISHED BY OUR TEXT

The greatest crime in human history was done for a bribe. To all ages, Caiaphas and his fellows stand as the specimens of those who give, and Judas Iscariot as the type of those who receive, bribes. It was the case of a man taking a bribe of £15 or £20 to betray his Master and Friend. The worst bribe ever given or taken, it presents, in all its naked hatefulness, the features of evil which every bribe presents in a lesser degree. Observe a few of the features of the story.

**1. Men unscrupulous in expending money.**—People that have five-pound notes to give away have temptations proportioned to their wealth. A careless lavishness may foster infinite evil; and the abuse of wealth in corrupting men stands as high in sin as the use of it in blessing men stands in sanctity.

**2. You have here one too greedy of gold.**—It is strange that so few seek to guard themselves against this. There are few things so dearly bought as gold. Some give all their leisure to get it, some all their thought; some part with their self-respect, some with their peace of mind; some sell all their manliness, some all their virtue. Here greed drives Judas to that crime which was the marvel of hell itself! Brethren, we are all fond of money; let the example of Judas set us on our guard against it.

**3. Observe, further, that some delude themselves by supposing that the guilt belongs only to him who takes the bribe, while the advantage remains with those who give it.**—Such was the feeling expressed by the priests. When, in the bitterness of remorse, Judas comes confessing that he has sinned in betraying innocent blood, how significant is the contempt with which they speak! "Of course you have; but what have we to do with it? That is your look out. See thou to

that"

Just as to-day men look with loathing and contempt on the wretched creatures who receive their bribes—pitying them, condemning them, pluming themselves on the possession of a degree of honour which could stoop to nothing so low, and complacent in the idea that the elector gets the money and the guilt, while they get the honour and the advantage.

These priests were a little premature in their complacency. God parceled out the guilt on other principles, and did not let them off so easily.

They who instigate and profit by a crime are, even in the eyes of human law, reckoned as partakers of its guilt; and this idea, that we can deftly get the advantage and leave to others the guilt of a crime, will be found in our experience as delusive to us as it was to the high-priests.

**4. Lastly, observe the bribe accepted doing no good to him who took it.** —So little, that he was more eager to get quit of the money than to get hold of it. It burnt him as if it had been heated in hell-fire! So he casts it down on the floor of the Temple. It so embitters life, that he goes and hangs himself!—ends hope, and perfects his perdition!

No bribe has ever done the man who took it any good. The money you work for brings with it a blessing from God. You can increase your children's welfare with it. You can use it to some good purpose. But gold got dishonestly is only a curse. It is drank; it is squandered; or, if saved, it breeds meanness, and genders an evil readiness for action still worse. It is an example to a man's children - which trains them to low and greedy thoughts and vilest ways.

If such be the considerations that should weigh with us, and such the illustration that should deter us, what are we to do? We cannot secure unity of sentiment. There will always be (it is desirable that there should always be) parties differing in their views—one looking chiefly to the good which exists, and desiring to conserve it; another looking to the additional good that may be, and labouring to attain it. Such a division is natural and proper, and is not to be regretted. Nor should we desire any diminution of zeal in the political activities of the people.

We have inherited a grand possession in English liberty and English law. The welfare of England is an object of interest to all mankind, as well as to ourselves. She is the great mother of free nations, and whatever abates her prosperity or honour impedes the sacred cause of freedom.

If we rightly saw all that is involved in the prosperity of England, we should feel that we need a higher and a holier patriotism—one that will seek to do a citizen's duty with all the intelligence we can bring to it. We need the highest honour we can bring to our task. We may not vote otherwise than our honest judgment prescribes on any account—not to please a friend, not to gain some advantage for our own trade, not to secure the triumph of any lesser cause in which our heart is interested.

We are put in trust by God with more power than most of us imagine. Let us use it honestly, wisely, thinking only of the nation's good; and, in a larger degree than we think possible, the blessing of God will rest upon our land, whilst amongst the rewards with which at last our gracious Saviour will crown all that is right and holy in our lives, not the least will be that which is bestowed on the integrity which defies all efforts to corrupt it, and which seeks to 'do a citizen's duty with a single eye to the nation's good.



# The Tears of Jesus for the Impenitent \_\_\_\_\_

George Barker

From *The Baptist Magazine*, 1881

*"And when He was come near, He beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace!—But now are they hid from thine eyes."*—Luke 19:41, 42

Reverent criticism of the statements of the New Testament record is not a characteristic of this age. With the fearless, searching spirit of inquiry, so estimable and so useful, there is not too much of that devout feeling which becomes us when we treat of sacred matters, nor of that solemnity which should be manifest when we speak of Him whose life and death have become the greatest events of history.

This remark is not the expression of any fear that the faith reposed in the record, or in the validity of the Saviour's claims, will be weakened by the rough treatment of adverse critics. But it is made in some apologetically, and in order to remind you that we feel the importance of reverently considering such a subject as the one before us, even though our first remarks upon it may be misjudged.

So much do we value the results of bold, out-spoken comment, that we should prize it even at the cost of much proper veneration. Happily, however, it is possible to combine the two; and we are anxious not to lay ourselves open to a suspicion of irreverence, as we ask the questions which have probably arisen in the minds of skeptical thinkers; as, for example, whether this readiness to weep does not reveal an absence of manly character—whether, at such an important moment, when surrounded by an excited and admiring crowd, these tears were not "sensational"—and whether, in view of the suffering and death which Jesus knew awaited Him in Jerusalem, the weeping was not a selfish one.

If these questions be answered negatively, it may be further asked why He should weep over the rejection of Himself, which was, after all, an important element in the fulfillment of His mission—and, further, why He should weep over a reprobate people.

Let us consider these questions in the order in which we have stated them.

There is only one previous mention of our Lord having wept. That was at the grave of Lazarus—a weeping which reveals the sympathy of His human nature with the sorrow of the mourners, even when He knew that by His own word the cause of their grief would be removed, as the restored friend and brother came forth alive again. He wept compassionately with those that wept, and perhaps with a profounder thought of death as the penalty of sin, the enemy whose power He had come to break.

At that natural emotion few objectors make demur; for in the presence of Death, and amid those who sorrow over bereavement, even the stoutest hearts yield, and the love and sympathy displayed in such tears are not beneath the wisest, the noblest, and the sternest manhood. Yet such an opinion, as related to Jesus, has not always been admitted in the reverent thought of Him which men have desired to hold. In the early church there were those who wished to omit these two passages from the record, under the supposition that it was inglorious in Christ to weep, so little insight had they into the quality of truest worth His tears displayed.

Some of the bravest and greatest men mentioned in sacred and profane history have thus yielded to emotion on occasions of deep and moving interest. Abraham, Joseph, David, Nehemiah, Peter, and others are spoken of in the Bible as having wept. History speaks of Julius Caesar, Brutus, Marcellus, and Wellington as having been moved to tears. As we reflect upon the circumstances of many of these displays of tenderness, we are constrained to acknowledge that they were proofs of truest greatness. These were not men who wept on any and every occasion, but men of strong character. We do not share the wish of the ancient Christians above referred to—that these traits of the human nature in our Lord had been hidden.

We love Him for the sympathetic sorrow He showed. We feel that He was touched with feelings like our own, and was, therefore, the more fitted to be our Great High Priest.

The occasion of His approach to the city does not, at first, appear so natural for such a display of feeling. It looks more like mere sensationalism. We say this reverently in order to bring out our point. Men have often sought effect by the indulgence of emotion which might have been restrained. That it was with no such intent that Christ now wept the sequel will show. His tears were wholly out of keeping with the occasion, viewed in the light of its external appearances. Those who surrounded Him with their festive greetings and glad hosannas must have been at a loss to account for this sudden display of feeling. Its effect upon them must have been strange, though no record is left of the way in which they regarded it.

We are all to some degree conscious of the imposing majesty and beauty of a large city when, from some neighbouring height, a sudden bend in the road reveals it to us. Let it be remembered that, as Jesus then beheld it, Jerusalem was in its glory. It was not a dingy, smoke-begrimed city like those we see ; but large, beautiful for situation, built in a style of the greatest magnificence—pinnacle and tower, gold and white, catching the gorgeous hues of the eastern sun—standing majestically upon the hills, which were environed by the rich luxurious valley through which Kedron flowed. For splendour and beauty it must have been no ordinary sight.

Moreover, to Him it could not have been unfamiliar. Doubtless He had gazed upon it many times, from the same spot, as it lay in outstretched magnificence below. But now He looked upon it for the last time. There *are* times in our history when long familiar scenes become strikingly impressive, and when they suddenly wake emotions which we wonder that we have never felt before. He was not so elated with the transient greetings and praises of the crowd as to be carried away by them. His own deeper thoughts weighed with saddening influence upon His mind.

Too fully was He occupied with the mission of His life to suffer the joy of the throng to lift Him up even with a momentary pride. And when the procession came to a halt in full view of the city—with no regard for their thoughts, but in the spontaneous expression of His own—He gave utterance to the words before us. It was the outpouring of a long pent-up sorrow over the persistent rebellion of Israel against God. It was too deep, too peculiar an emotion for the bystanders to appreciate—an emotion wholly foreign to their minds. It was neither sentimental nor sensational, but was the outburst of the profound spiritual sorrow of the Man of Sorrows—irresistible—mighty in the compassion it showed—yet lost upon them, because at the time they were incapable of understanding it.

Nor was it a selfish grief. These were not the tears of a timid apprehension of the suffering that He knew lay before Him. He wept, not because He beheld the scene of His approaching trial and death—not because He foresaw that the hosanna of this band of friends would soon be exchanged for the shout of derision, and the cry of "Crucify Him!" which his enemies would raise—but because He sadly deplored the wickedness of the people, and their opposition to the Kingdom of God, and because

He foresaw what they little dreamed—how this glorious city, so majestic in its splendour, would become the scene of the most terrible devastations and sufferings, and how, in less than fifty years, its glory would have passed away, so that, of the mighty edifices which were then the national pride, not one stone would be left upon another. It was the grief of generosity, not that of selfishness.

The shame and suffering, the bitterness of His "hour," which was at hand—these were crowded out of His thoughts as matters which concerned Himself, by the compassionate sorrow with which He looked for the last time upon that "city of ten thousand memories"—that city of a proud, historic past—and felt that the turning-point in its prosperity had come, by reason of its persistent rejection of the love of God, and that ere long the eagles would be prattled together and Jerusalem would become a prey.

But why should Jesus weep over a reprobate people, especially when their conduct formed an important and, in one sense, necessary condition for the fulfillment of His own mission? *It shows us how reluctantly He gives the wicked over to their fate*—how, in Him, vengeance for the insults He bore gave place to merciful regrets that they "would have none of Him"—regrets at their loss of the "peace" He proffered—and not regrets at the denial of His own honour and glory. Not Himself,

but the people—not His shame, but their loss—awoke His pity and drew forth His tears.

Though He knew from the beginning how cruelly they would reject Him, and though He came as the Sacrifice for sin, He could not contemplate their wilful hardness of heart, and the dreadful use of their free agency in all this, without sorrowing over the loss which they as yet knew not, and the troubles which were soon to overtake them. Though they hated Him, He loved them still, and the prospect of their sufferings and of their humiliation, even at the moment of His immediate anticipation of His own, caused Him, " when He was come near and beheld the city, to weep over it, saying, thou hadst known, even thou at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace!—But now are they hid from thine eyes!"

It is a remarkable utterance, which, whilst it leaves no ground for reasonable doubt with regard to the feelings which caused Jesus to weep, presents some thoughts which are usefully susceptible of a modern application. Are not those to whom Christ is now preached, but who, whilst they hear, take no practical heed, partakers of that rejection of Him of which these Jews were guilty? What are the things which make for their peace? Repentance and faith. Repentance is not, in itself, a state of peace; it is the trouble of the heart over the sins that are past. But there is no peace without it. It does not remove condemnation; it is no expiation of guilt.

Though in all the bitterness of contrition we mourn for sin, we have not peace by contrition alone. Faith in Christ as our Saviour must be added to it. The lack of these two things—repentance and faith—makes the condition of many who hear the Gospel to-day worse than that of the Jews of old. Familiarity with the truth does not ensure the reception of it To-day there are thousands who have knowledge enough, but whose knowledge is merely educational or contemplative. They can discuss intricate questions concerning Christ and His work, but they have not that experimental knowledge of Him which constitutes the peace of the children of God.

If Jerusalem had known the things which belonged to its peace—and it might have known them—what a different history it would have had! Jesus wept as, with prophetic vision, He saw the calamities which were to befall it. His pity was uttered upon the outermost bounds of mercy. Whilst opportunity lingered, and the chances of amendment remained, the appeals of the Divine love did not sink into silence. But wilful ignorance knew not the awful destiny to which it hastened.

Even in the destruction of His enemies our Lord manifests no anticipatory pleasure. Regretfully He sees the day of mercy close upon those who will not avail themselves-of it. "If thou hadst known in this thy day...!" The sentence is incomplete. It stands as a mournful, broken ejaculation, showing that even then the lingering desire for postponement dwelt in His loving heart, and that at that last moment outraged goodness was loth to see the wicked seal their doom. So now, in this season of grace, as the messages of the Gospel are spurned, and as sinners harden their hearts in sin, He looks tearfully upon them, and wishes that He might gather them to Himself.

After a pause, in which He struggled with His emotion, He said, "But now are they hid from thine eyes." What were hidden? Not only the salvation they might have found, but also the doom that was impending. The spiritual blindness of the impenitent hides alike the way of escape and the approach of destruction.

To-day Christ looks upon us. Unseen, He is in our midst. We do not doubt this, though we are slow to realise it. He knows whether we reciprocate or reject His love. And whilst we linger, unwilling to decide—toying with the world—setting our heart on the pleasures of life—He looks pityingly upon us, and seeks, by the constant proclamation of His grace, to woo us to Himself.

Through all our years He has watched us, and borne patiently with our ingratitude and our sin. Does He not speak to us of long-neglected privileges and of oft-spurned overtures of mercy? Still He waits to be gracious. By the pity that wept over the impenitent—by the cross which wrought salvation—He pleads with us now. Let us turn to Him. God forbid that the day of grace should be wasted, and that the fiat should have to be pronounced, "Now are these things hid from your eyes!"

