OCCASIONAL NOTES

S t r a n g e r s R e s t E v a n g e l i c a l C h u r c h

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**“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”**

**(Isaiah 9:6)**

**By Mark Mullins**

As I start this Christmas edition of the Occasional Notes we have just passed Black Friday which seems to be extending over the weekend into the following week. Black Friday is an opportunity for people to buy their Christmas present early but I wonder how many have thought about the greatest gift that has been given to the human race and which, as we all know, is what Christmas is supposed to celebrate. Isaiah tells us that unto **us** a son is given.

**The Greatest Gift**

God’s greatest gift to mankind was His Son and it will do us no harm to reflect on the origin of the Son of God to appreciate more fully the magnificence of this gift. John 3:16 is one of the best known verses in the Bible:

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

God’s love to the human race was the gift of His only Begotten Son. God’s Son is a most remarkable Son because he had no beginning and no ending. In Exodus 3, God revealed Himself to Moses in the burning bush. When commissioned by God to return to the people of Israel Moses asked God whose name he should tell the people of Israel that he had been sent by. The Lord replied (v14):

And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.

We see the eternity of God reflected in His Name for eternity could be likened to an ever present moment without beginning and without end. He is therefore as ageless as His Father. In John 8:58, the Lord Jesus took this name upon Himself when he told the Jews, “Before Abraham was, I am”. In Revelation 1:8, the Lord Jesus says about Himself:

“I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.”

**Eternally Begotten**

If God’s Son has always existed with the Father then you might ask how it is that he is yet begotten or born as his son? First, we must conclude that the Lord Jesus is begotten by His Father because scripture tells us and second because otherwise He would not be the Father’s natural Son unless He was begotten.

Two objections are raised when considering the begetting or bringing forth of Christ. First some think of begetting as being created, yet Christ was not created. Begotten simply means to be born or to come forth.

In John 1:18 we read that the only begotten Son was in the bosom of the Father which denotes the strong bond of love and affection between Father and Son, yet it also demonstrates their distinct personhood. A human son is not necessarily dependent on his human father. The two can exist independently of each other. The father-son relationship merely depicts the son’s origin and shared nature with the father. So it is between God the Father and God the Son.

The second objection is the idea that The Son of God could be begotten while still existing for eternity. This is a mystery which we cannot fathom but it is the clear teaching of scripture as we see in Micah 5:2:-

But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, *though* thou be little among the thousands of Judah, *yet* out of thee shall he come forth unto me *that is* to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth *have been* from of old, from everlasting.

This is a statement of the eternal begetting of Christ from eternity.

The begetting of Christ is also described in Proverbs 8:22:25:-

The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old.  23  I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was.  24  When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water.  25  Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth.

Here Solomon, who was speaking about wisdom appears to be carried beyond himself to speak about the begetting of the Son of God who is the wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:24). Plainly the whole passage is speaking of God’s wisdom which we note is in the feminine so it is only this specific extract that could be applied to God’s Son Himself.

It is not unusual for the Old Testament prophets to be carried beyond themselves in this way. We find this in relation to prophecies concerning the Messiah such as the verse at the beginning of this article in Isaiah 9:6. When Isaiah was prophesying about the King of Babylon he was carried beyond himself to prophesy about Satan or Lucifer, the son of the morning in Isaiah 14:12. So we see in Proverbs 8 that the Son of God was set up from everlasting and brought forth before the earth was created which, in any event, is a concept apparent from his everlasting life and his description as God’s only begotten Son.

**The Son of God was not begotten by The Father at His Birth**

There are some who mistakenly view the begetting of Christ, as God’s Son, to be at his birth into the world. However this cannot be right. First, it would make the Holy Spirit His Father which He is not. Then consider 1 John 4:9:-

“In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that **God sent his only begotten Son** into the world, that we might live through him”.

It is important to note that God sent his only begotten Son into the world because he had a Son to send. You cannot send something or someone that you do not possess or have the right to send at the time of sending. That well-known verse in John 3:16 also illustrates the point:

For God so loved the world, that **he gave his only begotten Son**, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

**The Human Will and Divine Will Distinguished**

The extent of God’s love is demonstrated by the magnificence of God’s gift which was His only begotten Son. They are co-equal (John 5:18 and John 10:30). Indeed if it was any different then the Lord Jesus could not, as the Son of God **be** God because He would not be Almighty or all powerful (see Isaiah 9:6).

Hebrews 5:8, which states that the Lord Jesus, referring to his life on earth (verse 7) “though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered” can be understood in no other way. If the Son was eternally in submission to the Father then He would not have had to learn obedience during His human life on earth since He would have been living in submission eternally which He was not. It is only in the working out of God’s one will in the work of the Son as our mediator that we see the Son in submission to The Father.

It is in the Son’s role as mediator that Philippians 2:6-7 tell us this about the Lord Jesus:

Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:  But made himself of no reputation, **and took upon him the form of a servant**, and was made in the likeness of men.

So, while God demonstrated His love to us by giving His only begotten Son to be born into this world and die a sinner’s death, at the same time the Son voluntarily took upon Him the form of a servant.

To put it differently, there can be no submission of the Divine Will of the Son of God because one of the attributes of God is His immutability or unchangeability (Hebrews 6:17):

Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel…

Therefore the will of God must be shared by all three persons of the Trinity or else there would be change within the Godhead with one Person of the Godhead having an independent will to one of the other persons of the Godhead.

It follows that the submission of The Son to do His Father’s will can only have been in the Lord Jesus’s role as man and mediator and not in his divinity as God’s Son. 1 Timothy 2:5 tells us that there is One God and one mediator between God and man, the man, Christ Jesus.

Verses that shows the distinction between the Lord Jesus’s Divine will and his human will as man and mediator are:

Matthew 26:39:- “Not as I will, but as Thou wilt”;

Luke 22:42:- “Not my will, but thine be done”; and

John 6:38:- “I am come down from heaven, not to do mine own will but the will of Him that sent me”.

References to the Lord Jesus’s will in these passages are to his human will and references to His Father’s will are references to the Lord Jesus’s divine will which is One with His Father.

Verses which demonstrate the Lord Jesus’s human will are:

Matthew 27:34:- “They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink”;

Luke 2:51:- “he was subject” to his parents;

Philippians 2:8:- “And being found in fashion as a man … became obedient unto death”);

John 1:43:- ”The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee”;

John 17:24:-  “Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am”;

John 19:28:-”After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst;

Verses demonstrating the Lord Jesus’s divine will as God-man are:

Luke 13:34:- “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen *doth gather* her brood under *her* wings, and ye would not!”;

John 5:21:- “For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth *them*; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will.”

These passages therefore teach two wills of Christ. The human will of the Lord Jesus as man and mediator and His divine will, which is identified with the Father’s will and to which the Lord Jesus was obedient to death. There are therefore two natures but one person in Christ in His incarnation whereas there are three persons and one nature in the Godhead. The mystery of the Trinity is that three persons can have the same will but this is because the three Divine persons are not three individuals but three persons in one being in God. The mystery of the incarnation is that two beings (human and divine) can exist in one person.

The teaching that the Lord Jesus had only one will on earth is known as Monotheletism and was condemned as heretical by the sixth oecumenical Council in 680AD consisting of the Catholic church in the East and West. They adopted the following addition to the Chalcedonian Christology:

And we likewise preach two natural wills in him [Jesus Christ], and two natural operations undivided, inconvertible, inseparable, unmixed, according to the doctrine of the holy fathers; and the two natural wills [are] not contrary (as the impious heretics assert), far from bit! But his human will follows the divine will, and is not resisting or reluctant, but rather subject to his divine and omnipotent will. For it was proper that the will of the flesh should be moved, but be subjected to the divine will, according to the wise Athanasius. For as his flesh is called and is the flesh of the God Logos, so is also the natural will of his flesh the proper will of the Logos, as he says himself: ‘I came from heaven not to do my own will but the will of the Father who sent me’ (John 6:38) … Therefore we confess two natural wills and operations, harmoniously united for the salvation of the human race”.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Dr John Gill, who was a predecessor of Charles Haddon Spurgeon at the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London between 1720 and 1771 wrote this about the idea that the Son of God was in some way submissive to His Father as the Son of God, as opposed to as the Son of Man:

As to subordination and subjection, and inequality, which it is supposed the Sonship of Christ by generation implies; it may be answered, that Christ in his office-capacity, in which he, as Mediator, is a Servant, and as he is man, and appeared in the form of one; it will be acknowledged, that he is subordinate and subject to the Father; but not as he is the Son of God: and whatever inequality sonship may imply among men, it implies no such thing in the divine nature, among the divine persons; who in it subsist in perfect equality with one another; and in particular, the Scriptures represent the Son of God as equal to his Father, as one who thought it no robbery to be equal with God; being of the same nature, and having the same perfections with him, and that he is equal to him with respect to power and authority; for with respect to power he says, "I and my Father are one"; and they represent him as having the same claim to equal honour, homage, and worship; since all men are "to honour the Son, as they honour the Father"; not as in subordination to him, but as equal with him.

John Brown of Haddington[[2]](#footnote-2) advised when describing the deep mystery of the three distinct persons in one godhead:

That the doctrine concerning it, being unfolded only by Revelation, we ought to use as few words as possible concerning it but such as are scriptural. We are certain that God perfectly knows himself, though we do not; and that his expressions concerning himself, though we should not understand them, are just and safe; whereas those of human invention may be neither and may lead us, unawares, into blasphemous view or representations of him.

I sincerely trust that in this article I have not erred into such dangerous territory.

The understanding that God the Son, who has all the attributes of God, voluntarily set aside his divine glory and became a human being should stir in our hearts the highest adoration. Thomas Watson, the Puritan, wrote in his *Body of Divinity*:

That man should be made in God’s image was a wonder, but that God should be made in man’s image is a greater wonder. That the Ancient of Days should be born, that He who thunders in the heavens should cry in the cradle; … that He who rules the stars should suck the breast; …He was poor, that He might make us rich (*2 Corinthians 8:9);* He was born of a virgin, that we might be born of God; He took our flesh, that He might give us His Spirit. He lay in the manger that we might lie in paradise. He came down from heaven, that He might bring us to heaven. And what was all this but love?

The words of the second verse of the carol, O Come All ye faithful, spring to one’s mind:

God of God, Light of light,

Lo, he abhors not the virgin’s womb;

Son of the Father, begotten, not created;

O come, let us adore him,

O come, let us adore him,

O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!

My prayer for us all this Christmas is that we may enjoy a deeper appreciation of God’s greatest gift to mankind and that those who were transfixed by Black Friday may experience the disillusionment that will point them repent of their idolatry and turn to the only Saviour of the World. A Happy Christmas and a Blessed New Year to you all.

**Mrs Lucy Hutchinson (1620-1681)**

**“Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price is far above rubies.” (Proverbs 31:10)**

**By Faith Amurao**

“Let her as she is above other women, show herself in this occasion, a good Christian, and above the pitch of ordinary women.” So wrote Colonel John Hutchinson, the Parliamentary Governor of Nottingham Castle during the English Civil Wars, to his wife, Lucy Hutchinson (née Apsley) in his last message to her as he died of a fatal chill in prison. In 1663 John Hutchinson was arrested for alleged involvement in an armed rising against Charles II. He was never formally tried but was detained and died in prison, in Sandown Castle, a forlorn, decaying place on the Kent coast. For the next few years following her husband’s death, Lucy Hutchinson determined to write his memoir that would safeguard his memory against false charges. The manuscript biography of his life was published posthumously in 1817 with immediate success. David Norbrook, writing on Lucy Hutchinson’s epic poem, *Order and Disorder*, the first to be written by a woman and described by critics to be as ground-breaking as John Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, remarks, “*Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson* is particularly remarkable given the agonizing circumstances under which it was written. With a characteristic intellectual toughness, Lucy Hutchinson produced not just a personal testimonial to the head of her family but a sociological analysis, which placed his life in a larger pattern of social change and providential intervention” (‘*Order and Disorder:* The Poem and its Contexts’).

Lucy Hutchinson was born in London to Sir Allen Apsley, the Lieutenant of the Tower of London, and Lady Lucy St. John. The provision of her education, including the learning of Latin, came from her father. It was from her mother, however, that she received godly, Puritan instruction, leading to a knowledge of the Lord Jesus as Saviour. In God’s providence it was Lucy Hutchinson’s academic interest which was instrumental in Colonel Hutchinson marrying her. Mr Hutchinson was visiting the home of the Apsleys during her absence when he saw some Latin books. He learned that they belonged to her and began to grow very interested in their owner although he had never met her. They were married in 1638.

Four years later, in 1642, Civil War broke out. The term ‘Puritan’ came to be used to describe almost any opponent of the monarch and his court. Lucy Hutchinson in her *Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson* famously writes, echoing a statesman:

“If any were grieved at the dishonour of the kingdom, or the griping of the poor, or the unjust oppressions of the subject by a thousand ways invited to maintain the riots of the courtiers and the swarms of needy Scots the King had brought in to devour like locusts the plenty of this land, he was a Puritan; if any, out of mere morality and civil honesty, discountenanced the abominations of those days, he was a Puritan, however he conformed to their superstitious worship; if any showed favour to any godly, honest person, kept them company, relieved them in want, or protected them against violent and unjust oppression, he was a Puritan; if any gentleman in his county maintained the good laws of the land, or stood up for any public interest, for good order of government, he was a Puritan. In short, all that crossed the views of the needy courtiers, the proud encroaching priests, the thievish projectors, the lewd nobility and gentry,...all these were Puritans; and if Puritans, then enemies to the King and his government, seditious, factious hypocrites, ambitious disturbers of the public peace, and finally the pest of the kingdom.”

According to Christopher Hill in his essay, ‘The English Revolution 1640’, “The Civil War was a class war, in which the despotism of Charles I was defended by the reactionary forces of the established Church and conservative landlords. Parliament beat the King because it could appeal to the enthusiastic support of the trading and industrial classes in town and countryside, to the yeomen and progressive gentry, and to wider masses of the population whenever they were able by free discussion to understand what the struggle was really about…It is not…denied that the ‘Puritan Revolution’ was a religious as well as a political struggle; but it was more than that. What men were fighting about was the whole nature and future development of English society.” The Civil War toppled a problematic monarchy that was essentially feudal in its outlook but what followed was a decade of uncertainty as differing Puritan factions vied for control. Amidst the jealousies and feuds breaking out among Parliamentary supporters, Lucy Hutchinson and her husband persevered in their pursuit of what they believed the Lord had called them to do even if at times it generated criticism among Presbyterians and supporting Separatists.

In 1646 Colonel Hutchinson replaced his father in Parliament and when Charles I was brought to trial he was one of the judges who signed the death warrant. During the Commonwealth he was a member of the first Council of State. After the termination of the Long Parliament by Oliver Cromwell, he and his wife retired to the country disagreeing with the extent of the power assumed by the Army and Cromwell’s apparent, overwhelming personal ambition. Lucy Hutchinson and her husband were committed to a godly republic, where the old national church which in their perspective was corrupt through its traditions and idolatry, acceded to tolerated and voluntary Protestant congregations. They wanted a country where political corruption was also resisted through limits on personal power. The restoration of Charles II brought with it the resumption of a persecuting state church and a renewal of the former monarchical system.

On 10 January 1661 a royal proclamation was passed forbidding all meetings of “Anabaptists, Quakers, and Fifth Monarchy men.” The imprisonment of over 4,000 Quakers took place. Other Nonconformists like John Bunyan were thrust into prison. In his case for twelve years. He survived but many did not. Legislation against all forms of Nonconformity known as the *Clarendon Code* and a 1662 Act which required strict conformity to the Church of England were passed. Puritans whose consciences could not submit to the conditions set in these laws led to the decline of Puritanism. Although their preaching waned, their writing ministry went on. Like them, from 1667 to 1668, Lucy Hutchinson wrote her statements of her religious belief which were called *On the Principles of the Christian Religion, Addressed to Her Daughter* and *On Theology*. The first of these was written specifically for her daughter for the practical purpose of grounding her in the fundamental truths of the Christian faith, to prepare her against worldly temptations and to fortify her mind against error and confusion.

Lucy Hutchinson believed that spiritual meditation on objective Truths as found in the Bible was a great means of leading to a deeper experience of those same Truths. She solemnly warned in *On the Principles of the Christian Religion*, “Christ is, in the Gospel, held forth to men to be received as their life and salvation, and they that seek a Christ anywhere but where God exhibits Him, that is, His own authorised Word, may find Christ of their own inventions, but shall never find the Christ of God, the alone Saviour of men.” In the light of the majesty and holiness of God, she walked in the fear of the Lord which was, in her words, “This reverential fear begets a holy care and watch in the soul, suspecting and crying out to God to keep His citadel there…’Tis a holy frame of spirit that keeps us always in a reverent awe and dread of the great majesty of God, and in an humble posture of soul before Him, yet cuts not off, but aggravates our delight in Him, our joy and our singing before Him…”.

**Praise and Prayer Requests**

For Praise:

* Gospel opportunities at the English Speaking Classes and the Profession of Faith by G from Italy;
* The birth of a baby boy to Janusz and Aneta on 7th December, the couple baptised in February;
* For Faye Amurao’s recovery from a neck operation;
* For E, an ex soldier, joining the church; and
* For the new website;

For Prayer:

* Gospel opportunities at the English Speaking Classes and the Profession of Faith by G from Italy;
* The birth of a baby boy to Janusz and Aneta on 7th December, the couple baptised in February;
* For Faye Amurao’s recovery from a neck operation;
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1. History of the Christian Church by Philip Schaff at page 2398 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. John Brown lived from 1722 to 1787 and was the leading minister in the Associate Synod during the formative years of eighteenth century Scotland. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)