

FOREWORD

James Smith (1802–1862) served as pastor of the New Park Street church from 1841 until he left London under health concerns around 1850. That church had prospered under the Christ-centered biblical exposition of gifted ministers from its inception. The man who gathered this church in London during a period of oppression of dissenters was William Rider. Under his influence, Henry Jessey, minister at St. George the Martyr, adopted Baptist views and became one of the early and influential leaders of the Particular Baptist movement.

Rider was succeeded as pastor by Benjamin Keach, who had been persecuted, arrested, put on trial, placed in the stocks, fined, and put in jail for his Baptist views. Among his forty-something publications was a giant volume of exposition entitled *Exposition of the Parables* and another entitled *Preaching from the Types and Metaphors of the Bible*. Also, he evoked controversy and an excision from the church by his defence of corporate singing as a regulated part of corporate worship. “Tis a hard case that any Christian should object against that Duty which Christ and his Apostles, and the Saints in all Ages in their publick Assemblies were found in the practice of; but ’tis no easy thing to break People off of a mistaken Notion, and an old Prejudice taken up against a precious truth of Christ.” [Benjamin Keach, *The Banqueting-House or A Feast of Fat Things* (London: Printed by J. A. for H. Barnard, 1692), 11.] The book contains 209 hymns beginning with ‘God as Father’ containing 16 hymns on the doctrine of God followed by 49 hymns on the Person and Work of Christ and 13 hymns on the Holy Spirit. After that 16 hymns on Scripture are followed by hymns on other subjects arranged systematically culminating with three on hell: ‘Hell, a Furnace of Fire,’ ‘Hell, a Lake of Fire,’ and, number 146, ‘Hell, a Bottomless Pit.’ Hymns 147-209 treat a variety of other subjects beginning with ‘Sin Laid on Christ’ and closing with ‘Wrath Against Persecutors.’

Keach died in 1704 and was succeeded by his son-in-law, Benjamin Stinton (1676–1719), when he was close to thirty years old. Stinton was a convinced Baptist who defended those views while at the same time ‘endeavored to cultivate harmony among Christians of different sentiments.’ [Ivimey, 3:413] He was active in providing education for the children of

Dissenters and The Baptist Fund. He collected historical data on the Baptist churches of England, hoping that Daniel Neal would use it in his *History of the Puritans*, but later used by Thomas Crosby in his *History of the English Baptists*. Among several sermons that he had published by request was a theological celebration of the changes prompted in the life of the Dissenters by the death of Queen Anne: 'Of Divine Providence; occasioned by the demise of her late Majesty Queen Anne, and the happy accession of our present Sovereign King George to the Throne of Great Britain.' Ivimey observed that Stinton was 'a consistent Calvinist; steering [sic] clear of Arminianism on the one hand, and Antinomianism on the other.' [3:413]. Stinton died unexpectedly on February 11, 1718.

After some controversy in the church which led to the establishing of another congregation, John Gill (1697–1771) was installed as pastor. Although self-taught, his scholarship was profound and his writings were abundant in length and type. He published sermons, controversial and polemical literature, commentaries, and systematic theology. *The Cause of God and Truth* displayed the skill with which he negotiated and intertwined polemical, exegetical, historical, and theological disciplines. His commentary of nine volumes dealt with every verse of the Bible and was completed before he wrote his two-volume *Complete Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity* (1769). He served the church from March, 1720, until his death on October 14, 1771. During his time as pastor, the Baptist cause was defended in public through his pen. The church, however, declined in membership, did not spawn the founding of other Baptist churches, and saw few men called to ministry. For his scholarship, his orthodoxy, his purity of life, and his unwavering faithfulness to his call as a preacher, teacher, and defender of the word of God and its gospel, Gill was admired and celebrated by many of his contemporaries. Even Ivimey, who had his reservations about some of the doctrinal propensities of Gill, wrote that he was 'an ornament to the denomination to which he considered it his honour to belong.' [3:444].

Upon the death of Gill, the church selected a young man from Bristol College, the twenty-year-old John Rippon (1750–1836). Another secession occurred at his coming. Showing early, however, his proverbial prudence, he managed the occasion with compassionate wisdom, suggesting that the leaving party be granted £300 with which to construct a chapel. The church prospered under his ministry of sixty-three years. His preaching has been described as 'lively, affectionate and impressive.' Rippon loved hymns, wrote several, and produced a hymnal in 1787, *A Selection of Hymns*, containing 588 hymns. This set a standard for hymnals and was widely popular in England and America. His alteration of Perronet's 'All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name' is probably his best known contribution. He remained as pastor until his death, although in his last years he was 'supposed to have outlived his usefulness.' [G. H. Pike, *The Life and Work of C. H. Spurgeon*, 6 vols., 1:121] Having begun at Horsley Down, moved to Goat Street, then Carter Lane, the construction of London Bridge made another move necessary. Factors

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dictated that a chapel be constructed at the south end of London Bridge at New Park Street. It was a damp, low-lying, unhealthy location.

Joseph Angus (1816–1902) succeeded Rippon—he was twenty-one—but remained for only four years. He served for a decade (1840–1850) as secretary of the Baptist Missionary Society and then served as Principal at Stepney College. During his 44 year span as principal, he moved the college to Regent's Park.

Coming to New Park Street after Joseph Angus was James Smith (1802–1862), the author of this book of devotions. Reared in the Church of England, upon conversion he concluded from his own reading of Scripture that he should be baptised in the manner practiced in the book of Acts. He applied, therefore, to the Baptist church in Brentford and was baptised and received as a member. Having natural gifts of speech and manifesting a deep commitment to evangelical truth, he was encouraged to pursue ministry. Smith was hesitant but, by 1829, became pastor of a church in Cheltenham. When he grew to a persuasion that he should address the unconverted, objections arose to his preaching, and he formed a new congregation in 1835. This church had remarkable success under his preaching and leadership. In 1841, he moved to London to serve as pastor of New Park Street after the removal of Joseph Angus. For almost a decade, he laboured faithfully and with true evangelical zeal for the growth of the members and the salvation of the lost. Smith recalled that 'the Lord enabled him in simplicity, not in the words of man's wisdom, but in the words of Scripture, in the language of the heart rather than the language of the head, – to preach the same doctrines [the Calvinistic doctrines of grace] in connection with their influence upon the heart and their effects in the life.' He found himself unable to sustain his health in the environment in London, particularly in the location of New Park Street. He left for health reasons resisting the protest of friends who 'told him how very wrong it was for him to leave Park Street.' Eventually he made his way back to Cheltenham where his ministry was blessed with spiritual fruit and a steady stream of conversions. Under his leadership, the congregation built a new building, Cambray Chapel, in 1855.

In 1861, Smith was invited to the celebration of the opening of the Metropolitan Tabernacle. He reminisced concerning the pessimism that some had about the prospects for the church when he left. He had assured his melancholy friends that God knew where to find a man and how to prepare him for just such a situation. Smith told the gathered crowd that 'He now felt confirmed in that opinion, for if he had not left Park Street, humanly speaking, they would never have had that Tabernacle, they would not have had the Church they now possessed, nor would have seen the wonder wrought in the land which they had witnessed.' On a visit to New Park Street after Spurgeon had come, Smith recalled this pleasing conversation: In the words of one recording Smith's speech, we read:

He remembered coming to London on one occasion, after New Park Street Chapel was thronged, and a member of the Church, not very comfortably

seated on account of the crowd that surrounded him, speaking to him of the wonderful success that was given, and the glorious work that was being wrought, said, 'Ah! Sir, your prayers are answered. Did you not use to pray Sunday after Sunday that God would crowd the place? Have I not heard you say, "Lord, cram the place?" And he has done it, and I think now you ought to be satisfied; however uncomfortable it may be for us, you ought to be very comfortable to think that God had answered your prayers.' [MTP, 1961, 259.]

Smith preached on Thursday evening, April 11, 1861, on Effectual Calling. It was the fourth of a five part series on the doctrines of grace. Smith reviewed the doctrines covered leading to his topic showing his mental grasp and heart commitment to those doctrines. He affirmed the Father's infinite wisdom and mercy in electing a portion—'the vast majority of the fallen inhabitants of this world'—to be redeemed by the Son. The Son received this commission and in receiving it knew that the people of the Father's election had been given to him. The fall had brought them into a state of being 'so depraved, so polluted, so rotten, that nothing could effect a change but the omnipotent energy of the omnipotent God.' In order to perform an effectual redemption, the Son came and 'assumed humanity, and united it with Deity. The two natures constitute the one person of the glorious Mediator.' In this way he stood as the representative of his people, a Surety of the purchase, the 'Substitute of the multitude of his fallen ones.' He was the necessary sacrifice to whom sin was transferred by imputation so that by such an expiation sin no longer stood as a barrier to the free flow of divine mercy. Even as omnipotent and infinite wisdom devised the way, the infinite glory of the Son accomplished the redeeming and atoning work, so must a commensurate divine omnipotence operate through the Spirit to 'renew, to transform, to remodel, to fit human nature to gaze upon the unveiled glories of the Deity, and to render to God the homage due unto his name.' In consonance with his conviction about evangelistic urgency, Smith described the necessity of a general call of the gospel as prelude to the effectual call of the Spirit. 'While we speak and give the call as we are commanded and commissioned, the Holy Spirit works – the infinite power of the Eternal Spirit comes into contact – direct, immediate contact with the mind of man.' This covenantally-directed, infinitely-gracious, omnipotent third Person of the Triune God gives a life impossible for an iniquity-bound, transgressionally-dead sinner to obtain apart from the invincible, grace-determined power of a new creation. This life as granted sovereignty of irresistible power and imperishable seed can never be lost. Smith gives a moving narrative of the process of conviction wrought by the Spirit in the conscience and mental consciousness of the person being drawn with effectual grace. After this scripture-impregnated and experientially rigorous description, he preached, 'He has now experienced the effectual call. It has been a call from darkness into marvellous light, from bondage into glorious liberty; out of prison the man comes to reign; from the dunghill he is lifted up to sit among the princes, even among the princes of God's people.' This call is heavenly, distinguishing, and irreversible. 'Thus,'

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he summarized, 'you perceive, my friends, all originated in God's thought, which though sprung into a perfect plan, to carry out which plan provision was made, and this plan will be perfectly carried out to the praise of the glory of his grace.' [MTP, 1862, 318-322.]

This theological system of thought informs the day-by-day devotions that constitute this present work. One example may serve to illustrate the intense theological foundation to Smith's 'Remembrancer.' On the evening of December 25, these sentences constitute a portion of the intended encouragement to believing sinners:

He was one with, and equal to the Father. But He became man. He was conceived in Mary's womb. He was born in Bethlehem. He was a weak and helpless infant, and yet at the same time the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of peace. Deity and humanity united in His person. He took our nature to take away our sins. He became a man in order to be a Saviour. He came on purpose to save sinners. This was His object. This was His work. For this He lived, and laboured, and suffered, and died. He came to be our substitute. He was born once, that we might be born again. He died once, that we might not experience the second death, but live forever. His love passeth knowledge. His birth was the greatest display of condescension, which heaven or earth ever witnessed. It was introductory to His obedient life, meritorious death, victorious resurrection, triumphant ascension, and glorious second advent. He was born in Bethlehem, in weakness and poverty; He will soon come to earth again, with power and great glory.

Cathcart's Baptist Encyclopedia (1881) recorded accurately and succinctly the spirituality and literary talent of Smith. The article noted that he was 'widely known and the author of "The Daily Remembrancer" and other evangelical works of large circulation.' [Cathcart, 2:1066, s.v. Smith, Rev. James.] The article recognized that Smith had 'the pen of a ready writer' from which 'no fewer than forty productions were given to the press.' He also contributed articles regularly to religious periodicals. 'His writings are characterized,' so the writer described, 'by great plainness of diction, remarkable felicity of Scripture quotation and illustration, and an exuberant richness of Christian experience.' [Cathcart] These lovely literary traits run throughout this book of more than 700 concise, spiritually-energetic, biblically-rich, heart engaging devotions.

Smith is not afraid to use the time of devotion to challenge and chasten the reader. Reflecting on Genesis 42:36, 'All these things are against me,' Smith looked the complaint straight in the face and wrote: 'They are not against you but for you; you forget that they come according to the arrangements of a gracious providence, and that your heavenly Father sends them for your good. Leave off complaining, for it springs from ignorance of God's Word, or forgetfulness of your many mercies and sins; or from unbelief and a bad temper; and it reflects upon the love, care, and kindness of your God. These things are painful, trying, and perplexing; but they are intended to do you good, and while you are complaining, they are working together under divine

direction for your present and everlasting welfare. Beloved, how apt we are to mistake the design of our trials, and to lose sight of God's promises.'

Smith often deals in provocations to deeper devotion and a sense of the goodness and privilege of single-hearted discipleship. From 'Let Him Deny Himself' the reader is challenged to know that 'We are not our own, nor is any thing we have our own; it is the Lord's. Our appetites, pleasures, and pursuits, must all be brought into subjection to the obedience of Christ. His glory is to be sought at all times, in all things, under all circumstances; and when this is done, we are safe and happy.'

Each devotion ends with a verse or two of a hymn sung regularly by the Evangelicals of the mid-nineteenth century. They demonstrate Smith's alacrity in selecting fitting hymns to seal in poetic form the biblical principle devotionally composed. Hymns are from Joseph Addison, Isaac Watts, Philip Doddridge, Joseph Bromehead, Thomas Kelly, Thomas Haweis, Charles Wesley, Jane Hore, Walter Shirley, John Newton, and others. The hymn selections not only show depth of knowledge of present hymnody but carry an independent source of worship as well as a thematic cap to the devotion.

The devotions for a day often reflect juxtaposition of ideas that complemented and expand each other. We find such kinships in 'Be ye thankful,' based on Colossians 3:15 and 'Now will I praise the LORD' based on Genesis 29:35. Another is 'A mediator' based on Galatians 3:20 and 'One mediator between God and men' based on 1 Timothy 2:5. 'I will help thee' from Isaiah 41:13 teamed with 'Hitherto hath the LORD helped us.' Based on 1 Samuel 7:12, After a morning devotion on January 9 called 'Gethsemane' from Matthew 26, Smith closed the evening with 'The place which is called Calvary' based on Luke 23:33. These sentences introduced the evening devotion: 'We visited Gethsemane this morning; let us visit Calvary tonight. There Jesus suffered immediately from the hand of a holy God; here He suffered by the hands of wicked men.' 'Why are ye so fearful?' from Mark 4:40 is paired with 'Fear not, thou worm Jacob' from Isaiah 41:14. 'If ye love me, keep my commandments,' Christ's stern but loving call from John 14:15, is a morning text that comes before an evening text from 1 Corinthians 7:22, 'Christ's servant.' The narrative for the evening shows it is in pure earnestness in demonstrating the morning call: 'Every Christian is a servant. Jesus is his Master. The precepts of the gospel are his rule. He is bound to obey. He has pledged himself to do the will of God from the heart. He that is not willing to serve Christ, has no evidence whatever that he is interested in Him.' 'We joy in God' from Romans 5:11 is supplemented by 'The joy of the LORD is your strength' from Nehemiah 8:10. That day ends with this observation, 'It is as much our duty to be happy, as to be holy; both are recommended, and provision is as much made for the one as the other.'

Sometimes Smith uses a day to pair concepts that emphasize temporality under the governance of eternity, or the human viewed in light of the divine, or tottering weakness bolstered by unvanquished strength. He begins on January 1 with 'Look Unto Me,' from Isaiah 45:22 for the morning reading.

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The evening then is based on Isaiah 66:2: 'To this Man Will I look.' This pattern is repeated frequently with such striking combinations as 'The Fear of Death' and 'To Die is Gain;' 'Blessed be ye poor' from Luke 6:20 and 'All things are yours' from 1 Corinthians 3:21; 'Let him deny himself' expressing Matthew 16:24 and 'I will honour him' based on Psalm 91:15; 'Let him ask in faith' from James 1:6 paired with 'Help thou mine unbelief' from Mark 9:24; 'But thou art the same,' taken from Psalm 102:27 contrasted with 'We all do fade as a leaf' from Isaiah 64:6. That evening devotion begins with the humbling words, 'What a contrast between an unchangeable God, and a sinner fading like a leaf! Yet, this is a true picture of us, and of all temporal things. We began to look green and gay not long since, and in a little time we shall wither, fade, and die.'

Many days do not contain an intended pairing of ideas with complementary emphases or ironical distinctions. They all, however, generate knowledge of divinely revealed truth. Whether the devotions have some intended pairing or stand alone, each is resonant with biblical concepts designed to edify, challenge, and encourage the Christian, and remind him ever that all the glory belongs to the Lord. The subjects are so richly varied and the admonitions so well-distributed between challenge, encouragement, evangelistic appeal, theological instruction, and exhortation to wonder that an accurate summary statement defies complete accuracy. One of the closing applications from Smith himself, however, expresses his desire in a pleasing summary:

To know God is to be truly wise, and to possess everlasting life; for "This", said Jesus, 'is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.' The knowledge of God comes from reading His Word, watching His providence, studying His works, and the teaching of His Holy Spirit. Can we say tonight, 'My God, I know Thee? My God, I love Thee?'

TOM J. NETTLES

JANUARY 1

❁ MORNING ❁

'Look unto me'

ISAIAH 45:22

A New Year's morning opens upon us, and we are still exposed to sorrow, Satan, and disappointment; sin lives in us; and a thousand things are ready to distress us; but our God says, *'Look unto me.'* 'Look unto me' as the source of happiness, the giver of grace, and your Friend. 'Look unto me' in every trial, for all you want, and in every place. 'Look unto me' *today*. I have blessings to bestow. I am waiting to be gracious. I am your Father in Jesus. Believe that I am deeply interested in your present and eternal welfare; that all I have promised, I will perform; that I am with you, purposely to bless you. I cannot be unconcerned about anything that affects you; and I pledge Myself to make all things work together for your good. You have looked to self, to others, in times past; but you have only met with trouble and disappointment; now look unto Me *alone*, to Me *for all*. Lift up the eye and the heart to Me today, and every day throughout the year; and walk before Me in peace and holiness. Prove Me hereby, if I will not thus make you holy, useful, and happy; try Me, and find My word of promise true; true to the very letter.

*Look to Him, till His mighty love
Thy ev'ry thought control,
Its vast, constraining influence prove
O'er body, spirit, soul.*

❁ EVENING ❁

'To this man will I look'

ISAIAH 66:2

To what man? – the poor in spirit; the humble; the man who trembles at His Word; who lies low in self-abasement at His throne; who mourns over his follies and his faults; who fears to offend a God so good, so holy, so great; the man who looks to Jesus for life, peace, and everlasting salvation. To such, the Lord will look. He will observe them. He will admire them. He will manifest His approbation of them. He will look and love; look and listen to their prayers; look and accept their persons and services; look and honour them, visiting them as His friends, dwelling with them as His children, owning them as His jewels, and using them as instruments for His glory. He will look upon them and strengthen them as He did Gideon; look, and restore them as He did Peter; look, and so lift up the light of His countenance upon them, and give them peace. My soul, hast thou been looking to the Lord today? Hast thou looked unto Him as thy Father? If so, doubtless He has been looking upon thee with a Father's love. He is now looking down upon thee with approbation. Sweet thought! The look of God is more than wealth, more than honour. Retire to rest this night with the thought: Jehovah is looking upon me with love.

*He proves His love, displays His grace,
Through the redemption of His Son;
He turns my feet from sinful ways,
And pardons what my hands have done.*