
Editor's Notes

Because I have written the survey of church history literature in this issue I will keep my notes brief.

Not far from where I was brought up in Massachusetts is the town of Northampton. Today the home of the prestigious Smith College, in the early 18th century Northampton was the home of Jonathan Edwards and saw the remarkable revivals that took place during his ministry there. The meeting-house of the Congregational Church in the town is a replacement of the one he preached in that burned down in the 19th century. Inside it is a memorial plaque to Edwards on which are inscribed the words of Malachi 2:6 which in the English Standard Version reads, 'True instruction was in his mouth, and no wrong was found on his lips. He walked with me in peace and uprightness, and he turned many from iniquity'. Those words fittingly sum up Edwards's ministry as they should the ministry of every faithful gospel minister. In their description of the ideal priest that was such a contrast to the priesthood of Malachi's day, these words are a constant challenge to me whenever I think of my ministry. Of course, gospel ministers are not priests in the old covenant sense and we must guard against any tendency to become such, but there are some functions of the priesthood that new covenant ministers are called to fulfil, not least of which is to teach the word of God. We must be those on whose lips true instruction is found and to whom (verse 7) people should turn for instruction amidst all the spiritual confusion and falsehood of our society. The prayerful preaching and teaching of the word must be our priority as it was for Jesus and the apostles, but we must also walk with God in peace and uprightness. Echoing what Genesis 5:22–23 says about Enoch, Malachi reminds us how we must have a close and intimate relationship with God characterised by righteous behaviour. Our relationships with God as gospel ministers should also be characterised by peace or *shalom* in its biblical sense of well-being and wholeness. How carefully those of us who preach the word must nurture intimate communion with God. And what is the purpose of our ministries? It is to turn many from iniquity. Fundamentally this happens when through our ministries people become Christians and begin to live in a godly way. But our ministry of the word in public and private is intended to continue turning people from sin to godliness right through their Christian lives. Like an anti-virus programme on a computer meditation on Malachi will help us to fight those things that would corrupt our ministries and nurture those things that would make them more effective.

I will keep until the next issue a review of some books that can help us in fulfilling the kind of ministry described in Malachi 2:6. There is one, however, that I would urge you to get if you do not have it already. And that is **Arthur Bennett's *The Valley of Vision*** (Banner of Truth). For a number of years now I have used this collection of prayers in my devotions. Covering a wide variety of subjects these prayers have been collected together from a number of Puritan and later writers. Not only do I use them

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