

JANUARY–FEBRUARY 2018

£1.50

The Gospel Magazine

Abortion • To the lambs of the flock • Former Days

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1766–2018

*Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.
Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.
Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

These texts, which have been associated for so many years with *The Gospel Magazine*, give some indication of what this bi-monthly stands for. We seek to present the Lord Jesus as the only Saviour for a lost world: to edify the people of God; and to promote unity among believers, 'the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace'.

The Gospel Magazine is believed to be the oldest religious periodical still being published. One distinguished former editor was the Rev. Augustus Toplady, whose famous hymn, 'Rock of Ages cleft for me, Let me hide myself in Thee', was first published in these pages.

The Trust Deed of *The Gospel Magazine* is defined in terms of the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion of the Church of England, but the magazine itself is non-denominational. We aim to provide variety in unity, publishing articles from a wide diversity of past and present writers committed to 'the faith once delivered to the saints'.

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THE GOSPEL MAGAZINE

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Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.

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JANUARY–FEBRUARY 2018

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EDITORIAL

THE entry of a new year is as regular, and as implacable, as the chiming of a clock. The measure of our allotted years is marked by the changing of the calendar. We catch ourselves writing the wrong year in dates until our awareness of the passing of time has caught up with the reality of time.

Time is a great enemy. The Apostle Paul wrote, 'See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil' (Ephesians 5:15–16). To redeem time is to make the most of it, to not waste time. We can more easily fritter away the hours in the day than we can the pounds in our pocket. Unlike mere money, time cannot be made up. When it is gone, it is gone for ever.

The Apostle tells us to 'walk circumspectly', which implies both the fact of movement ('walk') and the manner in which we are to move ('circumspectly'). If the meaning appears doubtful, consider the words immediately following—'not as fools, but as wise'. Here we see what the Apostle intends; that

we should go about accurately, or carefully. But, one might ask, how can a person go about inaccurately?

We are in error if we go about without a clear view of our destination. Elsewhere the Apostle declared, 'For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ' (Philippians 3:20). Philippi was a Roman colony, and the people there sought to demonstrate their loyalty to Rome by being more Roman than the Romans. Paul used this fact to teach the believers in that place an important truth. Our citizenship ('conversation') is in heaven, in that we live by the rules, and for the reward, of heaven. That is, we are not governed by the standards of the world, nor by the desires of the flesh. We are born again, and our conduct is according to the will and revelation of our Saviour Jesus Christ. We want to be found to be about our Master's business when he appears. But if we fail to keep the hope of heaven before us, we will soon become content to live by another, lesser standard.

We are in error if we seek that destination by a wrong path. It was once said that all roads led to Rome, and there are many today who believe that the people of this earth all worship the same deity, albeit by different means, and addressing that deity by different names. This could not be further from the truth. While it is true that they are no gods, who have been invented by their worshippers, it is not true that the true and living God will accept the worship we choose to offer, only that which he has commanded. This means that, if we seek to come to him by a path he has not marked out, we will not reach him. Cain's sacrifice was not acceptable because it was not the one God had commanded. The Pharisees could not come to Christ, as a rule, because they could see no need to come. The rich young ruler went away sad because he loved his wealth more than he loved his soul. We come Christ's way, or we come not at all. In this race there is no prize for trying hard.

We are in error if we walk unwisely. The one who walks unwisely is the one who fails to note his surroundings. Sometimes his path leads him through the green pastures, and sometimes by the still waters—and sometimes through the valley of the shadow of death. If we walk along the path as if it were all one, we will likely come to trouble. We can relax in the green pastures, and be refreshed by the still waters, but our walk through the valley of the shadow of death must be with our eyes and ears open. Yes, we always walk behind our Saviour Christ, and yes, his rod and his staff they comfort me. We are never left on our own, but the dangers are sometimes closer and sometimes further away. Wisdom teaches us to take heed of our surroundings, and abide in the shadow of the Lord Jesus Christ at all times, and especially when the danger is close to hand.

We are in error if we fail to redeem the time. To redeem the time means to spend it wisely. 'Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days' (Ecclesiastes 11:1). Some uses of time may appear to others to be pointless, as time spent in reading God's Word, in prayer and in our church meetings. Those who criticise may not always be unbelievers; this is a matter of concern among professing believers also. We had some decorating done at home recently, and it seemed at first as if the decorator was idling away the time, in that we could see little progress after two days. In fact, he had been spending the time preparing the walls, filling the holes and cracks, and cleaning the old paste and dust off the plaster. It meant that, when the time came to paint, he was able to get on quickly, and produce a good finish. We must learn to cast our bread upon the waters, trusting that the Lord will make our use of time profitable in his service.

How, then, should we use our time?

- *Let us have a disciplined approach to each day*, setting aside time for communion with our Lord, study and meditation on the Word and fellowship with other believers if possible.
- *Let us have clear goals*, knowing that the great priority is to bear witness to Christ day by day. Let our lives be living sermons to grace, and to the saving power of the gospel, that others might observe and be turned to consider their own selves.
- *Let us have confidence in the means, and in the way.* Christ has not called us to an uncertain walk, nor to a doubtful end, but to that which is settled and sure through the shedding of his own blood. He has called; let us obey and follow.¶

CHRIST'S HUMILIATION

A sermon on Philippians 2:7

THOMAS MANTON

But made himself of no reputation

2. By way of pattern and example. Christ, that came to set open the way to heaven, would also teach us the way to heaven, not only by his doctrine, but example. Christ made himself of no reputation, and therefore we should be dead to the reputation and grandeur of the world, which is the great diversion and hindrance to the heavenly life. The apostle, when he brings this instance, he saith, 'Let the same mind be in you that was also in Christ Jesus,' Philippians 2:5. This very thing is propounded to our imitation. The Son of God had wisdom to choose, right to enjoy, power to procure, the best condition which the world affords; but yet he chose a mean state of life, subject to many afflictions and sorrows. Here I shall show—

(1.) The power of Christ's example in the general; (2.) What he teaches us by emptying himself, or making himself of no reputation.

First, his example hath an alluring power, or great force in moving; this is the example, not of an equal or inferior, but of a great person, one far above us. This great person is Jesus Christ our Lord, the great messenger of the God of heaven, who came to reclaim mankind from their vain courses, and to instruct them in the way of life.

[1.] His example is a *perfect and unerring pattern*; for his life is religion exemplified, a visible commentary on God's word. He came not only to restore us to God's favour by his merit, but to set us an example,

1 Corinthians 11:1, 'Be ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ.' Then you cannot err, if you follow Christ in his imitable actions.

[2.] *It is an engaging pattern.* Christ's submission to a duty should make it lovely to us. The disciple is not above his lord, nor the servant above his master: 'If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet,' John 13:14. Shall we decline to follow such a leader? 1 John 2:6, 'He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk even as he walked.' Alexander, conqueror of the world, achieved most of his great exploits by his example. When hardly beset, he would make the first in every danger and desperate action; when his army grew sluggish, as laden with spoils of their enemies, he commanded all his carriages to be fired; and when they saw their king devote his rich treasures to the flame, they could not murmur if their mite and pittance were consumed also. If Christ had only taught us contempt of the world, and not given us an instance of it, his doctrine would be less powerful.

[3.] *It is an effectual pattern.* The Spirit of Christ goeth along with it, as well as his doctrine: 2 Corinthians 3:18. 'We are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.' His steps drop fatness. He hath left a blessing behind in all the way that he hath trodden before us, and sanctified it to us, that we may follow after him with comfort.

[4.] *It is a very encouraging pattern*; for he sympathises with us in all our difficulties, having made his own heart tender by experience; Hebrews 2:18, 'In that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted' Hebrews 4:15, 'We have not an high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are'. He knows the weaknesses and reluctances of human nature in our hardest duties, and will pity and pardon our infirmities.

[5.] The example of Christ will be *armour of proof against all temptations*. The apostle saith here, v.5, 'Let the same mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus;' and in 1 Peter 4:1, 'Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind.' If this mind be in you, temptations will have little force upon you.

Secondly, What he teacheth us hereby

[1.] *Patience* under all the indignities we undergo for God's sake in the course of our pilgrimage: 1 Peter ii. 21, it is said, 'Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.' So Hebrews 12:2, 'Looking to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame.' Let us be contented to be abased for him. He descended from heaven to the grave, as low as he could, for us; therefore let us submit to any condition for his glory. Some that profess his name will suffer nothing for him. If they may enjoy him or his ways in peace and quietness, well and good; but if trouble arise for the gospel's sake, immediately they fall off. The most, yea, the best, have a secret loathness and unwillingness to condescend to a condition of trouble and distress for the gospel. Now to these I will but propound these three considerations—

(1.) If Christ had been unwilling to die for us and suffer for us, if the same mind had been in Christ, what had been our estate and condition to all eternity? Without his sufferings we should have suffered eternal misery. If you would not have Christ of another mind, let the same mind be in you.

(2.) We cannot lose for him as much as he hath done for us: 2 Corinthians 8:9, 'Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich.'

(3.) We are gainers by him if we part with all the world for his sake: Mark 10:29, 30, 'There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.' Oh! then, do not stand upon terms. The same mind or spirit answerable to Christ was that of David: 2 Samuel 6:22, 'I will be yet more vile than thus.' Christ became vile for us, made himself of no reputation; and shall we be flouted out of our religion? If he had disdained to endure grief and sorrows, and stood upon befitting terms, what had become of us?

[2.] *Humility*. We are far inferior to Christ, and shall we stand so much upon our reputation? Matthew 11:29, 'Learn of me, for I am meek, and lowly in heart.' Learn of me, not to make worlds or work miracles, but to be contented with the lowest place, the meanest service, to be anything and do anything to bring glory to God; and that not out of necessity, but choice: Matthew 20:28, 'Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister.' It is brought to check aspiring or affecting domination in the church.

They that love the pre-eminence, would be great and high, seem to dislike Christ's proceeding; especially those that rend and tear all to advance themselves or to grow greater in the world. See that magnificent preface to the history of Christ's washing his disciples' feet: John 13:3, 'Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God.' Poor worms that are but three degrees distant from dust and nothing, how do we stand upon our terms! Christ, when his own thoughts were most filled with his own glory, doth the meanest office. Surely, considering Christ's humility, we should no more over-value ourselves, nor desire high esteem with others, nor affect pre-eminence, nor under-value and despise others.

[3.] *More exact obedience*. Christ's condescension was a special act of grace and love, but it was also a signal act of obedience. It is so called in the 8th verse, 'He humbled himself, and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross.' It was done in pursuance of the Father's command; and elsewhere, Hebrews 5:8, 9, 'Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.' By the multiplicity of his sufferings he learned obedience; and the impression is according to the stamp and seal. Christ came to be the leader of an obeying people.

[4.] *Self-denial as well as obedience*. Preferring a public interest, the glory of God, and the good of souls, before his own glory as God, and the interests of that natural life that he assumed: Romans 15:3, 'Christ pleased not himself;' and John 12:27, 28, 'Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour; but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name.' That was enough, if God was

glorified. Every Christian should be thus affected: Philippians 1:20, 'That Christ may be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death.'

[5.] The last lesson is *contempt of the world and all the glory thereof*. Christ teaches us this lesson by making himself of no reputation two ways.

(1) *The example of his own choice*. The Lord of heaven and earth despised and neglected the glory and riches of this world. He passed through the world to sanctify it as a place of service; but chose not pomp of living, nor the happiness of it, lest we should choose it as our rest and portion: 'They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world,' John 17:16. Those that are dearest unto God must look by crosses and trials to be fitted for another world. If a man say never so much for contempt of the world, yet live in the love of it, his saying is nothing. But Christ would be a pattern of his own doctrine. Contempt of the world is a lesson of great consequence; salvation lieth upon it: 1 John 2:15–17, 'Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world: if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him; for all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world; and the world passeth away, and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.' Whether we are high or low, full or kept bare, it concerns us all to learn it. Though we flow in wealth, we should be as having nothing, and sit loose from the creature. If we are poor, we must count grace a preferment: James 1:9, 10, 'Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted; but the rich, in that he is made low, because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away.' There is required of all an hearty preparation for, when they are not called to a patient enduring of, afflictions for Christ's

name: Philippians 4:12, 'I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; everywhere and in all things I am instructed, both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.' This is of a hard digestion to a natural man. Now Christ's example is a great help to us to check our worldly desires; let us not affect greater eminency in the world than Christ had; and to check the vanity of fulness, or our carnal complacency, that it may not be a snare to us: 1 Timothy 5:6, 'The woman that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth.' Christ was a man of sorrows; do you profess Christ, and yet are you addicted to vain pleasures, and not able to deny them?

(2.) *As it is an argument to confirm us in the certainty of the happiness of the world to come.* It were best to choose the easiest life here if we did not believe eternity, to live a life of pomp and ease. The troubles and miseries of the godly have been counted a sure argument to confirm it: 1 Corinthians 15:19, 'If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.' God would not make us miserable by our duty. And 2 Thessalonians 1:5, 'It is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God.' If the consideration of godly men's sufferings in this world be of moment to such an inference, much more the sufferings of Christ, who was not only a man good and innocent beyond example, instructing the souls, curing the bodies of so many men, but also the Son of God. His exaltation is a pledge of our happiness, and his humiliation an argument he is gone there as our forerunner.

Application to the Sacrament. This duty binds us both to the mediatory and moral consideration of Christ's abasement.

1. *The mediatory consideration of Christ's abasement.* That we may grow in faith and

love, we remember the death and sufferings of the Lord Jesus for the increase of faith and love.

[1.] *Faith.* Here is the foundation laid of all our happiness, and deliverance from sin and misery. Here is a merit and a price full enough to purchase all needful graces. He became poor that we might be rich, and not have a slender measure of grace: John 1:16, 'Of his fulness we all receive, and grace for grace.' He was emptied that we might be filled: Ephesians 4:10, 'He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things'; and 1 Corinthians 3:22–23, 'All things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's'; John 10:10, 'I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly'; Titus 3:5–6, 'He saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour.' What may we not promise ourselves from God made man, made sin, made a curse for us? Surely a larger and plentiful measure of the gifts and graces of the Spirit.

[2.] *His great love* to lost sinners; for he made himself of no reputation for our sakes. Such was the inconceivable love of our Lord Jesus Christ to the souls of men, that he was willing to condescend to any condition for their good and salvation. Some will do a kindness, so as themselves may not be the worse, nor the poorer, nor disgraced, nor adventure the displeasure of others; but Christ hath filled us by emptying himself, taking our nature, and was subject to misery, out of love to the salvation of lost sinners. He did willingly 'ay aside his glory, which he had with the Father before the world was, to suffer in his human nature the utmost of misery and grief which the malice of men and devils could inflict, and which seemed good to the

Father to order and appoint for a satisfaction to provoked justice. So much more vile as Christ was, so much dearer should he be to us.

2. Let us improve *the moral consideration* of Christ's being a pattern and example to us. We feed upon Christ that we may be like him. Other food is assimilated and changed into our substance, but here we are changed into it. We who give up our names to Christ must expect to enjoy the fruits of his obedience in the same steps wherein he walked before us. If we can condemn the world, be content to be of no reputation that we may glorify God

and finally save our souls, then are we like Christ. We come to arm ourselves with the same mind which was in Jesus, to get above the hopes and fears, pains and pleasures, honours and profits, of the present world; nothing in this world should be great to us. These things are transitory, soon conveyed out of sight, the basest and vilest of men are capable of them, the most generous are above them. Therefore we should be weaning our hearts more and more from this world, and drawing them off to another world; for we profess ourselves to be followers of a poor Saviour.¶

God's part in your calling and election is sure enough, and needs none of your labour to make it sure; but to make it sure to yourselves, and to make the knowledge thereof sure and clear to you, diligence is needful, and diligence will do it. Search out the fruits and marks of election; and when you find any of them, then, and not before, climb up this high tree of the Father's giving you to Jesus Christ.

Robert Traill

It is a common saying of some sort of professors, that they can and do trust God for pardon, heaven, and eternal life, can trust him with their souls, but can't trust him for things of time respecting their bodies. This is a common mistake. For the true Christian, when faith is in act and exercise, can and doth trust in and depend upon his God for his daily bread, as much as for heaven and happiness.

Allowance should be made by each one for human infirmities; though we must not call our sins by the name of weakness and infirmities, and so wipe our mouths. Men differ in their stature, their apprehensions, their natural tempers, in their faces and their voices; and yet they are but men: so may those be good Christians that differ in little matters. Men may be going to the same place, that do not walk just the same path. Two men may finish their work well, that may not carry it on exactly the same way. You cannot single out a family, wherein all the children are of the same stature, favour or temper; yet they are brethren and sisters. It is pity that such should fall out by the way.

We trust to continue the sermon on Christ and Belial in the next issue. The translator has been overtaken with work, and has been unable to find the time to continue this labour before the deadline.

THE WORD IS POWERFUL

CARINE MACKENZIE

Our daily newspaper recently carried a full page with the following words written in large letters.

WORDS ARE POWERFUL CHOOSE THEM WELL

This was to draw attention to a series of articles by various journalists telling why they chose a writing career and why they thought words were important.

God chose to communicate with us in words. His words are powerful and well chosen. In the beginning God spoke the word and the world was created. (Genesis 1). God said 'Let there be light and there was light' (Genesis 1:3).

John tells us that 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God' (John 1:1), pointing us to the Son of God who came to earth as a man to be the Saviour of sinners.

God gave us his written word—first written on stone with his own finger (Exodus 31:18)—then papyrus scroll, or vellum or paper and now even digitally on a tablet or phone. The Bible that we have was written by many different men, chosen by God and prepared by him for this great task. Peter tells us in his second letter that the Bible is authoritative and sure. It is not a man's opinion 'but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost' (2 Peter 1:21). Our Bible is inspired by God. It is inerrant with no mistakes and is utterly reliable.

What really matters in your life? What is most important to you? Is it your family or your school or your church? The Westminster Shorter Catechism says that the most important thing in life is 'to glorify God and to enjoy him for ever'. The next question tells us where we can learn to do that. 'The word of God which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him.' We need the Bible to help us to fulfil our main purpose in life.

The Bible is like no other book. 'It is quick and powerful ... and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart' (Hebrews 4:12). When we read the Bible we find out about ourselves. It points out our sin and directs us to the Saviour of sinners the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible accomplishes God's purpose. 'It shall not return unto me void', he said. (Isaiah 55:11).

The Bible is not a text book where we go to get the right answer to a quiz question. It is not a recipe book which we refer to now and again. The Bible is food for our souls. 'Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart' (Jeremiah 15:16). Just as we need food regularly and often, we need to be feeding on the word often. Food is not doing us any good if it is sitting in the fridge. The Bible is not doing us any good if it is lying on the shelf.

Learning portions of God's word off by heart is a great advantage. If we have memorised Scripture or are familiar enough with it, the Holy Spirit can bring to our mind a suitable verse to answer a question or encourage a friend. Knowing the words of the Bible is a safeguard for ourselves too. 'Thy word have I hid in mine heart that I might not sin against thee' (Psalm 119:11).

The Bible is full of promises to God's people to meet every situation. When we are feeling lonely, we should turn to God's promise in Hebrews 13:5. 'I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.' If we feel anxious we can remember the Lord's promise that he cares for us (1 Peter 5:7). If we are burdened with our sin or any problem we can accept his invitation to come to him, 'and I will give you rest' (Matthew 11:28). If we are depressed and sad, the Bible suggests that we think about the Lord Jesus. 'Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be weary and faint in your minds' (Hebrews 12:3). If we find it hard to pray, we can find words to say in one of the Psalms which express our deepest emotions. God's word provides comfort in every time of need.

We should be committed to God's Word, because he is so committed to us. He is so committed to us that he sent his only Son to die for sinners. If God be for us, who can be against us? (Romans 8.31).

BIBLE SEARCH

Find the missing words from the verses which all deal with God's word. The initials of the correct answers will spell out a description of God's word.

1. Every word of God is _____: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him (Proverbs 30:5).
2. Ye have _____ from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you (Romans 6:17).
3. The grass _____, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever (Isaiah 40:8).
4. The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of _____, purified seven times (Psalm 12:6).
5. The statutes of the LORD are right, _____ the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes (Psalm 19:8).
6. Through faith we understand that the worlds were _____ by the word of God (Hebrews 11:3).
7. Let my cry come near before thee, O LORD: give me _____ according to thy word (Psalm 119:169).
8. Thy word is a _____ unto my feet, and a light unto my path (Psalm 119:105).

ABORTION

BY BRIAN GARRARD (Basingstoke)

I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well (Psalm 139:14)

THERE is no doubt that the psalm referred to above was penned by David despite what Spurgeon called the 'wild inferences' of the critics. The occasion of it was possibly when he was being reproached, spoken against and accused of being a hypocrite who only used religion as a covering for his ambitions and sin. Regarded by many of the ancient Jews as the most excellent of all the psalms, David rejoiced in God's omniscience (vv.1–6), omnipresence (vv.7–12) and His great love in creating man (vv.13–16). This led him to meditate upon the being of God (vv.17–18) and not to desire the company of wicked men (vv.19–22). Finally he had a holy confidence in Christ's righteousness that had been imputed to him (vv.22–24) and saw this as his only standing before a holy God.¹ Knowing that God had made him in the womb caused David to be aware that he was always cared for by God and in his presence.

A departure

In considering Abortion the truths above must be kept in mind and made the whole foundation of any thinking on the subject. Always begin, continue and end with God and not human reasoning. Abortion, suicide and euthanasia belong together in the sense that arguments for or against can apply to both and must be approached with a

¹ David Dickson, Matthew Henry, Matthew Poole, C.H. Spurgeon and John Brown (Haddington) 'The Psalms of David in Metre', etc.

clear reference to God and his holy Word.² In the 1960s under Harold Wilson's socialist government, capital punishment was abolished and homosexuality and abortion were legalised so that, little by little, successive administrations have been dismantling a biblical and Christian understanding of society. As to the matter in hand, what is abortion? It can be defined as the termination of the life of the foetus within the womb before it has independent life. Abortion can occur naturally through what is called 'spontaneous abortion' and it is estimated that 25% of all human pregnancies can end in this way. This usually happens in the first three months after conception. Or it can be 'induced' by such methods as suction or vacuum aspiration, scraping the uterine lining, forceps, saline infusions or surgery like Caesarean section.³ Abortion is nothing new for in ancient times the practice was often used as a method of

² See my short article entitled 'Suicide and Euthanasia' which was sent out with the Spring Mailing, 2010. This will be published in a forthcoming edition of The Gospel Magazine.

³ I have spared readers the precise descriptions of the procedures. Should anyone require details then these are no doubt available from text books on the subject. Suffice it to say that these methods ought not to be permitted in civilised and 'Christian' nations and the pain and distress caused to the unborn does not need to be described for readers can imagine this for themselves. How any so-called 'compassionate society' can permit such practices is a source of horrific amazement to me! The same can be said about experiments on embryos. The price is too high to pay for possible cures to diseases and conditions.

birth control.⁴ Why the reason for a departure from a traditional and biblical care and love for the life of a child in the womb? It is because 'man has reached the lowest grade of impiety' (Charles Ellicott)⁵, has 'no fear of God before his eyes' (Psalm 36:1), does not keep God's law (Psalm 119:136) and has forsaken God in favour of their own ways (Jeremiah 2:13). In this state man thinks himself to be the decider of life and death and acts as if God does not exist. Each act of defiance is an affront to his holy and perfect sovereignty.

The teaching of Scripture

Widespread abortion as permitted under law has to be condemned and considered as contrary to the Moral Law of God. Every Christian conscience ought to be grieved, constantly saddened by it and see it as a perpetual holocaust that blights the nations of the earth. What are some of the reasons for this?

1: God alone is the source of all life and in his sovereignty is the 'author of all being' (Milton). See Psalm 36:9, 'for with thee is the fountain of life'.

2: God is the one who creates life in the womb; see Psalm 139:13–15. The language makes it abundantly clear that God does the creating of life through the natural processes of conception and it is not the arbitrary act of nature or the human body. David wrote of God having 'possessed my reins' and 'covered me in my mother's womb'. Also of being 'fearfully and wonderfully made' and being 'made in secret' and 'curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth' (that is, in the womb). See too Job 10:8–9, Psalm 22:9–10, Isaiah 43:7, Jeremiah 1:5 and Acts 17:28.

⁴ This was also true in Greece and Rome and was it one of the important reasons why God judged these two nations? How long can people continue in sin before God unleashes his awful judgments?

⁵ Commentary on Psalm 36.

3: It is God who gives conception in the womb or denies it as he pleases. He may well use natural means to accomplish this but it is still his work. A number of Scriptures demonstrate this and some are as follows: Genesis 17:21 & 25, 29:31, Judges 13:2–7, Ruth 4:13 and 1 Samuel 1:19–20, 27 and 2:20–21. These all show God giving conception but others reveal the opposite; see Genesis 16:2, 29:31, 30:1–2 and 1 Samuel 1:5. It follows then that when God gives conception it is not for man to terminate the life that he has chosen to give but rather to do all in his power to preserve it.

4: The foetus has a true life and existence from the moment of conception despite what men and women might attempt to decree. There is ample evidence of this from God's Word and a few examples must suffice. See again Psalm 139:13–16 where the language used describes David as a living, breathing and true human life from the very moment he was conceived and a careful reading of the text cannot admit of any other interpretation. Luke 1:15 tells of John the Baptist being filled with the Holy Spirit while in his mother's womb but this could not be possible if he was not already a true human being. Verse 41 of the same chapter has John having a conscious and knowing existence in the womb when he leaped at the sound of Mary's voice. It is also worth remembering in this regard that at three weeks the heart has started beating and at four, brainwaves have been measured and there is some response to pain. At eight weeks the unborn child already has the clear shape of a human person, while by the time he reaches twelve weeks he is sucking his thumb. As the Puritan Thomas Brooks used to say, 'you are wise and know how to apply it' and as these facts are pondered, I trust the reader will weigh them and consider well the evil of abortion.

5: The foetus is also a 'living soul' (Genesis 2:7) and was originally made in the likeness of God (Genesis 1:26-27). Despite arguments about when the soul is imparted or, as atheists assert, no spirit life exists, Scripture teaches that every man born into the world is a spiritual being with a soul. The same applies to every unborn child and it must be remembered that within the womb of every pregnant woman a living soul resides which is created by God and intended to live eternally. What great responsibility this places on all potential parents and governments to ensure that every foetus is permitted to come to full term, be born and live life upon the earth.

6: The OT Law quite rightly believed that the foetus was a true human life and sought its protection as Exodus 21:22-25 reveals. If the unborn child died as the result of a woman being harmed then the perpetrator was to forfeit his own life. God, then, views the child in the womb as a full human being and not as insignificant and to be disposed of as men and women think fit.

7: Abortion is a contravention of the sixth Commandment which says, 'Thou shalt not kill' (Exodus 20:13). This is the unlawful removal of a person's life as well as hatred, brutality and sinful treatment of others-whether in the heart, mind or by deeds of the body. 'Thou shalt not kill' comes in the second table of the Law and all the Commandments found there are concerned with loving your neighbour as you love yourself. Is it love to the unborn to kill them before they have even had the opportunity to emerge from the womb? These little ones are defenceless, weak and unable to plead their own cause therefore it is necessary that another speak for them especially as the valuable gift of life is being taken away. Proverbs 31:8-9 are often quoted in this regard, 'Open thy mouth

for the dumb in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction. Open thy mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy'. Are not those tiny lives within a woman poor and needy whose only 'crime' was to be conceived and then face a brutal execution? The womb ought to be a place of protection, nurture, safety and security but in millions of cases it has become the opposite. Sadly it is only too easy to provide a rationale but in the cold, clinical and humanistic mindset of the present, the real issues are easily swept aside. Remember the attitude of the Hebrew midwives who defied Pharaoh and spared the male babies (Exodus 1:15-22). As a result God blessed the midwives but it is noteworthy that the reason why they refused to destroy these little ones is because they 'feared God'. True godliness seeks to save life unlike godlessness which appears to favour its destruction.

8: Only God has the right to determine the issues of life and death and there is a certain irony here. Modern men and women do not like 'to retain God in their knowledge' (Romans 1:28) (or acknowledge God, see the margin) but then set up another 'god' which is usually themselves. This contemporary divinity has little mercy in it but is very happy to target the weak, unprotected, poor and needy. I have not exhausted the biblical arguments for a 'pro-life' stance as ample material abounds but it is necessary to move on and discuss other matters.

Objections and justifications

Some attention must be given to the thinking of the supporters and promoters of abortion and I shall attempt to do this by addressing commonly held objections of abortionists and their justifications of the practice. As I do so I would ask readers to bear in mind that much more could be written but this article

endeavours to merely introduce the subject. Other and better treatments exist and anyone interested would do well to read them.

The general cost of bringing up children in the world is very great therefore smaller families are a good thing. Also, it is unjust and unfair to women to expect them to give birth to large numbers of babies. Children have always been expensive to care for and the present is no exception, but to advocate the destruction of the unborn is a price too high to pay in order to solve these alleged difficulties. Surely there is a better way to overcome economic problems than resorting to the removing of many lives? In addition, should abortion be used as a method of birth control?⁶

Abortion can significantly reduce health-care and support costs for families who could have children born with physical and mental problems and difficulties. No doubt it can and does but this does not make the practice right. A wrong action does not become a good one because the motive may be laudable or, to put it differently, the end does not justify the means. This leads on to another matter and that is the number of abortions that are offered to women because of some actual 'defect' in the unborn, or a perceived problem. This is a sensitive area and I understand the heart-ache that can be the result but two things at the very least can be said. The first is that God makes the unborn and in his providence they may not be in a perfect state. Exodus 4:11 says, 'Who bath made man's mouth? Or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? Have not I the Lord?' **Hard** though it may be to fathom

⁶ A discussion on the rights and wrongs of birth control and an expanding world population is beyond the scope of this article, but Christian women who may use any method to prevent a pregnancy ought to ensure that it does not destroy the life of the unborn child and thus be an abortion technique.

God's ways we see that everyone regardless of their physical and mental state has a purpose and worth and the idea that they can be discarded as damaged goods is unacceptable. The second thing I would say is that I have known of a number of parents who could have had abortions because of health defects, some of them serious, but refused. Now that their children are born and older they readily confess that they could not imagine life without them. Providing for such as these is not easy and no one in their right mind would suggest it was otherwise but a society that boasts of being truly loving and compassionate ought not to shirk the responsibility in caring for them.

Abortion can be necessary in order to save a woman's life. If this was illegal then many of them would die. This affects a tiny minority of women and I am informed 'is quite rare'.⁷ The same source would also argue that abortion for this purpose can be justifiable providing all other means have been employed to save the life of both mother and child.

It is necessary to use abortion as a method of birth control. This has already been touched on above and ought never to be used because it destroys the life of the unborn. The life of a child ought to be as sacred within the womb as it must be outside of it.

Under-age pregnancies require termination for the sake of the young mother's mental and physical health. The opposite is often the case where the experience of abortion can be found to actually cause mental, psychological and even physical harm. In a sense, and this is said guardedly, the young mother needs the child in order to help her through the difficult time of pregnancy, giving birth and all that comes afterwards. Is the resultant baby any less a life because the mother was 'under-age'?

⁷ The charity called 'Life'.

Pregnancies due to rape need to be aborted. I do not seek to minimise the trauma that can be the result of this terrible experience of violation but does it justify the extreme action of ending a life? History and the present do provide cases where the children of rape victims have grown up to lead very useful and productive lives. Had they been aborted then life and this world would have been the poorer.

Extra-marital affairs, unprotected and casual sex, pregnancies resulting from drunkenness, etc also require termination. There is an understandable panic, fear and worry that can result from these but do any of them justify abortion and all that can result from it?⁸ Women have already been violated once; if they undergo abortion then they face a second abuse of their bodies and the inevitable harm that can result.

Abortion is necessary when screening shows up abnormalities in the foetus. I appreciate the alarm and anxiety that can be the product of such possibilities but it must be remembered that these tests can be wrong at times and are not always reliable. At least one charity does exist which has as its aim the care of children with serious defects, therefore help and support are available. This also means that there is no reason to abort but give the child the real possibility of living, however long or short that time may be.

Abortion must continue to be legal otherwise it will encourage the growth of underground abortionists. The difficulty with this argument is the attempted justification of a moral evil. It is not right to permit evil that good may be the result (cf. Romans 6:1, 2) which is antinomianism and lawlessness. Any society that attempts such a thing has become spiritually bankrupt and immoral.

⁸ Research is emerging which reveals that the health of those who have had abortions can be adversely affected whether physically, mentally or psychologically.

A Pro-life stance denies a woman's right to choose. A great deal is said about this but is the woman really free to choose anyway or is she subject to family pressure and the prevailing notions in society that deem abortion acceptable and necessary? The truth is she is not truly free to choose either to abort or not to abort for society has removed this choice. An even more serious point of argument is to ask of the fate of the unborn. Do they have any rights especially when they cannot speak for themselves? Does anyone care for them and their continued existence? After all, a child lives inside the woman's body and is a human being. He or she is not a potential one but someone who is already breathing and functioning even though dependent upon the mother. Incidentally, much is written and spoken about child abuse but this must surely extend to within the womb as well as outside it?

The foetus is not a proper life yet and science has proved this, therefore it cannot be wrong to end its existence. Actually 'science' has not proved any such thing neither do scientists as a collective body argue for a foetus as not being a life. Although it may not be fully developed it is still human and in the light of this, is a child to be regarded as a 'non-person' because it is not yet fully grown? Of course not and the same logic must be applied to the little one in the womb. However the question is approached, the taking away of existence and life from the foetus is a terrible act.

Other arguments, objections and justifications exist and a great deal more is said and written on both sides of the divide. That it is a divide cannot be disputed and it is imperative that the life within a mother is guarded and protected. The world may regard a certain course of action as acceptable

but consensus and 'society's' opinions must never be any guide to matters like abortion, etc. What God demands and seeks as proper behaviour and treatment of the unborn is what matters above all else. Besides, none of his laws are grievous or burdensome but are for the good of all. God also holds men, women and nations accountable before him and he will not allow transgressors of his law to go unpunished. Temporal judgments are

numerous but even if men are spared them in this life they will not escape them in the next. Only a true revival of Christianity and a thorough reformation of the professing church can save the world from the dreadful scourge of abortion and other similar evils. May God the Holy Spirit grant this in a wicked day and perhaps spare the nations the inevitable judgments that must surely come if they do not repent.¶

TO THE LAMBS OF THE FLOCK

He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; He shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom. (Isaiah 40:11)

BY ROBERT MURRAY M'CHEYNE

BELOVED Children, Jesus is the Good Shepherd. His arm was stretched out on the cross, and his bosom was pierced with the spear. That arm is able to gather you, and that bosom is open to receive you. I pray for you every day that you may be saved by Christ. He said to me, 'Feed my lambs,' and I daily return the words to him, 'Lord, feed my lambs.' In the bowels of Jesus Christ, I long after you all. I believe Christ has gathered some of you. But are no more to be gathered? Are no more green brands to be plucked from the burning? Will no more of you hide beneath the white robe of Jesus? Oh, come! for 'yet there is room.' Lift up your hearts to God while I tell you something more of the Good Shepherd.

1. Jesus has a flock

'He shall feed his flock like a shepherd.' Every shepherd must have a flock, and so

has Christ. I once saw a flock in a valley near Jerusalem; and the shepherd went before them and called the sheep, and they knew his voice and followed him. I said, This is the way Jesus leads his sheep. Oh that I may be one of them!

(1.) *Christ's flock is a little flock.* Hear what Jesus says: 'Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.' Luke 12:32. Pray to be among the little flock. Look at the world—eight hundred millions of men, women, and children, of different countries, colour, and language, all journeying to the judgment-seat! Is this Christ's flock? Ah, no! Five hundred millions never heard the sweet name of Jesus, and of the rest the most see no beauty in the Rose of Sharon. Christ's is a little flock. Look at this town. What crowds press along the streets on a market-day! What a large flock is here! Is this the flock of Christ? No. It is to be feared that

most of these are not the brothers and sisters of Christ; they do not bear his likeness; they do not follow the Lamb now, and will not follow him in eternity. Look round the Sabbath schools. What a number of young faces are there! How many beaming eyes! How many precious souls! Is this the flock of Christ? No, no. The most of you have hard and stony hearts; the most of you love pleasure more than God; the most of you love sin, and lightly esteem Christ. 'What a pity it is that they do not a' come to Christ, for they would be sic happy!' said one of yourselves. I could weep when I think how many of you will live lives of sin, and die deaths of horror, and spend an eternity in hell. Beloved children, pray that you may be like the one lily among many thorns that you may be the few lambs in the midst of a world of wolves.

(2.) *Christ's sheep are marked sheep.* In almost every flock the sheep are all marked in order that the shepherd may know them.

The mark is often made with tar on the woolly back of the sheep. Sometimes it is the first letter of the owner's name. The use of the mark is, that they may not be lost when they wander among other sheep. So it is with the flock of Jesus. Every sheep of his has two marks. *One mark is made with the blood of Jesus.* Every sheep and lamb in Christ's flock was once guilty and defiled with sin, altogether become filthy. But every one of them has been drawn to the blood of Jesus and washed there. They are all like sheep 'come up from the washing.' They can all say, 'Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,' Revelation 1:5. Have you this mark? Look and see. You can never be in heaven unless you have it. Every one there has washed his robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Revelation 7:14. *Another mark is made by the Holy Spirit.* This is not a mark which you can see outside,

like the mark on the white wool of the sheep. It is deep, deep in the bosom, where the eye of man cannot look. It is A NEW HEART. 'A new heart also will I give you,' Ezekiel 36:26. This is the seal of the Holy Spirit, which he gives to all them that believe. With infinite power he puts forth his unseen hand, and silently changes the heart of all that are truly Christ's. Have you got the new heart? You never will go to heaven without it. 'If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.' Beloved children, pray for these two marks of the sheep of Jesus—forgiveness through blood and a new heart. Oh, be in earnest to get them, and to get them now. Soon the Chief Shepherd will come, and set the sheep on his right hand, and the goats on his left. Where will you be in that day!

(3.) *Christ's sheep all flock together.* Sheep love to go together.' A sheep never goes with a wolf or with a dog, but away with the flock. Especially when a storm is coming down, they keep near one another. When the sky turns dark with clouds, and the first drops of a thunder-shower are coming on, the shepherds say that you will see the sheep flocking down from the hills, and all meeting together in some sheltered valley. They love to keep together. So it is with the flock of Jesus. They do not love to go with the world, but always one with another. Christian loves Christian. They have the same peace, the same Spirit, the same Shepherd, the same fold on the hills of immortality. Especially in the dark and cloudy day, such as our day is likely to be, the sheep of Christ are driven together, to weep together. They love to pray together, to sing praise together, to hide in Christ together.

'Little children, love one another.' Make companions of those that fear God. Flee from all others. Who can take fire into their bosom, and not be burned? I remember of one little boy who was indeed a lamb of Christ's

fold. He could not bear a lie; and whenever he found any of his companions telling a falsehood, he left their company altogether. There was one boy with whom he was very intimate. This boy one day began to boast of something he had done, which boast our little Christian saw at once to be a lie. Upon this he told him that he must never again come to his house, and that he would have nothing more to do with him till he was a better boy. His mother asked him how he would soon know when he was a better boy. He said that he would see some marks which would show him that he was better. 'And what marks will you know it by?' 'I think,' said he, 'the biggest mark will be that he loves God.'

2. What Jesus does for his flock

(1.) *He died for them.* 'I am the Good Shepherd: the Good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.' This is the chief beauty in Christ. The wounds that marred his fair body make him altogether lovely in a needy sinner's eye. All that are now and ever shall be the sheep of Christ, were once condemned to die. The wrath of God abode upon them. They were ready to drop into the burning lake. Jesus had compassion upon them, left his Father's bosom, emptied himself, became a worm and no man, and died under the sins of many. 'While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.' This is the grace of the Lord Jesus. Every one in the flock can say, 'He loved me, and gave himself for me.'

(2.) *He seeks and finds them.* We would never seek Christ if he did not seek us first. We would never find Christ if he did not find us. 'The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.' I once asked a shepherd, 'How do you find sheep that are lost in the snow?' 'Oh,' he said, 'we go down into the deep ravines, where the sheep go in storms; there we find the sheep huddled together

beneath the snow.' 'And are they able to come out when you take away the snow?' 'Oh, no; if they had to take a single step to save their lives, they could not do it. So we just go in and carry them out.' Ah, this is the very way Jesus saves lost sheep. He finds us frozen and dead in the deep pit of sin. If we had to take a single step to save our souls, we could not do it; but he reaches down his arm and carries us out. This he does for every sheep he saves. Glory, glory, glory be to Jesus, the Shepherd of our souls. Oh, children, let Jesus gather you. Feel your helpless condition, and look up and say, Lord, help me.

(3.) *He feeds them.* 'By me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out and find pasture.' If Jesus has saved you, he will feed you. He will feed your body. 'I have been young, and now am old; yet never saw I the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.'

He will feed your soul. He that feeds the little flower in the cleft of the craggy precipice, where no hand of man can reach it, will feed your soul with silent drops of heavenly dew. I shall never forget the story of a little girl in Belfast, in Ireland. She was at a Sabbath school, and gained a Bible as a prize for her good conduct. It became to her a treasure indeed. She was fed out of it. Her parents were wicked. She often read to them, but they became worse and worse. This broke Eliza's heart. She took to her bed and never rose again. She desired to see her teacher. When he came he said, 'You are not without a companion, my dear child,' taking up her Bible. 'No,' she replied—

Precious Bible! what a treasure
Does the word of God afford!
All I want for life or pleasure,
Food and med'cine, shield and sword.
Let the world account me poor,
Having this, I ask no more.

She had scarcely repeated the lines when she hung back her head and died. Beloved children, this is the way Jesus feeds his flock. He is a tender, constant, almighty Shepherd. If you become his flock, he will feed you all the way to glory.

3. Jesus cares for lambs

‘He shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom.’ Every careful shepherd deals gently with the lambs of the flock. When the flocks are travelling, the lambs are not able to go far: they often grow weary and lie down. Now, a kind shepherd stoops down and puts his gentle arm beneath them, and lays them in his bosom. Such a shepherd is the Lord Jesus, and saved children are his lambs. He gathers them with his arm, and carries them in his bosom. Many a guilty lamb he has gathered and carried to his Father’s house. Some he has gathered out of this place whom you and I once knew well.

Before he came into the world, Jesus cared for lambs. Samuel was a very little child, no bigger than the least of you, when he was converted. He was girded with a linen ephod, and his mother made him a little coat, and brought it to him every year. One night as he slept in the Holy Place, near where the ark of God was kept, he heard a voice cry, ‘Samuel!’ He started up and ran to old Eli, whose eyes were dim, and said, ‘Here am I, for thou calledst me.’ And Eli said, ‘I called not, lie down again.’ He went and lay down, but a second time the voice cried, ‘Samuel!’ He rose and went to Eli, saying, ‘Here am I, for thou didst call me.’ And Eli said, ‘I called not, my son, lie down again.’ A third time the holy voice cried, ‘Samuel!’ And he arose and went to Eli with the same words. Then Eli perceived that the Lord had called the child; therefore Eli said, ‘Go, lie down; and it shall be if he call thee, thou shalt say, Speak, Lord, for thy

servant heareth!’ So he went and lay down. A fourth time (how often Christ will call on little children!) the voice cried, ‘Samuel! Samuel!’ Then Samuel answered, ‘Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth!’ Thus did Jesus gather this lamb with his arm and carried him in his bosom. For ‘Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him; And the Lord revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh,’ 1 Samuel 3.

Little children, of whom I travail in birth till Christ be formed in you, pray that the same Lord would reveal himself to you. Some people say, you are too young to be converted and saved. But Samuel was not too young. Christ can open the eyes of a child as easily as of an old man. Yea, youth is the best time to be saved in. You are not too young to die, not too young to be judged, and therefore not too young to be brought to Christ. Do not be contented to hear about Christ from your teachers; pray that He would reveal himself to you. God grant there may be many little Samuels amongst you.

Jesus cares for lambs still. The late Duke of Hamilton had two sons. The eldest fell into consumption, when a boy, which ended in his death. Two ministers went to see him at the family seat, near Glasgow, where he lay. After prayer, the youth took his Bible from under his pillow, and turned up to 2 Timothy 4:7, ‘I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness’ and added, ‘This, sirs, is all my comfort!’ When his death approached, he called his younger brother to his bed, and spoke to him with great affection. He ended with these remarkable words: ‘And now, Douglas, in a little time you will be a duke, but I shall be a king.’

Let me tell you a word of another gentle lamb, whom Jesus gathered, and whom I saw on her way from grace to glory. She was early

brought to Christ, and early taken to be with him where he is. She told her companions that she generally fell asleep on these words; ‘His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me;’ and sometimes on these, ‘Underneath are the everlasting arms.’ She said she did not know how it was, but somehow she felt that Christ was always near her. Another time she said, ‘I think it’s the best way to make myself as loathsome as I can before him, and then to look to Jesus.’ When seized with her last illness, and told that the doctors thought she would not live long, she looked quite composed, and said, ‘I am very happy at that.’ She said she could not love Jesus enough here; that she would like to be with him, and then she would love him as she ought. To her tender, tender, watchful relative she said, ‘I wonder at your often looking so grave. I’m surprised at it, for I think I am the happiest person in the house. I have every temporal comfort, and then I am going to Jesus.’ After a companion had been with her, she said, ‘Margaret quite entered into my happiness; she did not look grave,

but smiled; that showed how much she loves me.’ When sitting one evening, her head resting on a pillow, she was asked, ‘Is there anything the matter, my darling?’ ‘Oh,’ she said, ‘I am only weak. I am quite happy. Jesus has said, “Thou art mine.”’ Another day, when near her last, one said to her, ‘Have you been praying much today?’ ‘Yes,’ she replied, ‘and I have been trying to praise too.’ ‘And what have you been praising for?’ ‘I praise God,’ she said, ‘for all the comforts I have. I praise him for many kind friends, you know he is the foundation of all; and I praise him for taking a sinner to glory.’

These are a few of the many golden sayings of this lamb of Christ, now, I trust, safe in the fold above. Would you wish to be gathered thus? Go now to some lonely place—kneel down, and call upon the Lord Jesus. Do not leave your knees until you find him. Pray to be gathered with his arm, and carried in his bosom. Take hold of the hem of his garment, and say, ‘I must not. I dare not. I will not let thee go except thou bless me.’

PATTERNS FOR ORGANISATION AND WORSHIP OF THE CHURCH WHICH CALVIN SOUGHT TO DEVELOP IN GENEVA

BY WILLIAM T. FOLEY (London)

THIS year 2017 we are celebrating 500 years since the Protestant Reformation. There have been key players in this Reformation. Zurich had Huldrych Zwingli (1484–1531),

Wittenberg was the City of Martin Luther (1483–1546) but Geneva became the City of John Calvin (1509–1564) who was a second-generation Reformer. He is without doubt

one of the greatest theologians the Christian Church has seen since Augustine (354–430) of Hippo.

This study will not focus on Calvin's early life and education or conversion, though it should be recognised that he was brought up initially in the Roman Catholic Church; nor will it examine his life in Basel, where he published his *Institutes of Christian Religion*, undoubtedly the 'greatest exposition of evangelical truth produced by the Reformation' (Kuiper, *The Church in History*, p.252), or his life in Strasbourg.

We first encounter John Calvin entering the gates of Geneva 'toward evening on a warm day in August, 1536 (Ibid, p.252). Apparently his reason for the visit was to simply stay overnight on his way to Strasbourg to join Martin Bucer (1491–1551) in southwestern Germany where he wished to pursue the life of a scholar in a quiet and secluded environment. But God had different plans and was about to call him to the ministry in Geneva, a city which is located on the western tip of beautiful Lake Geneva in the French speaking part of Switzerland.

We should remember at the outset that when Calvin commenced his monumental work in this city that almost all the people of northern Europe were either Catholic or Lutherans.

On his arrival in Geneva his notoriety had preceded him, because of his *Institutes*, and therefore, he had a visit from William (Guillaume) Farel (1530–1565) who revealed his plans to him, but Calvin would have nothing to do with it and would not yield to Farel's entreaties. Calvin pleaded that he was too young; he believed that his inexperience in practical affairs and his need for further study and his general unfitness disqualified him for the work. With piercing eyes Farel got up from his chair and made a convincing

statement. According to Calvin, 'he proceeded to utter the imprecation that God would curse my retirement and the tranquillity of the studies which I sought, if I should withdraw and refuse to help, when the necessity was so urgent (See Calvin's *Commentary on the Psalms*, quoted in Reardon, 1981, *Religious Thought in the Reformation*, p.159). By an act of providence and Farel's voice of thunder, Calvin began his ministry in Geneva as an assistant at the age of twenty-seven years of age.

Calvin's theology and programme of organisation in Geneva appears to have been influenced by Martin Bucer's theological outlook, especially in the areas of predestination, the sacraments, the church or ecclesiastical discipline. Reardon (Ibid, p.156) writes that 'there is so patent a resemblance between the teachings of the two men that the question at once presents itself: did Calvin derive of his basic tenets, more or less in the form in which he characteristically expounds them, straight from Martin Bucer?' Calvin sought to promote and develop in Geneva a true Christian commonwealth which Martin Bucer failed to do in Strasbourg. Also we need to acknowledge and give credit to Farel who laid the foundation for change in Geneva and paved the way for Calvin to effect influence in the moral and social dimensions. Moreover, Calvin and Farel were involved together in the first reform programme, which lasted from August 1536, to 23 April, 1538, when both were banished. Of course, we need to recognise what was happening in Geneva whilst Calvin was banished. Geneva fell into chaos. According to McGrath (*Reformation Thought*, 1988, p.151) 'all the ecclesiastical changes of the 1530s had been destructive, eventually leading to something like chaos. A comprehensive set of ecclesiastical ordinances were required, and

Calvin was recalled to Geneva to help with the task. The magistrates were prepared to let Calvin have his way within reason in his organisation of the Genevan church, provided that the civil authority was not affected.' Reardon (Ibid) omits to mention that to stem the flow of disorder Sadoletto (1477–1547), the Bishop of Carpentras, who was faithful to Rome, wrote a letter. In this letter, according to Chaunu (*The Reformation*, 1989, p.127), he attempted 'to bring the Genevans back to the bosom of the Church under papal authority, "the so-called true Church," the one which had the universal consensus of all teachers and all ages in its favour.'

Calvin's reply to Sadoletto represents a brilliant *summa* of ecclesiology in which he expounded what was the true Church; the Word alone constituted the Church. (For Calvin's reply see Calvin: *Theological Treatises*, Vol. 22, pp.221–256, SCM 1954, translated by the Rev. J.K.S. Reid, MA, BD). This letter to Sadoletto had its effect on the Genevans; they did not yield to the Roman Church but invited Calvin to return in September 1541. Calvin remained in Geneva until his death in May, 1564.

We need to remember too that Calvin drafted extraordinary ecclesiastical ordinances after his return from Strasbourg in September and October 1541. He identified four orders of office in the government of the Church: first, pastors; then doctors or teachers; next elders; and fourth, deacons. According to Calvin (Ibid, p.58), 'if we will have a Church well-ordered and maintained we ought to observe this form of government.' Calvin proceeds to expound the characteristics of these offices. He especially lays down specific instructions about infant baptism; he details who should celebrate and who should preside over the Table of the Lord, and how the Supper should be

administered. He prescribes matters on marriage, burial, visitation of the sick, visitation of prisoners; the order to be observed in the case of children in the Church; the order to be observed in the case of those in authority; the maintenance of supervision in the Church with the form of oath to be said by ministers. This may be studied in depth in his work (Ibid, pp. 58–72).

In Calvin's draft order of Visitation of the Country Church, January 11, 1546, he set forth the need to monitor the ministers and parishes dependent on Geneva to establish if they were faithful to the purity of the Gospel (Ibid, pp.74–75).

In February 1557, he set forth ordinances for the Lordships to consider in respect to: sermons, catechism, penalties, and by whom fines are to be enacted, of Baptism, of the Supper; of times of meeting at Church. He lists: faults contravening the Reformation; namely, superstitions, blasphemies, contradictions of the Word, drunkenness, songs and dances, usury, brawling, complaints, games, fornication, etc, (Ibid, pp.76–82). This list of Calvin's measures illustrate the extent, in Geneva, of his effort to make it a Christian Commonwealth.

Nevertheless, as part of Calvin's initial ministry in Geneva, Kuiper (Ibid, p.256) writes, that he 'laid before the city council three proposals':

- (1) *the Lord's Supper* should be administered monthly, and every person not leading a good Christian life should be disciplined—if necessary, to the point of excommunication;
- (2) *a Catechism* which had been composed by Calvin should be adopted;
- (3) every citizen should subscribe to a recommended *creed*, which had probably been drawn up by Farel.'

Reardon (Ibid, p.168) provides a better insight by writing about four matters, 'Calvin prepared a draft list of the reforms he wished introduced. It was presented to the city's Small Council of twenty-five members, and provides, what virtually was, the basis of Calvin's entire programme of ecclesiastical renovation at Geneva. It is concerned with ... only: the Lord's Supper ... singing in public worship, the religious instruction of children, and the regulation of marriage.'

In Calvin's *Theological Treatises* (Ibid, pp.47-55) we discover Articles concerning the Organisation of the Church and of Worship at Geneva proposed by the Ministers at the Council on January 16, 1537. This provides an insight into Calvin's mind on the matter of ecclesiastical government. Essential to Calvin's ecclesiology was the concept of a well-ordered and regulated church; the elements of which included the aspects we have already mentioned.

Firstly, a church should celebrate the Holy Supper of the Lord. Calvin wished to see this celebrated every Sunday; this was achieved 'once a month in one of three places where ... preaching takes place, viz., St. Pierre, Riue or St. Gervais, in such a way that once a month it take place at St Pierre, once at Riue, and once at St. Gervais, and then return in this order, having gone the round' (Ibid, p.50). He appeals to Acts 2 to support his case. Stress is placed on the need to always celebrate the Lord's Supper in a reverent manner and that there is proper supervision in the church to avoid abuse. Emphasis too is placed on the discipline of excommunication to ensure compliance and obedience to the Word of God (Ibid, p.66). Kuiper (Ibid, p.256) believes that Calvin's introduction of the Lord's Supper was designed to make Geneva a 'model community', a 'city of God,' and to secure the freedom of the Church

from the State. It is significant that 'it was on the subject of the Eastern Communion that conflict broke out in 1538' and resulted in Calvin's and Farel's expulsion (Chaunu, Ibid, p.127). Later, in this paper, we shall discuss the Lord's Supper as understood by Calvin.

Secondly, Calvin considered it a 'thing very expedient for the edification of the Church' to sing psalms to rouse the heart and give praise and thanks to God (Ibid, pp.53-54). This was encouraged in all services, but sometimes they were read instead.

Thirdly, Calvin believed it was necessary in order to maintain 'purity of doctrine' that children should be instructed in the Christian faith and he composed a catechism for the express purpose. He had a firm rationale for this in so far that he desired that children would be able to give a 'reason for their faith' so that evangelical doctrine was not left to fade into obscurity and that the truth was handed from father to son and passed from generation to generation. Calvin expounds with clarity and simplicity the contents of the Christian faith. The French version divides the work into 55 Sundays. It commences with: 'What is the chief end of human life?' (Ibid, p.91) and concludes with the question: 'Is it of importance, then, to have a certain order of government established in the Churches?' (Ibid, p.139). To which the children should respond 'It is: for otherwise they are neither well managed or properly constituted. And this is the method, that elders be chosen to preside as censors of morals, to guard against reprehensible offenses, and to bar from communion those they do not believe to be capable of receiving the Supper or to be able to be admitted without profaning the sacrament' (Ibid, pp.88-139). Calvin wrote this Catechism out of concern for the public good. He wrote, 'I think it belongs to good example to testify to the

world that we, who undertake the restitution of the Church, faithfully exert ourselves everywhere for the rightful return of the use of the Catechism, abolished some years ago under the papacy. For this holy custom cannot be sufficiently commended for its usefulness' (Ibid, p.90). Calvin had in mind the edification of Christ's Church.

Fourthly, Calvin mentions the matter of marriage and in the process he was careful not to mention the pope, or perhaps he considered the name abhorrent, so he substitutes an exclamation mark to reveal his feelings. (See p.357 of Calvin: *Commentaries*; also, Calvin: *Theological Treatises*, p.67.)

The Roman Church viewed marriage as one of their seven sacraments whereas Calvin believed that Scripture only teaches two: Baptism and the Lord's Supper. The Roman Church press the text, in Ephesians 5:32 which means, 'mystery', to derive the word 'sacrament' as rendered in the Vulgate. Calvin cogently argues the point on philological grounds. He argues too that there is considerable confusion in the Roman Church from a misunderstanding of Ephesians 5:28 and other passages. Ultimately Calvin sees their perspective of marriage as having oppressive consequences for the Church (See *Institutes*, IV. XIX. 34-37).

TO BE CONCLUDED

FORMER DAYS

BEING A SUMMARY OF PAST ISSUES FROM THE GOSPEL MAGAZINE

250 years ago: January & February 1768

The issue was graced with a frontispiece, being an engraving of William Tyndale (spelt Tindal). The first article was part of a series on 'Christian divinity', and treated the subject of Justification. It is a lengthy and full statement of the doctrine, and includes the following paragraph:

Arminianism, many years after the reformation, was chiefly introduced, and promoted by a dignified clergyman in the South part of this Island, who was reputed to favour popery; and true religion has greatly declined since the doctrines of free grace and salvation by JESUS CHRIST have been so little insisted upon from the press and the pulpit.

This is followed by a shorter statement of the doctrine of Adoption. Those who are justified are children of God by grace. Adoption is not considered as outward, as in the case of the covenant with Israel, but inward and spiritual.

The life of William Tyndale is recounted, and the readers then comes to 'A dialogue between Christian and Truth for illustrating in a spiritual manner Scripture parables.' The parable under consideration is 'The parable of the Kingdom of Heaven being compared to leaven' from Matthew 13:33-35.

Casuistical Divinity, or Religious questions, are treated next. The question under consideration is, 'How may we keep from spiritual pride, after special enlargements and spiritual comforts in duty?' The reader

is encouraged to detect and pursue the workings of pride in its various appearances; to observe how irrational, abominable and detrimental spiritual pride is; to fight against it by the Word of God and prayer; to endeavour to turn this experience into another channel; and to take advantage of the workings of pride to stir up spiritual graces.

The issue ends with meditations, and with poetry.

The February issue continues the 'Christian Divinity' series, with a lengthy piece on sanctification. It ends with an examination of the benefits of believers in this life, which are given as Assurance of God's love, Peace of conscience, Growth in grace and Perseverance in grace.

Next comes an engraving of William Whittaker, and this leads into a biography of the Elizabethan theologian.

The Dialogue between a Christian and Truth deals with the woman bound with a spirit of infirmity, Luke 13:11–13. The infirmity is taken for the spiritual diseases of the soul, and the woman for a figure of the Church, redeemed by Jesus Christ. The essence of the piece is to teach the necessity of faith in Christ.

The Casuistical question asks, 'Is going to plays and other theatrical performances consistent with the possession and practice of Christianity?' A lengthy answer follows, showing the dangers to which an attender exposes himself, and the deadening effect such entertainments have on the heart and soul.

A second question is considered. 'What means should the children of God use, that they may get the graces of the Spirit quickened in their souls?' The answer is given.

ANSWER. *First*, They should meditate much upon the amazing love of Father,

Son, and Spirit to guilty sinners of mankind.'

Secondly, They should meditate much upon the unparalleled wonders that redeeming love hath wrought for the children of men.

Thirdly, They should meditate much upon the happiness of saints in glory, and upon their employment. These rest not day nor night from adoring; admiring, and praising God, who sitteth upon the throne and the Lamb.

Fourthly, They should frequently chide their souls for their inactivity in the service of God; and call upon all that is within them, to be stirred up to promote the glory of their divine Saviour, who was mindful of their interests upon an ignominious cross on mount Calvary, and is mindful of it upon a glorious throne on mount Zion above.

Fifthly, They should daily plead for the quickening influences of the Holy Spirit upon their souls, as the fruit of the atonement and intercession of the dear Redeemer.

The issue concludes with meditations and poetry.

200 years ago: January & February 1818

The style of the *Magazine* had changed a little by now. The opening piece is 'On the indwelling of the Holy Spirit etc', being an exposition of John 4:13–14, the water Christ gives. It runs for 13 of the 36 pages in the issue.

A heartfelt letter on the subject of our being new creatures follows. It arises from a controversy of the extent to which we are made new in Christ—are we changed, or are we not? The correspondent pleads that we must be, since the natural man cannot receive the things of the Spirit. Christ's work is a finished work.

A second letter follows, and with it a meditation on Jeremiah 6:16, 'Ask for the old paths.' It is a plea to avoid speculative theology, and preaching on the creeds of men. The writer urges instead a return to the plain meaning of Scripture. It will be interesting to see what response, if any, is made to this in a further issue.

The next letter deals with 'The light of God's countenance', and meditates on the different experiences believers have at different times of the face of God toward them, sometimes frowning and sometimes smiling, but always gracious.

Another letter looks at 'The reign of grace in the heart', while another is 'A reproof.' It concerns the spirit in which a letter was deemed to have been written in an earlier issue, in which the correspondent had quoted selectively from a private manuscript, somehow obtained. The writer of this letter takes the other correspondent to task for failing to act in a Christian manner. It is a lesson that needs to be repeated in every age.

Another letter, which continues a longer correspondence from the previous year, responds to an assertion made that the true gospel 'forbids all invitations to sinners, and discourages even the declaration to them of what Christ has done and suffered for sin.' The writer seeks to vindicate the preaching of the gospel as the only hope of sinners.

There are a number of other letters, some asking and some answering a variety of questions. The whole issue concludes with poetry, among which are some suited for Christmas and the close of the year.

The February issue opens with a piece on 'The gospel in its application.' The writer shows how the coming of Christ brought an end to types and shadows, and instead reveals to us the Father and his truth.

Some remarks on part of the Epistle to Hebrews follows, and then an article on the figurative passages of Scripture.

'Christ the Alpha and Omega, the delight of his saints' is treated next, following by correspondence.

The first, short, letter decries the interpretation of Isaiah 9:6 as being fulfilled in the life of King Ahaz. It is worth pointing out that, while there is no doubt that it was a sign to him that a child should be born, during whose early years all the things promised should be fulfilled, it is also true that there is a higher and deeper meaning here, as shown by the New Testament use of this prophecy.

The next letter leads into a piece on the work of the Holy Spirit in applying the finished salvation of Christ.

Aspects of the doctrine of the Trinity are dealt with next, and this is followed by a letter answering a previous correspondent on the question of whether Christ's human spirit was created independently of and before Adam's. The writer argues that it was, without ever making clear why he believes his position to be scriptural.

The subject of sanctification is followed up, with thoughts on progressive and bodily sanctification. It includes a strong rebuttal of the suggestion that such teaching leads to a belief in the extermination of sin, or in the Arminian view of sinless perfection—if the doctrine is rightly understood. Quotations from and references to the writings of Dr Gill are scattered throughout.

A very short letter asks the question, 'Can it be proven from the scriptures that Christ believed for his people? if it can, In what sense did he believe for them?' We shall trust to see in a future issue what answer, if any, was made to this.

Short pieces and poems complete the issue. An acrostic is included here on p.30.

100 years ago: January & February 1918

'Fear and Faith' from Psalm 41:3 is the first item in the issue. Although the First World War is mentioned, it is by no means the focus of the piece, which instead highlights personal, family and spiritual fears. The state of the Church is a matter of particular concern, which remains true for us today. Comfort is offered in the sovereignty of God, in his power, wisdom and unchanging faithfulness.

The hand of God as being for good upon all that seek him, Ezra 8:22, follows. Another comforting piece follows, likening Christ to the tree cast into the bitter waters to make them fresh. This is applied to the imputation of Christ's righteousness to his precious people.

A sermon on Christ's going forth into the garden of Gethsemane, immediately after the great prayer of John 17, from the Rev James Ormiston, comes next. The trials of the believer are considered, from the text, 'Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesek' (Psalm 120:5).

A new year sermon on 'Him which is, and which was, and which is to come', follows, in which the believer's rejoicing in Christ himself is examined.

'The inspiration of the Scriptures' forms a new topic, which will be continued in subsequent issues.

The eternal Sonship of the Lord Jesus Christ is shown to be the true scriptural position, as well as the position of the Church Fathers, the Reformers, the Confessions of Faith, and the Puritan and later expositors.

Attention is drawn to the surrender of Jerusalem, and to the Balfour Declaration.

The condition of the world in war leads to some thoughts on looking up, from Luke 21:28, and this solemn matter appears later in correspondence. Toplady's anti-legalism, which was portrayed by some as antinomianism, is one of the subjects covered briefly.

The final piece speaks of the condition of

elderly believers, and of the Aged Pilgrims' Friend Society and its work, still ongoing.

The February issue begins with a sermon on the poor of this world, from James 2:5, showing that the state of poverty is no exclusion from grace, while riches cannot buy it. 'A question to doubting ones' is asked next, from the text, 'Is anything too hard for the Lord?' (Genesis 18:14).

The words of Christ from the cross to his mother and to John are used to illustrate his all-encompassing compassion. If, in the midst of suffering and death, he took such care of these two, shall he not finally and fully care for all his own?

A sermon on the Passover Lamb is followed by some reflections on our citizenship of heaven. The fulfilment of Jacob's blessing of his sons in the history of the tribes of Israel focuses particularly on Reuben. The next instalment on the inspiration of Scripture follows, looking at Christ's own testimony to the written Word of God.

The surrender of Jerusalem is the topic of another piece, in which the author states his view on the imminence of the rapture. The present writer would differ.

A testimonial to Mr Samuel Arnold, publisher of both *The Gospel Magazine*, and the *English Churchman*, as well as other Protestant literature, speaks of the high esteem in which he was held.

Correspondence includes a serious letter from the Rev W Sykes, drawing the attention of readers to proposed changes to the Church of England that would rob her of her Protestant character, and disestablish her, with disastrous consequences for the Christian faith in this land.

These issues may all be found on the web site, gospelmagazine.org.uk.

STUDIES IN II PETER

BY EDWARD MALCOLM (Reading)

2 Peter 3:5

Knowing this first points to the mindfulness of v. 2, and of the stirring up of their pure minds, v. 1. That this matter is considered 'first' is to be taken either as saying it is the primary matter, or the most important, which come to the same thing. Either way, Peter's main purpose in writing these epistles is to warn of scoffers who will come in the last days. In 1:20 he spoke of another matter which needs to be known first, that the Scripture is not of private interpretation—that is, that men did not speak as they saw fit, but were moved by the Spirit of God. Once we grasp this concerning the Bible we will be delivered from a large body of error with regard to its origin and authority. Here, if we grasp this vital truth, that scoffers will come in the last days, we will learn to be discerning when people claim to come with words of wisdom from above.

So, what does it mean to be a scoffer? Literally, a mocker, one who refuses to believe what they are told, and who therefore will not act as they are exhorted to act. Jude 18 makes the same point. The way in which their scoffing manifests itself is simple; they judge that, since the world seems to have continued unchanged from the beginning, there is no reason to suppose that it will not carry on for ever. The fathers to whom they refer may be the first generations, Adam, Seth and Enoch, who all lived before the Flood. The fathers may be the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The world has not really changed since their day, at least if judged from the point of the first century AD. Either way,

these scoffers make a serious mistake, because they suppose that the world is in much the same state it was in immediately after the creation. This means that, for the scoffers, the warnings of final judgement are a joke, because how can anyone believe that God will bring about an end to his creation, when that creation shows itself to be so permanent and unaltering? The sin of the scoffers, then, is, to quote Calvin, 'to seek to appear witty by shewing contempt to God, and by a blasphemous presumption.'

2 Peter 3:6

The folly of such scoffers is readily exposed. Scripture declares, and the world bears the scars of, the Flood which destroyed the world in the days of Noah. God commanded the Flood, and it came; God has commanded judgment, and it shall come. The fact of the former proves the reality of the latter promise.

The key doctrine being taught here is that the word of God is with power—what he says comes to pass. This is most evident in the creation account, where the instrumental cause of creation was the word spoken, even if the first cause was the will of God, which worked itself out in the spoken command. The words of Isaiah 55:8–11 are relevant here. We can add that the words of those who serve the Lord also carry a certain authority; compare the cries of the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, 1 Kings 18, with those of Elijah. God will graciously grant the prayers of his servants who pray according to his will, but those who have no desire for God's glory cry in

vain. God, who only ever seeks his own glory, which is his by divine right, cannot be defeated in the thing he commands. Therefore we are to take heed of all that God says, for we are to live thereby, Deuteronomy 8:3.

For Peter's argument to stand, the Flood in Noah's day had to be universal. He says that the whole world perished when it was overflown by water, and is about to draw a contrast with the Flood then, and the fire which is to come, which will destroy the world as it now is. If Noah's Flood had been small and local then the fact of universal judgment to come would hardly stand.

2 Peter 3:7-9

The heavens and earth which are now means the creation as it is after the Flood. When Genesis 1:1 says that in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth, it does not refer to that heaven where he dwells, but to the creation as we can see it. So here, the heavens and earth refers to the created order, in its post-diluvial condition.

By the same word, which is the word of God, meaning that authoritative declaration which cannot fail.

Kept in store, which can have either of two meanings; it can refer to the act of putting a treasure into a safe place; it can also refer to the act of reserving something for a particular use. The latter definition fits better here, for Peter is saying that the world does continue as we see it, but only because God has something in mind for the world, and that something is judgment. This is borne out by the next word, 'reserved', which means that it is kept under lock and key, so to speak, so that nothing may happen to it before the appointed time.

This helps us to understand the depth of the scoffers' sin. They, not understanding that God allows no serious harm to come

to his creation because he has set the day of judgement, presume that God allows nothing to happen to his creation because it will continue like this for ever. They presume on the will of God, and misread his intention, even when that intention has been declared in Scripture. These scoffers do not consider that God's view of time is very different from ours. We consider the passing of the two thousand years since the coming of Christ to be a long time, and wonder for how much longer the world can continue. Yet God allowed some four, six, or even eight thousand years (depending on one's method of counting the genealogies of the Old Testament) between the first promise of a Saviour in Genesis 3:15 and the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Why did he take so long? Because he willed it so. He had a purpose, and, whatever else may have been accomplished by the passing of time, Israel had opportunity to become God's people, to learn the privileges of being God's people, of rebelling against the Lord, and of being recovered to desire what God had promised. Had there been less time, would there have been some who looked for redemption at Jerusalem when Jesus was born? God's timing is perfect, and it is we, who are bound by the shortness of life, by lack of faith, by impatience and by presumption, who think that God ought to work to our timetable. This is why Peter says that the Lord is not slack concerning his promises, but is longsuffering. It is patience, not carelessness, which causes him to give long periods of time.

Not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. These words can be a minefield for expositors. Some find an easy solution by pointing out that the 'any' and the 'all' here are those to whom Peter is writing, and so say that, although not all of Peter's readers may be true

Christians (note the warning of 2:20ff), all have the opportunity to repent because they are receiving these apostolic epistles. Thus the Lord cannot be said to be willing their loss since he is providing the light of the gospel to them.

Such an interpretation does not avoid the central issue; does God will the death of any? The Thirty-nine Articles are clear on this point. Article XVII speaks of God delivering 'from curse and damnation those whom he hath chosen in Christ out of mankind.' Therefore, on any reasonable reading of the Article, those who come to faith in Christ do so as cursed sinners, in every other respect no different from the mass of cursed sinners. How did they come into this state? God condemned all of Adam's descendents and accounted them to be guilty of Adam's sin, when Adam disobeyed God and ate the forbidden fruit. This may not be argued against, since God possesses sovereign rights of his creation because he is the creator. He may do with his creation as he pleases.

But this speaks to us of what is known as the secret decree, the act of the divine will by which the rest of salvation history is caused; because God decreed the curse of all mankind, he also decreed the salvation of some, and in order to effect this salvation he decreed the coming of Messiah to take away the sins of the world. The open decree is this, 'Repent and believe the Gospel', 'Come unto

me all ye who labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest', 'He that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out', 'whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely', and so on. No obstacle is laid in the way of sinners to come to Christ but one, to which Peter makes reference here. It is, in a word, repentance. 'All should come to repentance'. Not, 'All should come into heaven', for there can be no coming to heaven but first a coming to Christ. And there can be no coming to Christ which does not include with it a coming to repentance. Therefore if any will not repent, then the revealed decree of salvation in Jesus Christ goes unheeded. If it be argued that some are prevented from repenting because God has not willed their salvation, remember that he possesses sovereign rights as creator. And if any think that by this teaching there are some in the world who truly desire to repent but cannot because God will not allow them, note that, since all are dead in trespasses and sins by nature, none come to repentance unless first the grace of God softens them and makes them humble. Thus human nature, in its pride and belief in free will, is left unhurt, since no man considers himself to have been saved against his will, and none will consider themselves damned against their wills.

And take especial note of the order here; the way to avoid destruction is to repent. There is no salvation without repentance.

TO BE CONTINUED

Cain thought to be accepted for the sake of his sacrifice; and when he found his mistake, he was so weary of seeking happiness by doing, that he would court misery by murdering.

Stephen Charnock

POETRY

FAITH'S VIEW OF THE BABE OF BETHLEHEM

Lord God of Hosts! in heaven, in earth, in hell
Oh! dost Thou deign in human form to dwell?

Thou only object Faith can fix upon; ·
Heaven knows no other, Thou, the only one.
If there's another, *abstract* from Thy frame,
Say where He dwells, and say what is His name?

Is there an object, human or divine,
Save Thy bless'd self, I ever dare call mine?

My soul would see Him, that I may not dread,
Yielding my spirit on a dying bed.

Grant us, said one 'The Father's face to see,'
Oh! Philip; 'hast thou never yet known me :
Depend on this, the eye that doth ME view;

I say, to thee, 'Hath seen the Father too.'

Hail! Jesus hail! my Father's face I see,
And worship Him in bowing down to Thee,
Visible Jehovah, found in Abraham's seed,
Exactly suited to my deepest need.

What then in heaven, shall my soul one day see?
All the full Godhead, when I gaze on thee.
In Bethlehem's manger. Lo! the bless'd Supreme !
Three-one Jehovah. Jesus, great Aleim.
Eternal Spirit, glorify my Lord,
Draw me to Jesus, with love's threefold cord.

Found at His sacred feet, that happy place,
Of His rich fullness, grace receive for grace.
Rest then my soul, beneath His shady-wings;

Here Hope rejoices, Faith sits here and sings.
In Him complete, let Death but close these eyes,
My spirit wings her way beyond the skies.

A SON [OF] KORAH

PS: To Him who has manifested Himself
In His threefold character of person,
Father, Son, and Spirit,
Thro' the medium of humanity, to Him be glory. Amen .

THUS SAITH THE LORD

MYR SHOH

4.6.8.6.

Peter Murcott



Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls... (Jeremiah 6:16a)

1. Thus saith the Lord (Jeremiah 6:16)
(Hear Him, with one accord!)—
'Be still, and know that I am God'— (Psalm 46:10)
Exalted and adored. (1 Chronicles 29: 11)
2. '**Thus**'—God has set (Proverbs 22:28)
The boundaries of truth,
For every time, and race, and clime, (Psalm 33:8-11; Acts 17:26)
Which man must not remove. (Proverbs 23:10)
3. '**Saith**'—hammers home (Jeremiah 23:29)
God's word is like a fire;
Add nothing to it, nor subtract, (Deuteronomy 4:2)
Lest thou be found a liar. (Proverbs 30:6)
4. '**The**'—doubt's dismissed (John 14:6)
None other name is known; (Hosea 13:4)
Salvation comes by Jesus Christ, (Acts 4: 12)
By Him, and Him alone. (1 Corinthians 3: 11)
5. '**Lord**'—God supreme, (Job 9:1-12; Psalm 95:3)
In Persons Three, yet One; (1 John 5:7)
In heaven above, in earth beneath, (Matthew 6:10)
None else! Thy will be done! (Isaiah 45:22; John 4:34; 5:30 & 6:38)
6. Thus saith the Lord (Jeremiah 6:16)
(Hear Him, with one accord!)—
'Be still, and know that I am God'— (Psalm 46:10)
Exalted and adored. (1 Chronicles 29:11)

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TWO MEDITATIONS ON 'THUS SAITH THE LORD'

BY PETER MURCOTT (Douglas, Isle of Man)

- **'Thus'** speaks of *Sufficiency*—This is exactly what God would have you know. It is his eternal truth, infallible, inerrant, immutable and impregnable, untainted by human wisdom, which is none of these things. Therefore add nothing to it, or omit anything from it.¹
- **'Saith'** speaks of *Supremacy*—There is no higher source of wisdom and truth. God's Word overrides, outweighs and will outlive all else.² Therefore pay the fullest attention, and hang upon every word to the uttermost, since your very being depends on it.
- **'The'** speaks of *Singularity*. Therefore: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord, and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.'³ This is the first commandment: always put God first.
- **'Lord'** speaks of *Sovereignty*. In Isaiah 45:22 God declares: 'Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.' Therefore 'To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.'⁴
- **'Thus'** calls us to *Observe*—Take heed and take notice. As the old Primitive Methodists used to sing: 'Stop, poor sinner, stop and think before you further go.' This isn't like those text messages, which nowadays command such rapt attention as folk walk down the street. It is a vital text from the living and life-giving Word of God.
- **'Saith'** calls us to *Obey*—We might recall that God said, at the time of the Transfiguration of Jesus, which Peter, James and John witnessed: 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye him.'⁵ Hear to learn, and learn to obey, since there is no other way to be happy in Jesus.
- **'The'** means there is *One Lord Only*: There are many ways that one can go, but there is only one way by which one must be saved, and that is to follow Jesus Christ. Thus he himself said, in answer to Thomas's question: 'I am the way, the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.'⁶
- **'Lord' Over All**—One God in Three Persons. 'One Lord, one faith, one baptism.'⁷ Oh that we might all be at one with God through Jesus Christ the Righteous—again to quote Charles Wesley:

Jesus, the name, high over all,
In hell, or earth, or sky;
Angels and men before it fall,
And devils fear and fly.

¹ See: Deuteronomy 4:2; Proverbs 30:6; Revelation 22:19

² See: Isaiah 40:8; Matthew 24:35; Mark 13:31; Luke 21:33; 1 Peter 1: 25

³ Mark 12:30

⁴ Jude 25

⁵ Matthew 17:5b

⁶ John 14:6

⁷ Ephesians 4:5

MINISTRY

BIDEFORD, DEVON: *North Road Chapel*. Consecutive Expository Ministry. AV, *Christian Hymns*. LORD'S DAY 10.45 am and 6.30 pm. *Minister:* Mr R.J. Steward. northroadchapel.org. nrcbideford@gmail.com.

CHELTENHAM. *Providence Baptist Chapel*. Lord's Day services, 10.30 am and 6.30 pm. Bible Study and Prayer Meeting, Wednesdays 7.30 pm. Use AV and *Christian Worship*. *Pastor:* Mr Pooyan Mehrshahi. Tel. 01242 245116.

FRISTON, SUFFOLK: *Baptist Church*, Mill Road IP17 1PH (4 miles from Aldeburgh, 3 miles from Snape Maltings). Lord's Day services: 10.45 am and 2 pm. Bible Study Tuesdays 7.30 pm. AV and *Gospel Hymns*. Reformed Evangelical worship. *Pastor:* Michael Harley. fristonbaptistsuffolk.org.uk. Tel 01728 602657.

SUFFOLK: *Wattisham Chapel*. Evangelical and Reformed services each LORD'S DAY 10.45 am, 2.30 and 6.30 pm. Metrical Psalms and hymns. AV only used. Telephone 01449 612524.

WOLVERHAMPTON: *St Silas Church of England (Continuing)*, 49 Long Street, WV1 1HU. Sunday Morning Prayer 11am. Holy Communion as notified. AV and BCP used. For directions, parking and other details please phone 01785 254687.

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