

The Wicket Gate Magazine

A Continuing Witness



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- Sermons preached by Dr Needham and Mr Seaton
- Historical Lectures given in the Church by Dr Needham



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Two ‘Famines’

(The Pastor’s Letter December 1972)

Dear Friends,

There are two “famines” made mention of in the Word of God regarding the Church of Christ and, therefore, the particular area or nation where a particular church or churches are called to witness to the saving grace of God as it is in Christ our Lord. The first is a famine of the *preaching* of the Word of God, and the second is a famine of the *hearing* of the Word of God. The two are not to be confused, although inter-acting upon one another. The first has to do primarily with the “pulpit”, the second with the “pew”.

Just prior to the emergence of Samuel as the prophet of the Lord we are told that “The word of the Lord was rare in those days, there was no open vision,” and then, in the prophecy of Amos, the nation of Israel is threatened with a famine; “Not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water,” says the Lord through Amos, “but a famine of *hearing* the words of the Lord”

Either of the two famines – either the preaching or the hearing – can have a tremendously detrimental effect upon the testimony of our God and upon the Church of His Beloved Son where He has seen fit to deposit the testimony of His saving name in this gospel age. And from the pulpit side of things, we believe that where there is no real preaching of the Word of God in all its fulness, then the church eventually moves into a situation spiritually comparable to the judgement which fell on Israel (on account of their neglect of the ministry of truth) when the Ark of God was taken from them and the cry of “Ichabod – the glory has departed,” echoed around the land and in every Israelite’s heart. From the “pew” side of things, we see that when ears become accustomed only to receive those things which are most palatable to them, then, eventually they become completely stopped up altogether and no fruits of blessing, or comfort, or instruction can be reaped from the Word of God, even though a “harvest” itself may be there for the taking. Where **both** conditions exist, of course, then the result is a “double” famine, as it were, and the Church of Christ in the land appears to be almost non-existent as far as a real and vital Christianity is concerned. The “recapture” of either of these graces, then – either of preaching or hearing – must, indeed, always prove as a stirring from the dead for the Church. **But** – and this is what we

would like to stress – if there is ever to be a real revival of true and vital Christianity to act as salt in this wicked and perverse generation, then there must not only be a loosening of the tongues of preachers, but an unstopping of the ears of hearers.

This is an aspect of “reformation” that few seem to take into account in these days when there is so much talk on that subject. There is a great deal of hope placed in the fact of “pastor so-and-so exercising a **reformed ministry**.” But, this is only part of the question; for although there may be a veritable harvest – even of reformed preaching – there may also be a veritable famine of “hearing the words of the Lord”. And, surely, the Lord intends that there should be a faithful ministry **and** a faithful listening to constitute His Church wherein He has deigned that His honour will dwell.

To escape from the morass of present-day evangelical laziness, apathy, and indifference, reformed “ministries” in the pulpits is only half of the answer to the real situation, and the crying need is not simply that a man exercises a reformed ministry, but that he exercise it within the context of a reformed church. Only then will we begin to get anywhere near the real and vital need of our day, which is the worship of Almighty God by the people of God.

In these days there is great stress laid on the fact that “the church is the real agent in evangelism,” and rightly so. We abhor the idea of the church performing its evangelistic obligations “by proxy” through the appointment of a personality evangelist for a two, or three-week campaign every now and again when the time seems opportune. But how ever desirable, and necessary, and obligatory the evangelistic work of the church is in the area where the Lord has placed it, it is still merely the *out*-workings of the church’s life before the face of men, and can never stand in isolation to the united worship of God by that people of God under the sound of the truth of God to the glory of God. That is the only one and only true source of any spiritual life that the church is going to manifest to the world around it. In other words, our work *for* God only finds its motivating in our worship *of* God. This is why true Christian service has waned and goes on waning in our day. Side by side with turning the Lord’s Day worship into an entertainment session for the unconverted instead of a “drawing near to God” by the people of God has gone, the constant decline in the effective testimony of the church, so that she appears to be creditable only to children and for children. It is one thing to send your child along to “the church”, or

indeed, to go along as a child, but what an indictment of the professing church that when the majority of children “become men” and “put away childish things,” one of the first things to go is the evangelical church of today with its trite message of “no more blue Mondays” and its shallow services that hit somewhere between a religious gathering and an amateur talent contest.

The “witness” of the church can only be fully realised in proportion to the worship of the church being a true worship of its God and Saviour. And this must involve the church in its totality – in pulpit and pew – in pastor and people – in preaching and hearing – so that there is neither a famine with the one or the other. This in no way must be met with the old red herring about looking for a “perfect” church. Far from it; no one can hold the doctrine of the depravity of human nature and think such a thing, and we know that there will always be those within the congregations of God whose hearts are hard and whose ears are stopped; that fearful verse of Paul’s to the Corinthians settles that question once and for all, “For there must also be heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.” But, surely, where this type of hearer constitutes the mass of the membership of any particular church the true worship of God must have declined to a very low ebb indeed. If we hold that *true* preaching of God is the preaching of His free and sovereign love towards us in Christ the Lord, the, *true* hearing must, of necessity, fall into the same set of doctrines. And, therefore, *true* worship is both the glad preaching and the glad hearing of those doctrines. In what other environment of worship is God more glorified than where a pastor extols the height, and the breadth, and the depth, and the length of the sovereign love and acts of Almighty God in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and where the people’s hearts respond in glad and glowing “amens” (audible or inaudible) to the exposition of those glorious truths? We contend that there is no other environment quite like that in the normal run of God’s dealings with His people.

Hence our contention, that the recapturing of a reformed “ministry” in our day, although desirable and a cause for much thanksgiving, is not the whole answer to the general famine conditions that prevail, because the famine is a two-fold famine – not only of the preaching of the words of the Lord, but of the hearing of the words of the Lord, as well. And the ultimate need of our day is not reformed ministries only but reformed congregations responsive to those ministries.

Why this aspect of present-day “reform” has apparently been left unattended, only those concerned can answer, and we are not inclined to deal with that side of things just now. There is always, of course, a desire for a “gentle” reformation, and it is obvious that a pressing of such principles to their ultimate conclusion would be costly in reputation, in standing, and in a dozen-and-one other ways. But, we will search history’s page for that reform that was carried out in a painless fashion and without much tears and abuse, and search it in vain. It had invariably the shocks of revolution and disruption as its very life breath.

As we say, we welcome every intimation of a man “exercising a reformed ministry,” but we still long to hear of more exercising their reformed ministries together with reformed people, for if a man preaches one way and the people hear another way, where is the worship of God – the most pressing need of our day – in the midst of it all? The “voice” of Jacob and the “hands” of Esau are never a becoming combination; neither are the doctrines of grace preceded by duets, solos, choir pieces and banjo bands, and followed during the week with daffodil teas and teenage variety shows.

If we believe that the Lord is granting a reversal of the general famine of the preaching of His word today, then, let us not be at rest in that alone, but let us desire by prayer and purpose that He would also take away the general famine of the *hearing* of His word, so that there might not only be a “Thus saith the Lord” from reformed “pulpits”, but a resounding “Amen” and “so be it” from reformed “pews”.

Yours sincerely,
W. J. Seaton

The church, which is “rich and increased with goods,” may think it has need of nothing, because of its antiquity, orders, and endowments. It may cry “peace, peace” and flatter itself in shall see no evil. But, if it is not careful about the maintenance of sound doctrine among its ministers and members, it must never be surprised if its candlestick is taken away. —

J. C. Ryle



Gleanings In the Psalms

(Psalm 45)

Some see here Solomon and Pharaoh's daughter only – they are short-sighted; others see both Solomon and Christ – they are cross-eyed; well focused and spiritual eyes see here Jesus only.

C. H. Spurgeon

Verse 1. “My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the king...” This song has “the King” for its only subject, and for the King’s honour alone was it composed; well might its writer call it a good matter.

C. H. Spurgeon

Verse 1. “... my tongue is the pen of a ready writer.” We call the prophets and psalmists the *penmen* of Scripture, whereas they were but the *pen*.

Matthew Henry

Verse 3. “Gird thy sword upon thy thigh ...” The Word of God is compared to such a weapon as a sword. It must be observed, however, that this description of the Word of God is applicable to it only when Christ girds it on, and employs it as His sword. While it lies in its scabbard, or is wielded only by the infantile hand of Christ’s ministers, it is a powerless and useless weapon; a weapon at which the weakest sinner can laugh, and against which he can defend himself with the utmost ease. But not so when He who is the most mighty girds it on. Then it becomes a weapon of tremendous power; a weapon resistless as the bolt of heaven. “Is not my word like a fire, and a

hammer, saith the Lord, which breaketh the rock in pieces?" It is indeed, for what can be more efficacious and irresistible than a weapon sharper than a two-edged sword, wielded by the arm of omnipotence?

Edward Rayson

Verse 4. "And in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth ..."

The wheels of Christ's chariot, whereupon He rideth when He goes to conquer and subdue new converts to His kingdom, are *majesty, truth, meekness, righteousness*, manifested in the preaching of His gospel. *Majesty*, when the stately magnificence of His person and office is declared; *Truth*, when the certainty of all that He teaches in Scripture is known; *Meekness*, when His grace and mercy is offered to rebels; and *Righteousness*, when justification by faith in His name is clearly set forth. Christ goeth no voyage in vain; He cometh not short of His intention and purpose, but does the work for which He comes, preaching the gospel. Therefore, in His majesty, truth, meekness and righteousness He "rideth prosperously."

David Dickson

Verse 7. "Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil gladness above thy fellows." Observe how usual it is to impute Christ's exaltation to His merits. So the apostle Paul: God highly exalted Him and gave Him a name which is above every name, *because* He had humbled Himself, and become obedient unto death. And here, God anointed Him with the oil of gladness above His fellows, *because* He loved righteousness and hated iniquity.

George Harpur

Verse 10. "Hearken, O daughter ... forget also ... thy father's house."

The house of our nativity is the house of sin – we were shapen in iniquity. The carnal mind is enmity against God, therefore we must come forth out of the house of fallen nature, for it is built in the City of Destruction.

Spurgeon

Verses 13 to 15. "The Church – The Bride of Christ."

1. The Bride's *new name*: "The King's Daughter." And she is the King's daughter for two reasons.
 - She is "Born of God."
 - She is "espoused" to the Son of God.
2. The Bride's *character*: "all glorious within."

- Because Christ reigns on the throne of her heart.
 - Because she is the Temple of the Holy Spirit.
3. The Bride's *raiment*: "Wrought gold."
- Christ's perfect obedience.
 - His atoning death.
4. The Bride's *Home-coming*: "She shall be brought unto the King."
- She shall see the king in His beauty.
 - There will be an open declaration of His love to her before all worlds – "With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought."

Hints to the Village Preacher, Duncan MacGregor

Verse 15. "With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought ..."

Reader! Do not fail to observe the manner of expression; the church is "brought", she does not come of herself. No, she must be convinced, converted, made willing. No one can come to Christ except the Father, who has sent Christ, draw him.

Robert Hawker

BOYS AND GIRLS PAGE

"The Find"

Dear Boys and Girls,

An old man by the name of Simon once lived on a little farm where he worked very hard every day trying to make a living for himself.

One day when he was digging in his field, his spade suddenly struck against something hard in the ground, so he stopped digging, reached down, and began to clear away the earth with his hands. He soon pulled an old pot out of the ground, and with a disgusted grunt threw it to the one side. When he had finished his work for the day, he was just about to make his way back to his little cottage when he remembered the pot. "May as well take it with me," he thought to himself; and so, with the pot dangling at the end of his finger, he made his way homeward.

After his evening meal, he took the old pot in his hand and began to scrape away the earth. Suddenly, he realised that there was something written on the pot, and he began to rub away the dirt as fast as he could. Again, however, he just gave another disgusted grunt and threw the pot in a corner of the room, for the words were written in a strange language that he could not understand. Old Simon was just about to settle down for a snooze in his chair when there was a knock at his door. It was the local school-teacher who had been passing and had decided to give his old friend a call.

As they sat talking, the school-teacher's eye fell on the old pot in the corner. "What's this?" he asked Simon. "Just an old pot," said the old farmer, "it's got some writing on it, but I don't know what it means." The teacher took the pot in his hand, and began to carefully remove the earth that had stuck in the grooves that the letters of the words made. "There," he said finally, "now let's see what it says," and he read out the two words that had been engraved on the pot. "***Dig Deeper,***" they said. "That's what you should have done, Simon," said the teacher, "You should have dug deeper." So next day, old Simon did just that. And what do you think, boys and girls? He soon discovered many valuable things that he was able to sell so that he never had to worry about a shortage of food and clothes again.

Some people you know, like old Simon, read a little bit of the Bible and then just throw it to the one side, because they can't be bothered taking the time or trouble to understand some of the things written there. But, boys and girls, you must always "dig deeper" – go on reading more, and more. And if you do, you too will discover something of great value. Not earthly treasure such as the old man discovered, but the treasure of knowing Jesus Christ as your Saviour. "***Dig deeper,***" then.

Mrs Seaton

Alexander Cruden: A Genius, and Yet!



"Few of those who consult a Concordance of the Scriptures will think of seeking for entertainment from a life of the author; and fewer still would imagine that a man who could confine himself for year to such an employment could be the subject of that waywardness of mind which frequently attends the higher powers of genius, and excites the sympathies of mankind. Yet Alexander Cruden was one of those who trod the path of life on the verge of that awful abyss where the hopes and happiness of so many

great minds have been engulfed. And if madness was, in his case, softened into eccentricity ... he was probably indebted, for his escape, to that absorption of mind which such a work as this must have occasioned. What would have been to others intolerable drudgery, was a sedative to his agitated mind; and the labour, which would have wasted the energies of a happier man, was the balm of his wounded spirit.”

So runs an early paragraph in the introductory sketch of the life of Alexander Cruden which prefaces the famous Concordance of the Holy Scriptures which bears his name. Born in Aberdeen in the year 1701, Alexander Cruden was one of those who, “Crossed by hopeless love,” tumbled into the depths of mental instability, out of which he never fully recovered himself. The object of his overwhelming desire was the young daughter of an Aberdeen Minister whose hand in marriage he sought with great earnestness, but without success. Completely broken and deranged through distress and disappointment he was committed to a mental institute, and the pattern of confinement and release that was to characterise his life thereafter was set.

In 1727, following his first release from such an institute, he settled in London holding down the office of “Corrector to the press,” and, later on, in 1735, as “Bookseller to Queen Caroline, consort of George the Second.” Two years later, on completing the first edition of his Concordance, which he had methodically and labouriously compiled, he presented it to the Queen, by whose hand it found a ready acceptance. Her promise was that she would “not fail to remember the author,” but within a short sixteen days the Queen was taken from this earth and Alexander Cruden’s hopes of success and encouragement appeared to descend to the grave with her.

Overwhelmed by such an apparent tragic turn in events, the poor author of the Concordance was inconsolable, and was committed to Bethnal Green private asylum from which he tried to escape on several occasions until he was finally chained to his bed and handcuffed. On his release he delivered a scathing attack in the form of a pamphlet on the conditions existing in the country’s mental homes of that time and was instrumental in bringing about some moderate reforms and laying the foundation for others.

His life was passed, as the short sketch on his life indicates, “in a kind of happy and harmless lunacy, which left him sufficiently in possession of his rational faculties, to perform the duties of his arduous occupation (the correcting and improving of his Concordance) and to exercise himself in the

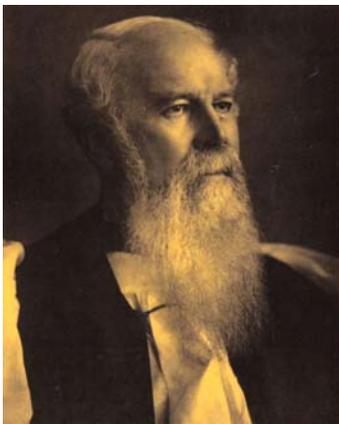
execution of the commission, with which he fancied himself intrusted ...". This "commission, with which he fancied himself intrusted," was that of "Corrector of the People," to which he hoped to lay claim by an Act of Parliament! Parliament was not forthcoming, however, but, quite undeterred by that the self-appointed Corrector waged war against the abuses of his times. "To a young clergyman who he thought too conceited and modern, he very gravely and formally presented ... The Mother's Catechism, Dedicated to the Young and Ignorant." While one of his favourite "adherents" to his causes was one, Earl Paulett, who says Cruden himself, was "goutish on his feet, and could not run away from the Corrector, as others were wont to do."

These few eccentricities apart, however, (and were they eccentricities to such a troubled mind?) Alexander Cruden lived so as to become the gospel which he had embraced and the Saviour whom he loved. "In 1762," we are told, "one Richard Potter, a poor ignorant sailor, was tried and convicted at the old Bailey, of forging, or uttering knowing it to be forged, a seaman's will. Mr Cruden was in the court and was so fully convinced of his being merely the tool of some designing villain, that he determined to interfere on his behalf, and endeavour to move the Royal clemency. For this purpose he visited him in Newgate, conversed with him on religious subjects, exhorted, instructed, and prayed with him. The man was awakened to his sense of his condition as a sinner, and appeared to be truly converted to God. Encouraged by this success, Mr Cruden began to take measures for saving his life. By repeated applications to Lord Hallifax, Secretary of State, he obtained a change of the sentence, from death to transportation. As an acknowledgement of his obligations to Lord Hallifax, he presented him with a copy of the Second Edition of his Concordance, to which he prefixed an elegant manuscript Latin dedication, acknowledging his Lordship's interference on behalf of Potter ..."

During this time, Cruden became interested in the fate of those confined within the prison, and with some friends paid regular visits for the distribution of gospel literature; at the same time, working for those prison reforms that were to become more apparent in the work of Elizabeth Fry. His work among young children, whom he dearly loved and cherished for Christ, is also noted, but it appears that it was in the realms of personal witness and testifying to the truth of the gospel that he was most at home. On one occasion, returning home late at night, he was accosted by "a woman of the streets;" after admonishing her in the name of Christ, he exhorted her to turn from her old life and seek life eternal in Christ. The woman said she

would do this if she had somewhere to turn that night, but Cruden dismissed her and told her to come back to his home the next day if she was of the same mind. The seed that he had planted by the Holy Spirit of God proved to have taken hold on firm ground, for the next day the woman returned, still penitent and still seeking the way of life that he had told her of. He took her into the service of his home, and there she remained until his death showing forth the praises of Him Who had called her out of darkness into His marvellous light.

Even his death had a little of the genius of eccentricity about it and was not marked by any great death-bed sayings, or any such thing – and yet! His maid rang the bell to summon him to breakfast; on his failure to appear, she then made her way to his room, but found it empty. The most obvious place for him to be, then, was the small closet adjoining his room where he always went for prayer. There she found him – or at any rate, she found his body; his soul had winged its way to eternal day to praise his Saviour with a mind set free from all adversity, but he had left his body in a posture of praise, as well; bent over the chair where he had died praying his last earthly prayer to the God whom he adored.



Bishop J. C. Ryle Speaks about

“SIN”

(1) I shall begin the subject by supplying some *definition* of sin. We are all of course familiar with the terms “sin” and “sinners.” We talk frequently of “sin” being in the world, and of men committing “sins”. But what do we mean by these terms and phrases? Sin, in short, is that vast moral disease which affects the whole human race, of every rank, and class, and name, and nation, and people, and tongue; a disease from which there never was but one born of woman that was free.

Need I say that One was Christ Jesus the Lord? I say furthermore, that “a sin,” to speak more particularly, consists in doing, saying, thinking, or imagining, anything that is not in perfect conformity with the mind and law of God. “Sin,” in short, as the Scripture saith, is “the transgression of the law.” (1st John chapter 3 verse 4) The slightest outward or inward departure from absolute mathematical parallelism with God’s revealed will and character constitutes a sin, and at once makes us guilty in God’s sight. Of course I need not tell any one who reads his Bible with attention, that a man may break God’s law in heart and thought, when there is no overt and visible act of wickedness. Our Lord has settled that point beyond dispute in the Sermon on the Mount. Again, I need not tell a careful student of the New Testament, that there are sins of omission as well as commission, and that we sin, as our Prayer-book justly reminds us, by “leaving undone the things we ought to do,” as really as by “doing the things we ought not to do.” The solemn words of our master in the Gospel of St. Matthew place this point also beyond dispute.

(2) Concerning the *origin and source* of this vast moral disease called “sin” I must say something. I fear the views of many professing Christians on this point are sadly defective and unsound. I dare not pass it by. Let us, then, have it fixed down in our minds that the sinfulness of man does not begin from without, but from within. It is not the result of bad training in early years. It is not picked up from bad companions and bad examples, as some weak Christians are too fond of saying. No! it is a family disease, which we all inherit from our first parents, Adam and Eve, and with which we are born. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh.” – “We are by nature the children of wrath.” – “The carnal mind is enmity against God.” – Out of the heart (naturally as out of a fountain) proceed evil thoughts, adulteries,” and the like (John chapter 3 verse 6; Ephesians chapter 2 verse 3; Romans chapter 8 verse 7; Mark chapter 7 verse 21.)

The fairest babe that has entered life this year, and become the sunbeam of a family, is not, as its mother perhaps fondly calls it, a little “angel,” or a little “innocent,” but a little “sinner.” Alas! As it lies smiling and crowing in its cradle, that little creature carries in its heart the seeds of every kind of wickedness! Only watch it carefully, as it grows in stature and its mind develops, and you will soon detect in it an incessant tendency to that which is bad, and a backwardness to that which is good. You will see in it the buds and germs of deceit, evil temper, selfishness, self-will, obstinacy, greediness, envy, jealousy, passion – which, if indulged and let alone, will shoot up with

painful rapidity. Who taught the child these things? Where did he learn them? The Bible alone can answer these questions!

(3) Concerning the *extent* of this vast moral disease of man called sin, let us beware that we make no mistake. The only safe ground is that which is laid for us in Scripture. “Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart” is by nature “evil, and that continually.”

Sin is a disease which pervades and runs through every part of our moral constitution and every faculty of our minds. The understanding, the affections, the reasoning powers, the will, are all more or less infected. I admit fully that man has many grand and noble faculties left about him, and that in arts and sciences and literature he shows immense capacity. But the fact still remains that in spiritual things he is utterly “dead,” and has no natural knowledge, or love, or fear of God. His best things are so interwoven and intermingled with corruption, that the contrast only brings out into sharper relief the truth and extent of the fall. That one and the same creature should be in some things so high and in others so low – so great and yet so little – so noble and yet so mean – so grand in his conception and execution of material things and yet be a slave to abominable vices like those described in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans – all this is a sore puzzle to those who sneer at “God’s Word written,” and scoff at us Bibliolaters. But it is a knot that we can untie with the Bible in our hands. Let us remember, besides this, that every part of the world bears testimony to the fact that sin is the universal disease of all mankind.

Search every nation of every clime in the four quarters of the earth – search every rank and class in our own country from the highest to the lowest – and under every circumstance and condition, the report will be always the same. The remotest islands in the Pacific Ocean, completely separate from Europe, Asia, Africa, and America, beyond the reach alike of Oriental luxury and Western arts and literature – islands inhabited by people ignorant of books, money, steam, and gunpowder – uncontaminated by the vices of modern civilization – these very islands have always been found, when first discovered, the abode of the vilest forms of lust, cruelty, deceit, and superstition. If the inhabitants have know nothing else, they have always known how to sin! So deeply planted are the roots of human corruption, that even after we are born again, renewed, “washed, sanctified, justified,” and made living members of Christ, these roots remain alive in the bottom of our hearts, and, like the leprosy in the walls of the house, we never get rid of

them until the earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved. Sin, no doubt, in the believer's heart, has no longer dominion. It is checked, controlled, mortified, and crucified by the expulsive power of the new principal of grace.

The life of a believer is a life of victory, and not of failure. But the very struggles which go on within his bosom, the fight that he finds it needful to fight daily, the watchful jealousy which he is obliged to exercise over his inner man, the contest between the flesh and the spirit, the inward "groanings" which no one knows but he who has experienced them – all, all testify to the same great truth, all show the enormous power and vitality of sin. Mighty indeed must that foe be who even when crucified is still alive!

(4) Concerning the *guilt, vileness, and offensiveness* of sin in the sight of God, my words shall be few. I say "few" advisedly.

On the one hand, God is that eternal Being who "chargeth His angels with folly." We, on the other hand – poor blind creatures, here to-day and gone to-morrow, born in sin, surrounded by sinners, living in a constant atmosphere of weakness, infirmity, and imperfection – can form none but the most inadequate conceptions of the hideousness of evil. The deaf man cannot distinguish between a penny whistle and a cathedral organ. And man, fallen man, I believe, can have no just idea what a vile thing sin is in the sight of that God whose handiwork is absolutely perfect.

But let us nevertheless settle it firmly in our minds that sin is "abominable thing that God hateth" – that God "is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and cannot look upon that which is evil" – that the least transgression of God's law makes us "guilty of all" – that "the soul that sinneth shall die" – that "the wages of sin is death" – that God shall "judge the secrets of men" – that there is a worm that never dies, and a fire that is not quenched – that "the wicked shall be turned into hell" – and "shall go away into everlasting punishment" – and that "nothing that defiles shall in any wise enter heaven." These are indeed tremendous words, when we consider that they are written in the Book of a most merciful God!

(5) One point only remains to be considered on the subject of sin, which I dare not pass over. That point is its *deceitfulness*. It is a point of most serious importance, and I venture to think it does not receive the attention which it deserves. You may see this deceitfulness in the wonderful

proneness of men to regard sin as less sinful and dangerous than it is in the sight of God; and in their readiness to extenuate it, make excuses for it, and minimize its guilt. – “It is but a little one! God is merciful! God is not extreme to mark what is done amiss! We mean well! One can not be so particular! Where is the mighty harm? We only do as others!”

Who is not familiar with this kind of language? We are too apt to forget that temptation to sin will rarely present itself to us in its true colours, saying, “I am your deadly enemy, and I want to ruin you for ever in hell.” Oh, no! Sin comes to us, like Judas, with a kiss; and like Joab, with an outstretched hand and flattering words. We may give wickedness smooth names, but we cannot alter its nature and character in the sight of God. Let us remember St. Paul’s words: “Exhort one another daily, lest any be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.” (Hebrews chapter 3 verse 13).

It is a wise prayer in our Litany, “From the deceits of the world, the flesh, and the devil, good Lord, deliver us.”

No news can suit a ruined race
But sov’ reign, free, eternal grace:
No other Gospel can impart
Joy, peace, and comfort to the heart.

The only Gospel we can own
Sets Jesus Christ upon His throne;
Proclaims salvation full and free,
Obtained on Calvary’s rugged tree.

Joseph Irons.