

JULY–AUGUST 2018

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The Gospel Magazine

Nicodemus • The Gospel in China • The importance of the Lord's Day

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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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EDITORIAL

THE recent vote on the Irish Republic's abortion stance will have come as a disappointment to many, but probably not as a surprise. That two thirds of those who voted chose change is typical of the way in which our society—by which I mean Western, liberal, democratic society—is going. Of course, one might speculate on the reaction from media and politicians had that majority been the other way. Recent voting in the United Kingdom shows that a result is only acceptable if it is the 'right' result. Many years ago, when the Church of England decided to codify its departure from Scripture by legislating for the ordination of women, it sought the approval of the membership, through votes at various levels. The deanery synods were given their opportunity, and one deanery in Lichfield Diocese chose to reject the proposed change. They were invited to vote again, and the majority in favour of retaining the status quo was turned into a majority for change. Democracy, it might be said, is all very well so long as the idiots who are

allowed to vote are the right kind of idiots, and do as they are instructed.

The situation in the Republic of Ireland is made somewhat more complicated by the presence and influence of the Roman Catholic Church. For a long time that body has decreed that it is a sin to use contraception in marriage, and the unsurprising effect of this has been that many families have been very large. Such families, while a blessing in some circumstances, can be a burden in others. The cost of feeding, clothing and shoeing children can place an enormous burden on parents, especially where incomes are low. The physical, to say nothing of the emotional, strain on mothers is also liable to be very great. As society changes, not necessarily for the better, there is a tendency to rebel against such decrees and limitations.

Interestingly, although the media showed numbers of young women cheering the outcome of the vote, a report in *The Spectator* quoted the results of a recent poll in England on reducing the upper time limit

on abortions—and pointed out that 70% of women were in favour of such a change, but only 49% of men. This gave an overall figure of 60%. One might wonder why men were less in favour than women, and there are a number of possible reasons, not least a lack of understanding among men about what is involved in later abortions. One might also wonder how many men, and women, think of pregnancy as just another sexually transmitted infection, treatable with a pill and hardly worth a second thought.

The Roman Church was conspicuous by its silence in the run-up to the Irish vote. Knowing that they were viewed as part of the problem, and perhaps knowing that the tide had turned against them, the authorities chose to keep a very low profile. One result of this is that the authority of the Church of Rome in Ireland has not been challenged openly; there was no public defiance of any edict to vote in a particular direction.

Another result is that the true nature of mass attendance in Ireland may be judged; although numbers are in decline, a high percentage of the population does attend. That attendance, however, appears to have no bearing on the way in which the majority live. It is a religion for the church service, and not for daily life.

It is at this point that the result becomes particularly relevant to us. We know that true religion is at low ebb in Britain, and nowhere is exempt from this downward trend. We know that it is easy to find a church where the expectations are so low that a person can be fully accepted without making any change to their morals or beliefs. If challenged, those who serve in the ministry of such churches will either claim that they have a better interpretation of Scripture than we do, or that we must take people as they are, and educate them over time. Of course,

the gospel doctrine of the new birth is completely unknown to such master theologians, who airily explain away the Second Coming as being the moment when a person chooses to believe in Jesus—by which they tend to mean, believe that there was such a person, and that he is generally to be taken as a guide to how we should behave towards our fellow man.

All of this shows us how vital is our witness. We are commanded to be salt and light, and our witness is to be plain. If professing believers will not abide by the Word of God, why should unbelievers take us seriously? If we, by our actions, show that our Christian faith is only for high days and holidays, who will think it worthwhile learning from us? If we are only 'Christian' when we are in the company of people we want to impress, how are we putting on the Lord Jesus Christ?

Long ago the prophet warned of the confusion that would result if the trumpet gave an uncertain sound. There has never been more need for believers to give a clear, faithful witness than today. False religion presses on apace all around us. Atheism triumphs in the victory it considers to be total. Immorality spreads all around, without and within the visible Church. There is only one remedy available to such things, the plain old gospel of grace, whereby sinners are saved from their sins through faith in the blood of Jesus Christ.

All around us are the signs of a sin-sick world. Rather than turn our backs on the world, or give in to despair, let us have the same boldness as the apostles of old. Let us go out into all the world, preaching the everlasting gospel, and warning our neighbours to flee the wrath to come. After all, is this not what our Lord commanded the Church? And are we not the true Church, the body of Christ, of which he alone is the Head? ¶

TRUTH IN THE INWARD PARTS

A sermon by THE EDITOR

Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom (Psalm 51:6)

The circumstances which led David to compose the Fifty-first Psalm are well known and terrible. They are well known because they are given in the heading to the Psalm, where we read, 'To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.' The events indicated are recorded in 2 Samuel 11 & 12, and they are well known for they tell of David's great sin, both of the adultery with Bathsheba, wife of Uriah, and of the murder of the husband to cover up the first sin. The events are terrible because they reveal the depth of the corruption of the human heart, even in those who know and love the Lord. If David, the recipient of so much grace and blessing, could sin this greatly, what are we not capable of, should the Lord take away his restraining hand and power? It behoves us therefore to pay careful attention to what the penitent sinner had to say, both as a man, and as a prophet. Here is a word from the Lord. Let us hear the word of the Lord.

We have here a plain acknowledgment on the part of the Psalmist that the Lord God will not be satisfied with a merely outward conformity to his laws, nor with worship that concerns only the lungs, vocal chords, tongue and lips. Since our worship is part of our obedient submission to the lawful majesty and rule of the Sovereign God, it follows that both our manners (the old-fashioned word for our moral behaviour) and our worship must conform to God's revealed will in every part.

The words themselves, according to the rules of Hebrew poetry, are a double statement, or parallelism, of one underlying thought. As such they make the same point in slightly different ways. As to the first clause, 'Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts,' the Psalmist is saying that the Lord looks for truth, that which is faithful, in those parts that influence emotions, thoughts and will—the inward parts, the entrails. In the Hebrew understanding of human nature, certain organs of the body, as the heart, kidneys and entrails, were the centre of personality and will. We can perhaps more readily understand this when we think of that feeling in the pit of the stomach when we are nervous or excited.

The same thought is repeated in the second clause, 'and in the hidden parts thou shalt make me to know wisdom.' The hidden parts are those that are secret, shut off and inaccessible. Wisdom is not head knowledge, but the fear of the Lord (Proverbs 1:7), the receiving of divine truth through the acceptance of divine revelation, in order that we might be truly obedient and faithful.

As to the differences between these clauses, the tense of 'desirest' is perfect, in that the Lord has always and shall always desire truth in the inward parts; this is not a new thing. The tense of the second clause is future, showing that those who seek wisdom will find it, as James 1:5 teaches.

The overall doctrine taught in this verse, then, is that our great need is to be faithful in

heart, mind and will, and that only the Lord has the power, will and purpose to make us so.

We consider that this is so

I. From the character of the God we are called to serve.

i. *God is holy.* So Leviticus 20:7, 'Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy: for I am the LORD your God.' To sanctify is to set apart; we are to set ourselves apart from all that is not holy. The reason why we must separate ourselves from all that is not holy is twofold. First, the Lord has commanded it, and he alone is able to require obedience from the creation. He is the Lord of creation, and as such has sovereign rights to command according to the pleasure of his will. Yet his will and his pleasure are not arbitrary, but are according to the divine character and nature revealed to us in all his deeds. When God placed Adam in the garden he commanded him to eat freely of the fruit of every tree. The fruit of one tree, however, was forbidden to him, and death was threatened in the event that Adam disobeyed. When Adam sinned, he came under the condemnation of death, and was cast out of God's presence. God cannot look on iniquity, Habakkuk 1:13, and he reveals his righteous wrath against all ungodliness, against all that is not holy and pure. Secondly, because he is the holy God he cannot be party to anything that falls short of his perfect nature. This is, of course, the fundamental problem we have as sinners, that we cannot come before the Lord. This is why Job cried for the daysman, to come between him and the Lord God; a mediator, a advocate with the Father.

ii. *God is faithful.* So Hebrews 10:23, 'Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)' The thrust of this verse is that we are

to have boldness in coming into the holiest, knowing that we have such an high priest, verse 21, and that our sins are truly forgiven, verse 22. We may have confidence that our sins are forgiven because God has promised us forgiveness in Christ Jesus. Since he has promised, and he is faithful, we are not to doubt. The importance of this for us is that it speaks to the faithfulness of God. Faithfulness is an aspect of holiness, in that God is faithful in all that he has promised, and all he has promised is according to his holy character. This is true both for the blessings and the cursing, that we may be certain that we shall not avoid what God's justice has set in store for us. Now, if God is faithful, ought we not to be faithful also, who profess to love and serve this same faithful God?

iii. *God is just.* So Isaiah 45:21, 'Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? who hath told it from that time? have not I the LORD? and there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me.' The holy Lord, on whose faithfulness we may all rely absolutely, is doubly to be served in that he is also just. This speaks to us of the fact that, first, his words and deeds are beyond reproach. There are those who would question the authority of God to elect some and not others, in denial of the treasured free will too which they claim. Such questions are not legitimate since the justice of God means there is nothing we can condemn in him. Else how could he differentiate between righteous and wicked, Psalm 7:11, and judge the latter, 129:4? If we will learn that the Lord our God is truly just, we would be kept from such errors, Psalm 119:137. Again, his justice speaks to his being irreproachable in all he does. So Psalm 145:7; we may not think that there is anything less than divine justice in every act

of the Lord, both to bless and two curse, to lift up and to cast down. If we being by accepting that all the acts of the Lord are just, we will be preserved from foolish thinking with regard to any of them, especially when we consider that we lack all the evidence, and that our judgment is being partial since we are so imperfect.

iv. *God is jealous.* So Exodus 20:5, 'I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me.' The jealousy of God is again a matter that can confuse. After all, we know that jealousy is bad thing, and that the tenth commandment, which forbids coveting, covers jealousy. How can the Lord be jealous? We do well to remember that he is holy, faithful and just, and therefore his jealousy cannot contradict his character in any way. We also note the context in which he speaks of his jealousy, namely of idolatrous worship. Since it was he who brought Israel up out of Egypt, it would be very wrong for the nation, or any member of it, to worship another god. There would be no reason, no justification, for offering worship to another deity, when the one who had saved them so evidently and in such a mighty manner was in the process of revealing himself to them. It would be worse than rebellion to turn from the God who overthrew the army of Egypt, and who led the people through the wilderness like sheep, to another deity who had done nothing at all.

All of this speaks to us of the character of our Lord God, and shows that we may not think of him as being pleased with a mere outward observance, or a fitful and occasional obedience. Since the Lord is holy, just, faithful and jealous, it follows that our behaviour toward him must reflect all these things.

II. From the nature of the worship we are to offer.

i. *That true worship is offered in spirit and in truth.* So John 4:24, 'God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.' Since God is a spirit, and therefore spiritual, it follows that true worship must be spiritual and true. False worship is not acceptable to the true God, any more than unspiritual worship is acceptable to the God who is a Spirit. This means worship that breaks the third commandment, in that it takes the name of God in vain, is unlawful. Many understand this commandment to refer only to taking oaths. The context shows that its true intention is to teach that those who worship the saving God, and who do so without resorting to idolatry, must nevertheless be on their guard against mere lip service. We can only do this when we worship God in spirit, meaning that we engage heart, soul and mind in the act of worship. It means our worship is an outworking of the love we have for the Lord. It means our worship reflects the honour in which we hold his holy name. In short, it means that our worship is an expression of faith, without which no worship would be acceptable.

ii. *That true worship is offered to the triune God.* The command of Christ is that baptism be in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost (Matthew 28:19). The Scripture speaks of the three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word and the Holy Ghost (1 John 5:7). The bearing of record is to the fact that Jesus Christ came, not by water only, but by water and blood—and he who overcomes the world is he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God, verses 5–6. We would have no reason to worship God, except perhaps as a distant, terrifying deity, were it not for the fact that he revealed himself for the express purpose of redeeming fallen sinners.

Man was not present when God began the work of creation, since he was not created until the sixth day—and was created last of all. How did he know that God had made the world in the way stated in Genesis 1:1–2:3? The Lord made the matter known to his creation; he revealed it. To what end did he reveal it? Among other reasons, to show man what God intended for him in the beginning, and what he might learn to hope for through the work of redemption. Therefore, when men began to call on the name of the Lord, Genesis 4:26, it was in the knowledge that the same Lord had made himself known as the author of hope and salvation. Since we know the same Lord, and the same truth, through the full expression of the fact in the incarnation and atonement, it follows that we must worship the fulness of the Godhead who decreed, worked and applied that salvation. The Father decreed it, the Son worked it, and the Holy Spirit applies it. Our salvation, even the forgiveness of our sins, is surely our greatest motivation to praise and worship. Since all three persons of the Godhead wrought that salvation, all three are worthy of worship. And since all three are holy, just and pure, our worship must conform to that, as far as we are able.

iii. *That true worship is done by the redeemed of the Lord.* So Psalm 97:12, ‘Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous; and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.’ That is, the people of God, the redeemed of the Lord, gather together to worship their merciful, loving, saving Lord. It is true that the congregation will be mixed, for the tares remain among the wheat until the time of harvest. It is true that no member of any congregation is righteous in and of himself. Yet it is true that worship is to be offered by those who have obtained mercy, who are forgiven, whose sins are covered in that robe of perfect

righteousness. Those who offer worship are to be those who flee all sin, and who do not defile their garments, Revelation 3:4. The congregation of the righteous does not consist in the right forms and ceremonies being used by those who have kept only an outward conformity to holiness. It consists of those who seek, by grace, to overcome sin daily, and who confess their sins frequently, and who know that they have no health in them. They apply to Christ for grace for their need of grace. They feed on the word of God daily, knowing their need of strength, wisdom and correction daily. When they come together, it is in true fellowship, as those who are united in love, purpose and hope. They are all washed in the blood of the same Lamb. Their sins were atoned for on the same cross. Their Saviour is the same Lord Jesus Christ. Their hope is the same heaven. They are all filled with the same Holy Spirit. Truth in the inward parts marks out the redeemed of the Lord from others who may come to pay lip service, as well as from those who are yet seeking the Lord.

Seeing then that our great need is to be faithful in heart, mind and will, and that the nature of the Lord we serve, and the manner of service we offer, teach us this, how may we become more as we ought to be?

First, let us acknowledge our weakness in the face of temptations. Some particular temptations are easy for us to overcome, in that they hold little or no appeal to us. Each of us knows which temptations do not fall into this category, and the three main areas where we are likely to fall concern money, sex and power. The deceitfulness of our hearts, in that we are far weaker in the face of temptation, is a major reason why we sin again and again in the same way. We continually overestimate our ability to resist temptation,

and we continually underestimate the power of temptation over us. Consequently, we fall again and again. If we would admit that we are not able to stand against temptation in our own strength, we would begin to move forward against it. Let us confess that we are weak in the face of certain temptations.

Secondly, let us acknowledge that we shall only resist temptation when we have strength from outside ourselves. We know we are to put on the Lord Jesus Christ, Romans 13:14, making no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof. Writing to the Ephesians, Paul instructs them (and us) to ‘be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might,’ verse 10. Such strength and might are as armour to us, the whole armour of God. Psalm 121 speaks to us of the power, and of the gracious willingness, of the Lord to preserve them that are his. ‘The Lord is my strength and my shield’ Psalm 128:7. He is a strong tower and a defence to his people. Our coming to the Lord for strength is not our hiding from temptation in him, as if it cannot find us there. The Scripture speaks of the way in which the Lord tests us, thereby proving our faith.

Then, we must learn the ways of the devil. He is a roaring lion, 1 Peter 5:8. He is able to transform himself into an angel of light, 2 Corinthians 11:14. He wrestles against us, using wiles, Ephesians 6:11–12. He casts fiery darts at us, Ephesians 6:16. Note the bold, sly way in which he attempted to reason with the Lord, Job 1:6–12, 2:1–6. The devil presses us where we are weakest, and he comes for us usually on either of two occasions. First, when we are down. If we have suffered some setback, or if we are brought down by some event such as bereavement, illness or sorrow of any sort, he comes with trials and temptations to turn us away from our heavenly Father. Our defences are down, and we are in great danger. Secondly, he comes when we

are up, when we have just resisted a temptation, or done something for the Lord, or in any one of a number of ways considered ourselves to be especially blessed. Then, again, our defences are down, for we think we have repelled the foe. We believe are out of danger for a while, and at that moment we are most vulnerable. David fell in sin with Bathsheba in the months following the announcement of the covenant with David, 2 Samuel 7, and with the record of his military victories and kindnesses, 8–10. When all seemed well, then David fell. Let us learn from this that we are ever in danger, and that Satan lurks nearby, in every condition, seeking an opening for an attack.

Then, let us learn that our being born again is no small matter. We are not born of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. We have been graciously brought to newness of life by the working of the Holy Spirit, through the hearing of the gospel, and in our believing the promises contained therein. We have reached out that empty hand of faith to Christ, and he has filled us with good things. Therefore we are not as we once were. We are new creatures, no longer bound to sin and death. We are Christ’s people, and he has shed his blood for us. This lays a responsibility on us to resist temptation in all its forms, and to be pure in word and deed. It also puts us in a new condition, whereby such resistance is possible, and where falling into sin is no longer inevitable. ‘Resist the devil and he will flee.’ This is no light instruction, but one to take to heart. We are no longer his lawful prey, and resistance is right and proper.

Let us always remember that God desires truth in the inward parts, and it ought to be our delight to do that which he desires. Let us use all means of grace to be as we ought to be. Let us watch, and pray, that we fall not. ¶

DAVID CYRIL RELF

BY PAUL RELF

David Relf was born in Eastbourne in 1922. He was born into a poor but God fearing family and as he grew up he had responsibility as the oldest boy. He showed academic promise, left school at 15, and worked in a solicitor's office in Eastbourne for 7 years before moving to London in 1945. After much hard work he eventually got his law degree at London University in 1956.

David Relf was a long time supporter of the biblical and protestant cause. He knew of God's work in his life from teenage years and was baptised at Ebenezer Chapel, Clapham in 1947. In his testimony he said 'My desire is to walk worthy of the Lord before my brothers and sisters in Christ.' This is something that with God's help he was able to do to the end of his life. He married his wife, Margaret and they spent 60 happy years together. They were together for the gospel and complemented each other in serving the Lord. They had three children who survive him.

He worked as a solicitor in local Government and then in part of the Lord Chancellor's department until his retirement in 1983. His legal knowledge was used to help a number of Christian societies. He was a faithful member of the church and deacon at Tamworth Road, Strict Baptist Chapel, Croydon for many years being fully involved in church life taking Sunday School classes and adult Bible classes. He had a concern for souls, looking for opportunities to tell of God's grace, supporting missionary endeavour but had a particular interest in 'Protestant matters'.

Mr Relf was a member of the committee of the Trinitarian Bible Society, the

Protestant Truth Society and the Gospel Magazine, serving the latter as Chairman until age and infirmity forced his retirement. He wrote letters to politicians, to the Royal family, to the *Daily Telegraph*, to Protestant papers such as the *English Churchman* and *British Church* newspaper. He would write on Christian, moral, constitutional, and historical, as well as Protestant matters. Sometimes he would write articles and book reviews for various Christian magazines. One series of papers he wrote for the *English Churchman* was on the Spanish Armada, and it was published in booklet form a few years ago by *The Gospel Magazine* under the title, 'But God...'. He wrote regularly and faithfully because he had a strong conviction of God's truth and sought to earnestly contend for the faith (Jude 4).

David Relf was very loyal to his family, his church and the cause of Truth. He was an encourager and would always have a kind word for people he had not met before as well as with those who he knew well but might have some differences. His discernment and assessment of the issues at stake will be missed but we know that he is now with his Saviour which is far better. His funeral took place at Tamworth Road Baptist Chapel on 27th March.

This obituary has been adapted from the one supplied to The Protestant Truth Society, of which Mr Relf was Vice-President following his retirement from the Council. The present Editor had the privilege of knowing Mr Relf both on the PTS Council and as Chairman of The Gospel Magazine Trust.

WHAT WILL LAST?

BY CARINE MACKENZIE

The flowers and greenery in the garden look so beautiful, but in a few months when autumn comes, the green leaves turn brown and wither away. The flowers die, the petals disappear. The summer beauty of the garden does not last.

God's word compares us to the grass and all our achievements and success to a flower. Just as the grass and flowers wither and fade so our bodies will die, our work will be forgotten and our accomplishments will not be important. 'But the word of the Lord endureth for ever' (1 Peter 1:25).

Jesus told us that heaven and earth would pass away, but his words shall not pass away (Matthew 24:35). How comforting and reassuring to know that God's word which we have in the Bible is lasting and trustworthy. It is never going to be out of date. It is always living and powerful. When everything we own and see around us has been swept away, God's word will still endure.

Many of the things we treasure today do not last either. I used to love my doll's pram. It has been thrown in the rubbish dump long ago. The bicycle or car that was so precious, eventually rusted, broke and became scrap metal.

The Bible warns us about many things that do not last. Too often we spend our time and energy on things that will perish. 'Labour not for the meat which perisheth,' Jesus told the people who followed him after he had miraculously fed 5,000 people with five loaves and two fish. But Jesus advised his hearers to labour for the 'meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you' (John 6:27).

Many of the things we do in this life are unseen by other people, but God sees what we do for him. That is the work which stands the test (1 Corinthians 3:11-15). That is what endures to everlasting life.

The things of this life will not satisfy but the things of God, his Word and his salvation will last. 'Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal, but lay up ... treasures in heaven,' Jesus taught his disciples and us (Matthew 6:19-20). The treasures in heaven will last.

That treasure in heaven is described as an eternal weight of glory (2 Corinthians 4:17). Our frail bodies will perish. Our afflictions will last for just a short time, but the eternal life purchased by the Saviour will last for ever.

Even the gifts that we have will not last. Paul, writing to the Corinthian Church, tells us that prophecies will fail, tongues will cease, and knowledge will vanish away but charity (love) never fails. (1 Corinthians 13.8.) The love given to us by God is a lasting treasure. His love for us is so great that he sent his Son that whoever believes in him would not perish but have everlasting life. We love God because he first loved us (1 John 4.19). The Lord wants us to show that love to others. 'By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another' (John 13:35).

Our life here will not last. It is soon cut off (Psalm 90:10). Even the earth and the skies—the

work of God's hand will perish but God will never change. 'Thou art the same and thy years shall have no end' (Psalm 102:27). Other psalms tell us that his mercy, righteousness, judgments, praise and truth all endure for ever.

God and his kingdom can never be moved. By grace we should serve him 'acceptably with reverence and godly fear' (Hebrews 12:28).

Bible Search

Find the missing words. The first letter of each word will spell out something that does not change.

1. While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are _____; but the things which are not seen are eternal. (2 Corinthians 4:18)
2. And now abideth faith, _____, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity. (1 Corinthians 13:13)
3. But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no _____. (Psalm 102:27)
4. If any man's _____ abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. (1 Corinthians 3:14)
5. He that spared not his _____ Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? (Romans 8:32)
6. _____ and honour are with me; yea, durable _____ and righteousness. (Proverbs 8:18)
7. Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy _____ endureth throughout all generations. (Psalm 145:13)
8. Of _____ hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. (Psalm 102:25)
9. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little _____? (Matthew 6:30)
10. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us

have _____, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. (Hebrews 12:28)

11. But now he hath promised, saying, Yet _____ more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. (Hebrews 12:26)
12. In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which _____ and waxeth old is ready to vanish away. (Hebrews 8:13)

CHRIST AND BELIAL

PART VIII

BY THE REV P LOS

Supplied by A W DE LANGE (Scherpenzeel, The Netherlands)

And on the contrary, how good it is under the banner of the anointed King of Zion! No words can describe the salvation which is to be found in him. It is true, Belial slanders the King and his people and the way they walk in, but it shall do no harm. And the reason why he does this, is because he fears that subject will go from his kingdom to the other.

Solomon was now a type or shadow of the Anointed King. When he was settled in his kingdom, the queen of Sheba, who had heard about his great wisdom and his immense richness, came to pay him her tribute. But when she saw and heard more than was told her, her wonder was so great, that there was no more spirit in her, while she had to cry: The half was not told me!

Those who are brought from the kingdom of Satan to the kingdom of that Anointed one experience the same thing!

To which of the two do you belong, my

reader? This question is a vital question and your eternal fate depends on its answer! No, it is not something to play with or laugh about. It is worthy to turn to ourselves with high and holy solemnity, and to ask what our answer shall be when the King cometh!

And he cometh surely! He may abide, he cometh! And his coming shall be as a thief in the night. Then the heavens shall be rolled up as a thin cloth and the powers of the earth shall be moved. And where shall everyone of us find his place? Stand still, ye traveller to eternity! I pray you, do not go one step further, before you know on which ground you are. Is the Belial's ground? Then you are fighting against the God of heaven and earth, and the Stone cut off without hands, shall once smash thee, when the gold and silver, copper and clay of the image shall be broken into pieces and scattered around as chaff on the threshing floor.

TO BE CONTINUED

WHAT ARE WE TO UNDERSTAND BY THE COVENANT OF WORKS AND THE COVENANT OF GRACE?

FROM THE GOSPEL MAGAZINE FOR AUGUST 1768

Answer. 1. Upon the creation of our first parents, when they were in a state of innocence, and had committed no sin, God was graciously pleased to enter into a covenant with them, called the covenant of works, or a covenant of life, from its condition and promises. In this covenant God and man were the two parties, for it had no Mediator. In it Adam was considered as a public person, the head and representative of all his posterity. The condition required of Adam was perfect and perpetual obedience to God's law, which was written in his heart: Besides which, he had a particular commandment given for a trial of his obedience, to forbear eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil; called so, because Adam by eating thereof came to know experimentally the good of obedience, and the evil of disobedience; what good he had fallen from, and had lost, namely, the image and favour of God; and what, evil he was fallen into, namely, the evil of sin and misery.

The blessing or reward promised to Adam upon obedience, was life temporal, spiritual, and eternal: and it is concluded from thence, that he would not only have enjoyed a long, pleasant and happy life here, with God's special favour and presence, but, after a certain period of time, he would have been translated to an eternal and celestial life with God above.

The threatening and penalty of this covenant, in case of disobedience, was death, temporal, spiritual and eternal, to Adam

and all his posterity.

2. Man having broken the covenant of works, and thereby being incapable of life by that covenant, and having sunk himself into the depth of sin and misery, God in his free mercy was pleased to make a new covenant for saving perishing sinners, called the covenant of grace, which is revealed to us in the gospel, where we have good news and glad tidings of salvation to fallen sinners through Jesus Christ the Mediator of the new covenant.

The foundation of all this grace, was a gracious compact or agreement betwixt the Father and the Son from all eternity, upon the foresight of man's fall; whereby the Father gives to the Son a certain number of Adam's fallen posterity, the elect, to redeem from sin and hell; and promises to him, upon his satisfying divine justice for them, by paying a sufficient ransom in their room, that he would accept it, and reward him with great honour, and also give grace and glory to his people. And the Son readily undertakes to be the Elect's Mediator and Surety, to take upon him man's nature; that he may do and suffer all that justice demanded for paying their debts, and purchasing deliverance to them from sin and Satan, hell and wrath, and also their salvation and, happiness for ever: which by some is called the covenant of redemption.

This covenant is called a new covenant, a covenant of peace, and a testament, it being

completed and ratified by the death of Christ the testator; who therein freely bequeaths a glorious inheritance and all things belonging to it: But it is generally called a Covenant of Grace; because grace was the spring and rise of it; and all things promised therein are God's free gift, without any merit of ours. Grace is the end of it; it is contrived to glorify free grace. And the grace of faith which receives Christ and his righteousness, and entitles to all the privileges and promises of the covenant, is not any work of ours, but God's free gift, wrought in us freely by his Spirit and also purchased by Christ's blood, and promised through Christ to elect sinners. And likewise all other saving graces and strength for new obedience are hereby purchased and promised. It is also called the covenant of grace to distinguish it from the covenant of works. As the covenant of works was made with the first Adam in the name of all his posterity, so the covenant of grace is made with Christ the second Adam, as the Mediator and representative of the elect, who are his spiritual seed.

The difference of these two covenants, and the excellency of the second covenant above the first, lies in these things:

1. The first covenant allowed of no surety: Adam stood bound for himself: But the second covenant admits a Mediator Jesus Christ to stand surety for us, and fulfil our part of it.
2. The first could be broken and disannulled; but the second cannot, because our Mediator is sufficient.
3. The least sin or failure made void the first covenant; but no sin of the Elect can dissolve the second.
4. The first being broken there was no room left for repentance, or for any remedy whatsoever: But the second allows of a remedy to the transgressor,

admits of repentance and flying to a Mediator for help and relief.

5. The condition of the first was obeying and working, and that to perfection: But the condition of the second is believing, that is receiving and laying hold on Christ and his covenant.

The covenant of grace requires works and obedience, but not in the same manner that the first covenant did; for in the first covenant they were required as the very condition of life and ground of salvation. But in the second, they are required as the evidences of grace, and fruits of our love to God in Christ. In the first they were required for the justification of our persons; in the second, for the testifying of our gratitude and our conformity to our head and patten.

The gracious promises of this covenant to the elect are great; particularly to have God become our God and Father in Christ, and to stand instead of all relations to us; to have his Son Christ and his whole purchase freely made over to us; namely, repentance, a new heart, illumination, faith, pardon, reconciliation, adoption, sanctification, perseverance, resurrection to life and eternal glory, with all the graces of the Spirit and innumerable other blessings, spiritual, temporal and eternal.

None was ever saved but by this covenant of grace. The faithful in all ages, before the coming of Christ, were under the same covenant with us, and saved by the same Mediator and Surety, and by the virtue of his purchase; wherefore he is called, 'The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.' But this covenant of grace hath been variously dispensed, and gradually revealed to the world in different periods, first under the Old Testament, and then under the New, from the fall to Moses, and from Moses to Christ, and now under the New Testament

times. The first publication of this covenant to the world was in paradise to our first parents, after their fall, 'The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head.' The Jews under the law, had not such a clear discovery and view of Christ as we under the gospel, he having been only revealed to them

by prophecies, types, sacrifices, and other ordinances; but they were under the same covenant of grace with us for substance, having the same Mediator and promises, and the same grace of faith required of them for salvation, seeing by the works of the law no man under the fall can be justified. ¶

NICODEMUS

BY BRIAN GARRARD (Basingstoke)

It may be profitable to spend some time thinking about the man named above. I want to do so by highlighting what is known about him in the New Testament. All the references to him are in the Gospel of John and consist of three. These are found in chapters 3, 7 and 19 and I commence with the first.

The man who came to Jesus by night

3:1–2. He was a Pharisee and 'a ruler of the people'. The latter means that he was a member of the Sanhedrin, which was the highest governing body amongst the Jews at that time. Given his high position it seems very appropriate that his name means 'victor over the people'. Now this man was evidently impressed by the miracles of the Lord and was concerned to discover more about divine things and their true nature. Here is a blessed thing! The Spirit of God works amongst all kinds of people and draws different classes to Christ. The Bible does not say that *no* wise men after the flesh or mighty or noble are called, but *not many* (1 Corinthians 1:26). It is a reason to thank God that he does save *some* from amongst the educated and mighty and noble. Whoever or whatever you might be (or think you are!), thank God from the

depths of your being that you have heard the gospel and been spoken to in your heart. Never complain about being brought up in a Christian family or having sat under faithful preaching of the Word. Do not be discontent but praise the God of heaven for his mercies toward you. A Christian upbringing is a truly great mercy and kindness and should you moan and murmur about this, then you are of all men and women a truly miserable being! Such a blessing was never given to me, so when I hear of young people expressing resentment at being raised in a Christian environment, then I am deeply grieved to hear it. Would these ungrateful individuals wish to have been brought up as heathens and pagans in some of the morally dark places of the earth? Would they prefer to be steeped in superstition and fear and thus have no hope at all for this life or the next? O put away such thoughts and use the privileges you have!

Now Nicodemus 'came to Jesus by night'. Why he chose to come then is not stated but some suggest he did so out of convenience, for he must have been a busy man. Others think he chose the night in the hope that he would not be observed by his fellow Jews. Whatever the reason, he came to Jesus and

acted very wisely in this. I think there is a valuable lesson or two here. The first is, come to Christ. Like Nicodemus, you may have many questions but the best thing to do is go to the Lord. Find out *his* answers to your doubts and uncertainties and receive what he has to say with a humble heart. Perhaps the finest way to do this is to read his Word, the Bible. Staying away from Christ will provide no help or hope for the future.

Another lesson is to take some encouragement from the unpromising start that Nicodemus made in his Christian life. That he was a true Christian after this interview with Christ I have no doubt. There are those who might disagree and would expect far more evidence of conversion. I have met people like this over the years. They expect new converts to be almost perfectly holy straight away and, in addition, firm and courageous believers. Sometimes that may happen but, in most cases, the early beginnings of the spiritual life can be very small and weak and insignificant. I know it was with me and I dare to suggest that most of my readers could say the same. Therefore, do not expect too much from young Christians, whatever their age in years. Be patient and bear with them and do not be too quick to pounce on every misdemeanour at the first, but wait your time. Sadly some can be turned out of the way by rebukes and exhortations from overzealous Christians. As for yourself, are you a new believer? Are you tempted to give up because you do not make the progress you would like or perhaps have received severe criticism? Go to the Lord. Tell him and ask for His grace and strength to grow in your spiritual life. Acknowledge and confess your sins to God but, whatever you do, go on in faith. Growth in the body takes years and it is no different with your soul.

The man who made slow progress

John 7:50–53 speaks of Nicodemus making pointed remarks at a meeting of the chief priests and Pharisees. Now, it is true that he remained silent about his connection with Christ. When the question was asked, 'Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him?' he did not stand and confess the Lord. No doubt he ought to have done but the truth was that he did not. Perhaps his faith was still very weak and his courage failed him. Yet, for all that, he could not stay completely silent but forcefully asked, 'Doth our Law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?' That may be better than nothing but, Nicodemus, could you not have said more about Christ? Sooner or later you *must* declare yourself and openly confess the Saviour!

Here then is the important lesson. It may be easy to discuss good theological and moral issues but the target can be missed and Christ not spoken about. Romans 10:10 says, 'With the heart man believeth unto righteousness; *and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation*' (the emphasis is mine). When the Roman emperors started pronouncing themselves gods and divine, Christians were faced with a stark choice. They either cursed Christ and worshipped the emperor or acknowledged the Lord and resisted idolatry. Thus they faced life or death, freedom or imprisonment. Today in many parts of the earth it is not that different and even in the West there is a cost to pay and a cross to bear. Nicodemus, you did speak out and that is in your favour but it would have been better if you had testified to your newfound faith in Christ: and it would also be a remarkable thing if you and I were not so reluctant to acknowledge whose we are and whom we serve (Acts 27:23). Thank God for spiritual progress like that of Nicodemus

but pray God that the tender plant of faith grows to full height and produces wholesome fruit. As in Psalm 92:12–15, the righteous flourish like the palm tree and grow like a cedar in Lebanon and ‘still bring forth fruit in old age’.

The man who revealed love for Christ

John 19:39. Nothing else is said of Nicodemus until after the death and burial of the Lord. It is then written of him that he brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes weighing about one hundred pounds. These spices were used in the embalming of dead bodies and they surely speak of great love for the body of Jesus. Weak faith had developed into something stronger and fearfulness was turning into boldness. It may take a while, perhaps years in some cases, but genuine grace in the heart will always show itself. Salt in the diet will be tasted and a light in the house will shine. So it is with the true work of the Spirit in the soul when it shows love to Christ. Nicodemus could not help himself but had to provide the spices for the Lord’s body. Neither can you or I in our worship and service. All is done because of love for the Saviour and not merely out of a sense of duty. Love is shed abroad in the heart by the

Holy Spirit given to every believer (Romans 5:5) and finally no dam can prevent it from pouring out. Now it is this knowledge that is an encouragement to faith and spiritual progress. Anxious that you are not vibrant and strong in your Christian faith? Concerned about a fellow believer because he or she appears weak and spiritually lifeless? Then pray for them and yourself and all the while exercise patience and spiritual charity, especially toward others. When you want to judge another then remember yourself. Could it be said of you that you are rather like Nicodemus who at first said little and did hardly anything for Christ? In John 19:38 it also says of Joseph of Arimathaea that he was a secret disciple of the Lord. Secret, that is, until he placed the body of Jesus in his own tomb and then he became an open believer.

Lord Christ, grant the Holy Spirit and his boldness so that I stand openly for thee and confess thee to all. Not being a secret disciple or giving a weak profession but always ready to show the world that I am thine. I do not want to act unwisely and bring thee into disrepute but, all the same, I do not want to deny thee. Cause all men to know that I am thy disciple and give me the grace and strength to declare this. Amen. ¶

The Gospel Magazine Trust holds a complete set of bound volumes of the magazine from 1766 to date apart from the years 1772, 1799 and 1824. Additionally the volume for 1783 contains only January–September, missing October–December and January 1784, which was the final issue before a break in publication. If any of our readers can assist in locating the missing volumes with a view to acquisition, please contact the Editor. The set of volumes is currently held at St Mary’s Library, Castle Street, Reading, and is available for reference and study *by prior arrangement*. In addition a full set of issues has been scanned to the website at www.gospelmagazine.org.uk.

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THE GOSPEL IN CHINA

BY TONY LAMBERT

When I first lived in Beijing as a young diplomat¹ in 1973 there was not a single church open in the entire country (apart from 2 'show churches' run for foreign diplomats). Mao's Red Guards had closed and ransacked every single one. Occasionally as I cycled through the dingy streets I would come across a derelict church. Mao's infamous wife Jiang Qing boasted that Christianity in China was now a museum-piece only. Overseas, many liberal Christians in the World Council of Churches openly agreed that over a century of missionary endeavour had failed completely, and even suggested that Mao's atheistic communism in some convoluted way had replaced the Gospel in establishing a (Marxist) kingdom of heaven on earth in China. A handful of evangelical missionaries overseas such as David Adeney and Lesley Lyall of the old China Inland Mission which had been expelled by 1952 along with all other missions, established prayer groups for China which in the face of all the evidence stubbornly refused to believe that the flame of the Gospel had been extinguished.

It has been my privilege to work for the Lord in China for over 45 years and witness first-hand the extraordinary work of God in a complete turn-around of the situation.

In 1979 following Mao's death, Deng Xiaoping opened the country to the outside world and began a rapid programme of

modernisation which has completely transformed China. Under Mao it was a backward, impoverished nation but in just the last 30-40 years it has become an economic and political super-power challenging America for global dominance. What is less well known is the spiritual transformation that has taken place and continues to do so.

In 1949 when the Communist Party seized power there were only about 1 million Protestants of all denominations. In April this year I was talking with a young house-church leader near Shanghai who told me the government estimates some 50 million Protestants, while some overseas claim over 100 million but he believes the real figure to be closer to 70-80 million. This tallies with my own researches over many years drawing on government and house-church estimates. What has happened to bring about this explosive growth—the largest in church history—so that the church in Communist China now may have more evangelical Christians than in the United States?

It is an uncomfortable truth for the complacent Western church that the Chinese church has not only survived but flourished after 30 years of intense suffering and persecution (roughly 1949-79). During the 1950s increasing pressure was brought to bear on the Chinese churches, many of which were closed. A puppet church, controlled by the Three Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM), itself controlled by the Party, was set up; many pastors including such well-known preachers such as Wang Mingdao and Watchman Nee were sent to labour camps. In the 1980s I met Wang Mingdao who told me that he

had been in prison for 23 years simply for refusing to join the TSPM. His reasoning was simple: Christ is the Head of his church, not the Communist Party and although a loyal Chinese citizen he could not acknowledge ultimate spiritual authority to be monopolised by the atheistic Party. This Biblical logic is that which still guides the so-called 'house-church' movement which consists of millions of believers who prefer to take the risk to worship independently in the home or some other venue, free from State control.

In 1965 Mao unleashed the Cultural Revolution and the last churches were closed. However, the communists failed to understand that the true church is not centred in buildings but in the people of God born again by the Spirit. While some pastors apostatised, here and there faithful believers at great risk began to meet in twos and threes to pray and read the Bible—if they still had one. The Red Guards destroyed most of them. Here the Chinese propensity for rote learning came into its own, as many Christians memorised entire books of the Bible. Others listened clandestinely to Gospel radio, such as FEBC, and wrote down scripture which was broadcast at dictation speed. Such was the effectiveness of the 'bamboo curtain' that there was great rejoicing in Hong Kong when one listener's letter was smuggled out of China in the early 1970s!

I was in Shanghai in 1976 when Mao died. Many were already bitterly disillusioned by the abject failure of atheistic communism to usher in the promised classless utopia. Hardly a family had been untouched by the remorseless cycles of political purges and famine which had resulted in the death of over 50 million people (far more than under Hitler or Stalin). China suffered an immense spiritual vacuum which God in his mercy used to draw millions to himself.

In 1979 Deng Xiaoping eased restrictions on religion and churches were reopened under the auspices of the revamped TSPM. I was in Beijing soon after and witnessed how elderly believers wept silently as they went forward for the Lord's Supper—most had not been to a church service for 20 years. Every Sunday the congregation grew.

Since then over 60,000 churches have been opened under the auspices of the TSPM. In a remarkable turn-around the majority of these are now broadly evangelical. The old liberal neo-marxist politicised 'gospel' of the 1950s and 1960s has virtually no appeal; liberal theology which was pushed by the government and the former head of the TSPM, Bishop Ding, appears to have largely withered with his death a few years ago; having attended many church services in 'official' churches over the last 40 years I have to say that only rarely have I heard any political propaganda: usually the sermon is Biblical and edifying for a full 45 minutes. (The house-church pastors often preach for over an hour—a mark of the Chinese church is a hunger for the Word of God.)

Over the last 40 years thousands of churches have been repaired, enlarged or built anew. In cities it is common for Sunday services to attract several hundred or even over 1,000 people. New converts are flocking to both registered TSPM and unregistered house-churches. In Lanzhou in NW China I was ushered to the front pew of what was the former China Inland Mission church and told 'you've come on the right day! We're holding our baptism service.' 'For how many?' I enquired. 'Oh, two hundred!' The baptismal pool was opened and for several hours the pastors conducted baptisms by full immersion.

A Shanghai house-church pastor conducted clandestine baptisms in a remote farm-house. The baptisms began at 11 pm

¹ Tony Lambert worked as a diplomat for ten years with postings in Beijing and Tokyo. Then in 1982 he and his wife Frances joined OMF International to serve the Chinese church based in Hong Kong. They retired from OMF in 2016. They have two sons, Jonathan, and David, their Chinese son, whom they adopted in Hong Kong.

but continued until 1 pm the next day. He told me that the total number of converts baptised on that occasion totalled 1,100.

Pastor Samuel Lamb the leading house-church pastor in Guangzhou (Canton) whom I visited many times, told me he annually baptised 200–400 new converts over a period of twenty years. When he died a few years ago some 30,000 people (presumably mainly Christians) thronged the streets trying to reach the cemetery.

China has certainly enjoyed an amazing period of church growth and spiritual awakening on a massive scale. It has also seen revival. In 1982–84 reports reached Hong Kong of spiritual awakening in the Chinese rural heartland of Henan province; reading these reports of young evangelists preaching in rural markets with people convicted of sin and closing their shops to hear the gospel I was struck how similar they were to the reports of revival under the preaching of Whitefield and John Wesley. Chinese Christianity is marked by a strong emphasis on prayer and the Word of God and an intense zeal for evangelism which is seen as the duty of every believer.

However, it would be wrong to paint an idyllic picture. Explosive growth has its own problems. The lack of trained preachers has meant that cults and heresies have sprung up especially in the rural areas. The most bizarre and dangerous of these is Eastern Lightning which preaches a Chinese female messiah who has already appeared in Henan, to replace Jesus and the Bible.

Furthermore, although the days of savage persecution are past there are disturbing signs that the Party under Xi Jinping are cracking down quite severely. Four years ago out of the blue a vicious campaign was unleashed in Zhejiang (for years a very open province for Christians) to remove thousands

of crosses from church roofs and steeples. Several large churches were actually blown up. At the beginning of this year the mega-church in Linfen in Shanxi province was also blown up by militia. On my most recent visit in April 2018 house-church leaders told me that Sunday School and youth work was again becoming difficult. Several private Christian schools that had quietly opened over the last decade have been closed down. Joseph Gu, TSPM pastor of China's largest registered church which can seat 10,000 worshippers, was arrested for opposing the cross demolition campaign and only released in December 2017. He was dismissed from his pastorate in Hangzhou and threatened with 10 years in jail if he continues to preach. In February this year new, stricter religious regulations were enforced calling for government registration of all house-churches. Ominously, the Party is insisting that Christianity should be made 'compatible with socialism'.

As storm clouds again gather for the church in China one pastor shared with me an urgent prayer request: 'Pray that Christians will stand firm in the faith whatever the pressure.'

One thing is sure: the church in China we see today has grown out of the crucible of persecution. This is a hard lesson. But it may be one that we in the West can learn from and take courage from as we too face growing pressures. The Chinese church which has not only survived under persecution but grown exponentially is unashamedly evangelical. Chinese Christians hold the Bible to be the Word of God and see the cross and resurrection of Christ as central to their faith. It is this same gospel of Christ, which was brought to China by missionaries such as Robert Morrison and Hudson Taylor, not a false watered-down liberalism, which is now thriving in China. To God be the glory. ¶

FORMER DAYS

BEING A SUMMARY OF PAST ISSUES FROM *THE GOSPEL MAGAZINE*

250 years ago: July & August 1768

The **July** issue continues the series of studies in the Ten Commandments, with an exposition of the Fifth. 'The general scope of the fifth commandment is, the performance of those duties which we mutually owe to our several relations, as inferiors, superiors, or equals.' The want of knowledge of, and obedience to, this commandment serves to explain the appalling condition of our society today. It is followed by an exposition of the Sixth, in which, we are told, 'We are bound by this command to preserve our own life and the life of others; and this is to be understood not only of the life of the body, but also of the soul: And we are to use an lawful means for that end. We are not to use unlawful means, or lie, or venture upon any sin, to preserve our own life or the life of others. We must not do evil that good may come.' The duty of all in this matter is then set forth. Then comes the Seventh Commandment. 'This Seventh commandment requireth the preservation of our own and our neighbour's chastity, in heart, speech, and behaviour.' Many places of Scripture are quoted to demonstrate the truth of this claim.

The biographical sketch is a life of Basil of Caesarea, who contended against the Arians. There is much about the man, though little about the nature of the controversy.

The Dialogue between Christian and Truth reaches Canticles 1:3, where the ointment is taken for the 'softening, healing and odoriferous nature of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.' There is blessing and comfort for the child of God in reading this portion.

The Casuistical Divinity question asks,

'Whether a person can desire the blood of Christ to be applied to his soul and yet be a hypocrite.' The answer comes in three parts; first, what is meant by the blood of Christ (*ans.* the whole of his saving work, especially his atoning death); how the blood is applied (*ans.* by imputation to us on God's part, and by believing on our part); and to what purpose is the blood shed and applied (*ans.* to justify us before God, to cleanse our conscience, and to sanctify us). The article concludes with points of application.

The affair of the Oxford Students continues to be treated, and then parts of a tract, from 1639, on Jacob wrestling with God, are reproduced. The issue concludes with poetry. The **August** issue continues with the Eighth, and 'The sum of this command may be gathered from the following scriptures.' These are, Ephesians 4:28, 1 Thessalonians 4:6, and Leviticus 19:11, 13, 15, 36. 'The duties required in the Eighth Commandment, are truth, faithfulness, and justice in contracts and commerce between man and man'. Then we have the Ninth; 'The duties required in the Ninth Commandment are the preserving and promoting of truth between man and man'. Finally, 'This [Tenth] command requireth contentment with our own condition, with a charitable frame of spirit towards our neighbour and all that is his'. The whole exposition concludes with a section explaining man's inability to keep the commandments.

The biography is of Origen, who was a prolific expositor, and who suffered for the faith throughout most of his life. Origen's writings are often found to contain

objectionable statements, but in his own lifetime he complained that heretics were busy inserting their own opinions into his works, or altering his words to suit their opinions, in order to have them accepted as orthodox. It is also pointed out that a man who wrote as much as he did must have been unable to be as attentive to everything he set down as he ought to have been, and so we should be careful not to be harsh in our judgment of the man, even if we steer clear of his writings.

The Dialogue continues the consideration of Christ as our ointment. The Casuistical Divinity takes up the meaning of the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace. It is reproduced elsewhere in this issue. The tract on Jacob's wrestling is continued, at some length. The issue ends with poetry, and the first, on The Joy of Heaven, is well worth reading.

200 year ago: July and August 1818

The issue begins with a meditation on 'Christ the Father's Gift' from Isaiah 55:4. It is followed by the next part of the treatment of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. This is a much-neglected doctrine, as Thomas Goodwin complained (see 'The Holy Ghost' in *Old Paths* by J.C. Ryle).

A controversy is continued, dealing with the question of the origin of souls. The writer, 'Impartial observer', whose words had been the subject of a previous reply, seeks to demonstrate from Scripture that God resting from his work on the seventh day does not require us to believe that he must have created all the souls of mankind before that day, contra the author's opponent. God, he argues, continues to create, especially in the new birth. Neither does the opponent's position, that he is the progenitor of his children's souls, stand up, since Scripture teaches plainly that, at death, the spirit shall return

to God who gave it. Much of what follows reads as self-vindication, including a complaint that The Gospel Magazine contains too many typographical errors (some things do not change!).

The controversial writer is then the subject of the next piece, in which he is suspected of misrepresenting Dr Hawker, whose views on sanctification gave rise to the whole controversy. The writer of this piece, who signs himself 'A card', suggests that Impartial observer has misunderstood Hawker, and imputed error to him unfairly.

Notes on Romans 8:28 follows, and show that all things do work together for good, often in the face of immense difficulty. Joseph and Job in particular are set forward as examples of this truth. A not dissimilar piece comes next, on The burdens of the flesh, by Upsilon.

A book review, on old age, takes up several pages, and is followed by more of the review of the book against Dr Hawker's book.

Another review, this time of a sermon, is given next. It concerns a Mr Maddox who was turned out of his curacy by the vicar of his church, for 'Being a Calvinist, preaching extemporary, expounding in a private house in the parish, and taking the Bible with him in the pulpit.' The main interest to *The Gospel Magazine* lay in the fact that the vicar justified his actions by taking William Cadogan as his example. Cadogan had sacked a parish preacher in Chelsea, appointed by the residents of the parish, and had installed Erasmus Middleton (an Editor of this publication) instead. Not long afterwards Cadogan died, Middleton was ejected by the next vicar, and the sacked man reinstated. The next review is of a sermon against using outward forms to suppress sin, but instead urging true conversion. The final review is of one of Dr Hawker's books, *A true portrait of Antinomianism*. Poetry concludes the issue.

The August issue begins with a meditation on Soul Satisfaction. This is followed by a continuation of the Hawker controversy, this time from one who wishes to defend the doctrine of progressive sanctification. [William Perkins is a great help to this, in his exposition of Jude. There, he states that our being sanctified is our being born again, and that the regenerate show their new birth by a life of obedience. Since that obedience does, or ought to, improve over time through the inward operations of the Holy Spirit, some may consider this to demonstrate progressive sanctification. However, it is, in Perkins' view, the necessary outworking of our being sanctified, not an increase in that sanctification. The main benefit of Perkins' view is that we are delivered from a reliance on bodily exercises (see the summary of the previous month above) and instead learn to live in the fulness of our being saved by the blood of Christ.—Ed.]

Notes on Hebrews 13:10–19 follow, and then our Impartial observer returns to cast doubt on a claim made earlier that there is a natural light by which people are better able to understand Scripture. He is on safer ground here than in his previous writing.

A piece on Communion with God is followed by an examination of the sense in which Christ is the first fruits of them that slept.

Controversy raises its head again, this time with A Query, asking whether the elect were justified from the beginning. The query arises from a sermon in which the preacher described eternal justification as eternal nonsense, and accused all who hold the doctrine of being Antinomians. It is hard to disagree with the preacher. Further controversial matters are covered. Poetry concludes the issue.

100 years ago: July and August 1918

The issue opens with a sermon on Divinely-wrought salvation. There is very little direct reference to the War, in spite of the sermon's theme. Wayside Notes on Wondrous Things from Psalm 119:18 come after a short poem, and Wellsprings meditates on the conversion of Saul of Tarsus.

A sermon by James Ormiston on the Holy Spirit of Power leads into Part VI of Jacob's Sons and Moses' Tribes. Issachar is the son and tribe under consideration here. Lessons are drawn from the upper and nether springs (Joshua 15:19), and Echoes from a country church consist of a sermon on the Trinity from Galatians 4:6. Thoughts on brotherly love follow.

An interesting piece on the writer of the hymn, 'All hail the power of Jesus' name' and the composer of the tune is reproduced from a Canadian publication—the hymn was first published in *The Gospel Magazine* in 1779. 'The dying thief a type of the Church', from A. Moody Stuart's commentary on the Song of Solomon (4:11), leads into Thoughts on Psalm 119:152–4. Letters come next, and then a treatise on whether the Established Church really holds to a doctrine of Apostolic Succession, as Bishop Daniel Wilson is quoted as promoting. The writer turns to the 39 Articles for help, and finds none for Bishop Wilson (who, readers will know was a most able defender of the scriptural doctrine and practice of the Lord's Day. Scripture). Antiquity and the Reformers are all shown to uphold the same position. Two short reviews conclude the issue.

The August issue begins with a sermon on Romans 8:16, and another on the mercifulness of God, Deuteronomy 4:31, with two poems between. Wellsprings meditates on the various promises in Isaiah

42:16, and is followed by a sermon on Isaiah 6:3, 'Proclamation, Prostration, Pardon'. 'Mindful of him', Psalm 8:4 is followed by Gad in the 'Joseph's sons and Moses' tribes' series. A piece arguing against the decorating of churches, particularly for Easter and Harvest, is followed by a report of the thanksgiving service for the silver wedding anniversary of the King and Queen. Notice of the next national day of prayer, commanded by the King for August 4, is reproduced.

The *Gospel Magazine* reports its own

need of funds, due to an increase in printing and postage rates. The Echoes from a country church are a sermon on 1 Peter 1:22. Thoughts on Psalm 119 reach verse 158, an obituary notice for the late Rev. J.B. Waddington, founder of the Evangelical Protestant Union, and a brief book review, conclude the issue

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

STUDIES IN II PETER

BY EDWARD MALCOLM (Reading)

2 Peter 3:13

Since we must be fruitful in good works if we are to show that our claim to being justified by faith is a true claim, it follows that we need time in which to bring forth such works. So Peter adds that we are to account the long suffering of the Lord as salvation; God graciously gives us time to work the works of God, as he holds back (from our point of view) the day of Christ's return.

The effect of this is to cause us to view the long time between the first and second advents, not as reasons to lose heart, but as opportunities to work while it is still day.²

This doctrine is not peculiar to Peter, but his readers know that Paul has taught the same thing in his epistles. Paul was plagued by Judaizers, who followed him around, entered the churches he had planted after he moved on, and tried to undo his ministry

² John 9:4.

by calling on the converts to submit to circumcision. They came claiming the authority of the Jerusalem apostles, Peter, James, John, etc. The effect was to make it seem that the apostles were divided, and that those who followed Paul were believing a different gospel from the one taught by the 'original' apostles. So Peter adds this comment, that he and Paul speak with one voice on this most important matter; and it is most important, for if there is no need to be fruitful in good works, nor to be justified by faith and so be in a right standing with God through faith in Christ's finished work, then the alternative must be submission to circumcision and the works of the law. Thus Peter is showing here that his doctrine of justification by faith alone, through grace alone, in Christ alone, is that which Paul also teaches; if they will hear Peter, let them also hear Paul. Note that Peter adds, 'according to the wisdom given unto him', showing that Paul's doctrine is by

revelation of God, and not by his own invention, as many accuse him today.

That Peter is aware of the confusion caused by Paul's enemies is shown by his next words, 'As also in all his epistles', etc. What Peter means is this, that as Paul has been accused of teaching novelty on this point, so he is accused of the same on various other points. But, as Peter and Paul speak with one voice on justification by faith, so they do on all other points. How, then, are readers confused? The fault lies not with Paul, but with the readers. Note what Peter has to say concerning them. 'They that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, to their own destruction'. Two key points arise from this.

The first is that ignorance of doctrine is the underlying cause of our inability to understand scripture. To be unlearned is to be untaught; not in the sense of lacking literacy, but in the sense of lacking a spiritual education. This is why we must both read the Bible for ourselves, and hear sermons, that we may be taught the truth.

The second is that lack of faith is the underlying cause of ignorance of doctrine. When Peter speaks of those who are unstable, he means those who waver in their faith. There is not that perfect love which casteth out fear; there is not that steadfast faith in Christ which holds fast to him come what may. Peter knows the reality of this all too well, for when Christ came walking on the water to the vessel in which he and his fellow disciples were sailing in the storm, Jesus called him to come out of the boat and to walk to him on the water. And Peter did! He walked on the water, and was born up by a substance which, by nature, is incapable of bearing up the weight of a human being. Yet Peter walked on the water because he had faith in Jesus Christ, and was obedient to

his command. So why did he begin to sink? Because, taking his eyes off Christ, he began to notice the enormity of his actions. He began to consider the conditions; not just that he was walking on water, but that the wind and the waves were boisterous. This caused him to be afraid, and that fear rendered his faith so weak that he began to sink.

So those whose faith is not pure, but who are afraid, or who doubt, and who therefore will not hold fast to sound doctrine, allow themselves to become confused by Scripture. Since they have no governing principle in reading Scripture, no vision of Christ before their eyes, no strong hope of heaven through their being justified by faith, they read the Bible with half-blinded eyes. The effect is to make them unable to see what is there, and so they turn from one thing to another, and become more and more confused. In their confusion they blame the Bible, and its authors, for lack of clarity, and then they begin to construct interpretations of the Bible to suit their own tastes. The effect is at best heterodoxy (believing something which differs from what is true) and at worst heresy (believing something contrary to the truth). And they blame the Bible for all their confusion!

That this problem is not of Paul's making is declared when Peter says, 'as they do also the other scriptures'. This is how the whole of the Bible is treated, although we note in passing that Peter is content to describe Paul's writing as scripture; and, since he is showing that there is no difference between his writings and Paul's, by extension he is saying that his own writings are scripture. Of course, the word scripture simply means writing, that which has been enscribed; but there comes a point when we have to accept that a word becomes a technical term, and here we are justified in saying that scripture means not just

any writing, but that which comes from the apostles, with their full authority as apostles.

What lesson ought Peter's readers learn? A simple one; they know already that Peter and Paul speak with one voice on justification, and on the need for fruitfulness in good works, and they know also how they are to read the writings of the apostles. Therefore they are not to take notice of any teacher who tries to make them take up a different interpretation of the truth, for in so doing they will corrupt their testimony, and be led to establish their own righteousness instead.

Thus falling from their own steadfastness, they will become lost, as there is no alternative state beyond these two.

Rather, they are to grow in grace; that is, they are to show forth more and more the benign influence of the Holy Spirit in their lives. They are to display more and more the graces and gifts of the Lord Jesus Christ. They are to enlarge their understanding of Christian truth, and desire to be instructed in all such things. Peter will take no credit for it; let all glory be ascribed to Christ, in this world and the next. ¶

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE LORD'S DAY

BY NINOS A. HADJIROUSOU (Cheltenham)

Take into account the words 'blessed' and 'sanctified'

Genesis 2:3 says 'And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.'

Let us remind ourselves once again of MacArthur's arguments: a) there is no specific Sabbath law given to Adam, b) it says nothing of a day of worship, c) it is completely isolated to God. But here in the Scriptures, we see two acts of omission that man is obligated to follow. Here we have God's PRESCRIPTION.

God blessed the day with a purpose

God 'blessed the seventh day and sanctified it'. Did God really simply ordain this day in creation just for himself? Does it have

nothing to do with man observing it? The answer is: no. God is holy. He has everything and so it does not make sense for him to appoint a day for himself. The fact that God ordains this specific day to be blessed, means that God made this day to be a law not for himself, but for man.

What does it mean when it says God 'blessed' the day? We know from Scripture how God blesses a man or a land. But how does he bless a day? What was God's purpose for blessing it?

If we look in Genesis 1:22 we will find that God blessed animals: 'And God created great whales, and every living creatures that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God blessed

them saying: Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth' (Genesis 1:21, 22). We see God not only acting as the Creator, creating, but also providing a purpose for each creature that he created. After God created them he then blesses them and gives them instruction on what to do 'be fruitful and multiply'. According to this text, a blessing means that it is given a purpose.

If you're given something to do, then there is a meaning or a purpose behind it. God also, as we read on, blessed man by creating him in God's image (Genesis 1:27). Moreover, God gave man a purpose. He revealed it when he 'blessed them': 'And God blessed them, and God said unto them: Be fruitful and multiply' (Genesis 1:28). We observe that God blessed man by giving him a purpose. Then God gave him the ability to fulfil that purpose. This is how God blesses.

Therefore, as we read Genesis 2:1-3, we see the same manner/pattern in which God blesses something. God blesses first the day, then he gives it a purpose, and then God gives the ability for man to keep it holy. The point is this: God did not make the Sabbath just for himself. Just like everything else God created, God blessed and God prescribed to man a purpose for him to do on the Sabbath.

The purpose of man is to simply imitate God by keeping it holy. What is obedience to God, other than mere worship? As we read in Romans 12:1 'by the mercies of God, ... present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable (natural) service (worship)'. God revealed to man in Genesis 2:2-3 that this day is a unique day, it is a special day for a purpose. Isaiah 58:14 confirms that if you keep the Lord's Day holy, you will be blessed. The Lord Jesus in Mark 2:27 confirms that 'the Sabbath was made for man', that is, it was assigned to man

for the purpose of worshipping God on that special day so that man would be blessed.

As Jonathan Edwards wrote:

What could be the meaning of God's resting the seventh day, and hallowing and blessing it, which he did, before the giving of the fourth commandment, unless he hallowed and blessed it with respect to mankind? For he did not bless and sanctify it with respect to himself, or that he within himself might observe it: as that is most absurd. And it is unreasonable to suppose that he hallowed it only with respect to the Jews, a particular nation, which rose up above two thousand years after.

Remember that this is before the fall of Adam and the flood (Genesis 3). Adam was perfect and without sin. He was righteous before God. The question that we must consider carefully is, what does a perfect and righteous man like Adam do on the seventh day? Answer: he obeys and worships God. He worships God by keeping the day holy.

This proves that the Sabbath was a creation ordinance, and is not based on Jewish ceremonialism which was dispensed in the Mosaic Law. The moral law was given because sin was in the world. The Mosaic economy arrived with its Jewish Sabbaths after Genesis 3 when man was already fallen, and after Exodus 16. So for some reason MacArthur believes that the Sabbath began to exist under the Mosaic covenant on Mount Sinai in Exodus 20. But such thinking is faulty and illogical as we have shown above.

The Sabbath-keeping command in Genesis 2 has its relevance as a creation ordinance for the following reasons: It belongs in the order of things which God made of man. Ask yourself, is it rational for us to think that God ordained the Sabbath just for himself,

without anyone worshipping him? I think not, dear friends. And surely God does not need us to worship him because he is alone. God created man and blessed man by giving him one whole day to worship his creator. What we have to consider is: what was God's purpose in stopping work after six days and then resting on the seventh day? Was it for himself? Not at all, for God never becomes weary and tired. So what other explanation could there be but this: that God did so that man would imitate him and follow that pattern? Edwards agreed

that it was [God's] mind, that mankind should, after his example, work six days, and then rest, and hallow or sanctify the next following; and that they should sanctify every seventh day, or that the space between rest and rest, one hallowed time and another, among his creatures here upon earth, should be six days.—So that it hence appears to be the mind and will of God, that not only the Jews, but men in all nations and ages, should sanctify one day in seven: which is the thing we are endeavouring to prove.

God prescribes man to keep it holy

Please note also the word 'sanctified'. The word means that it is a day to be pronounced or observed as clean. A.W. Pink said, 'the prime meaning (according to its scriptural usage) of the Hebrew word rendered 'sanctified' and 'hallowed' is 'to set apart for sacred use'.' Again, it simply sets this day apart from other days. It is described as an elevated day, unique from all other days of the week. God blessed it, God sanctified it or made it holy and God rested from all his works. MacArthur is right to say that this verse does not explicitly instruct Adam to follow specific instructions of what to do or what not to do. Indeed, the Holy Spirit does not mention

anything on how to keep the day holy with comparison to Exodus 16 and Exodus 20. But why is the seventh day and not any other day or all days to be called 'holy'?

Evidently, this simply proves that God designed a pattern and a purpose which man was to follow, in order to keep this day holy remembering God and his wondrous works. Thus, God places an obligation, an omission for all mankind that after six days of work, man will rest on the seventh day. And that on the seventh day man is commanded to keep this day as a holy day.

Consider the words of the Lord

In Mark 2:27–28 we read, 'And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath.'

Would you notice with me the following words of our Lord, 'the Sabbath was made for man'. Jesus is reminding the Pharisees of the original institution of the Sabbath. He is not referring here to the Jewish ceremonial rules. This is a theology which originates all the way back to the beginning of time. Jesus explains why man has to 'rest' on the Sabbath.

Why rest? Christ came into the world to take away the burdens of sin which man could not keep. That includes man's failure to keep all the threefold precept of the Law: moral, ceremonial and civil. Christ, on the other hand, was fully qualified and able to keep them all perfectly. His righteous life and death on the cross, which sanctified the wrath of God which was against us, was evident through his rising from the dead, on the first day of the week. Henceforth, the Law was removed over our heads as it were, ready to condemn us. And the laws dispensed for the nation of Israel alone (ceremonial and civil) were abolished. Man can now approach his creator by faith in the Lord Jesus' finished

work, and find spiritual rest. He can have communion with God. Christians in the New Testament know that what was known as the Sabbath on the seventh day, has moved to the first day of the week (1 Corinthians 16:2) because of Christ's resurrection. This is why the first day of the week is also known to all believers as the Lord's Day (Revelation 1:10). Christ is the Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:28). This is God's gift to his church.

Have you ever wondered why do we need to rest from all our normal activities of the week on Sunday? Because God gave this day to man to remember the great victory of his Son who rose from the dead for our sake. Read Exodus 16:29 where God says this day is 'given' to us.

Jesus says this day was 'made for man'. Rest does not simply mean physical rest from work. It means to enjoy time in the worshipping of God. Rest means to finally have a whole day being able to contemplate and worship God more than the previous days of the week. This is referring to our ultimate spiritual rest (Hebrews 4:3, 9).

What do we mean by that? On a technical note, in Hebrews 4:3, 9, the word 'rest' is used twice in verse 3 to mean 'a place of rest'. The other word 'rest' in v. 9 is literally 'sabbatism' (σαββατισμός, *sabbatismos*) which is understood as 'keeping the Sabbath'. This means that our spiritual rest is found by worshipping God in keeping his day.

Worshipping God, whether it be Bible reading, evangelism, listening to the preaching of God's word, speaking about God and his dealings with mankind, about his attributes, about the gospel and how it impacted our lives; all these are categorized as 'rest'. If we 'rest' on Sunday worshipping God, Isaiah 58:14 promises that we shall delight in the Lord and be spiritually blessed. Hence, not only do we find our rest in God on that day,

we also find our blessing and delight by observing and honouring his holy day.

So, Christian, why should anyone of us neglect such a precious day as this?

We conclude that God ordained the seventh day to keep it holy, by demonstrating to man that, in one day out of all the rest of the days of the week, man will have one day to enjoy and rest in him. That man who worships God shall delight in him.

Secondly, notice what Jesus also says in verse 28 'Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath'. MacArthur believes that the Sabbath is not an obligation for Christians any more. I would disagree with him on this very important point.

If that is true, why would Jesus be Lord of the Sabbath, if it were planned to be buried with him in the tomb along with all the other ceremonial keepings which were commanded under the Mosaic law? It is illogical to believe that the Lord would say 'I will rule the Sabbath and I will be Lord of it' if the Sabbath were going to die. What is the point if a Lord is lording over something that really does not exist anymore? MacArthur believes that the Sabbath, the Fourth Commandment does not exist. If that is the case, then logically speaking, neither does the Lordship of Christ over the Sabbath. Yet it is without a shadow of a doubt that the Lord Jesus himself did not believe in the end of the Sabbath!

For what Christ is stating here is his right and authority to say so since Christ is the one who said, 'keep it holy' (Genesis 2:3), because he is, as Mark 2:28 says, 'Lord also of the Sabbath.' Since the Lord Jesus Christ stated this, it implies clearly that what was instituted in Genesis 2:3 is still in force for Christians today for the sake Christ's Lordship.

As Professor John Murray explains:

What the Lord is affirming is that the Sabbath has its place within the sphere

of his messianic Lordship and that he exercises lordship over the Sabbath because the Sabbath was made for man. Since he is Lord of the Sabbath it is his to guard it against those distortions and perversions with which Pharisaism had surrounded it and by which its truly beneficent purpose has been defeated. But

he is also its Lord to guard and vindicate its permanent place within that messianic Lordship which he exercises over all things—he is Lord of the Sabbath, too.¹ ¶

¹ <http://www.newhopefairfax.org/files/30.%20Sabbath%20by%20Murray.pdf>

BOOK REVIEW

Conversations with a Dying Man

Samuel Rutherford

Reformation Press, 2017. 77 pp pbk £4.95 ISBN 978-1-912042-00-5

This book, first published anonymously as *The Last and Heavenly Speeches and Glorious Departure of John Gordon, Viscount Kenmure* in 1649, recounts the pastoral ministrations of Samuel Rutherford to John Gordon.

John Gordon was a Scottish Lord who had made a bold profession of Presbyterian belief, and was instrumental in Rutherford being appointed to the parish of Anwoth; but who, when called upon to oppose King Charles' proposals for the Church of Scotland and its Presbyterian principles, had absented himself in order to gain favour with the king, 'I deserted the Parliament for fear of incurring the indignation of my prince, and the loss of further honour, which I certainly expected' (p.14). He developed a fever which cause his 'premature' (sic) death at the age of thirty-five (p. 5) He considered this to be the Lord's chastening hand upon him. He lost all his assurance and was brought into despair being brought to a sensible acknowledgment of his sinful condition and, shortly before his death, was granted peace in believing. During his last illness Samuel Rutherford undertook pastoral ministrations to him, the record of which is faithfully recorded in these pages, John Gordon dying in full assurance of faith 12 September 1634: 'And so died he sweetly and holily, and his end was peace. He departed about the setting of the sun, September 12, 1634. Blessed are they who die in the Lord' (p.77).

We have a record here of faithful pastoral dealings of a Puritan/Presbyterian minister with one of his flock.

The book contains biographical details of John Gordon, Viscount Kenmuir and Lady Kenmuir. There is also an introduction by Rutherford which this reviewer found to be most profitable—pages 20-29, especially his comments upon the conscience.

Buy this book for two reasons—to see an example of Puritan/Presbyterian Pastoral dealings, and, for Rutherford's introduction.

JEN

Martin Luther's exposition of The Lord's Prayer

Henry Sant (ed)

The Huntingtonian Press, 2017. 113pp ppc £6.95 ISBN 978-1-901716-08-5

Anyone familiar with Martin Luther's preaching style will likely be prepared for the way in which the great Reformer expounds the Lord's Prayer. Anyone who is not may be taken aback by his style. For Luther, the Lord's Prayer is the ultimate abasement of the one who prays—assuming they actually pray from the heart in faith, and not from the lips only. He treats the introduction and the seven petitions as examples of how all Scripture is to be understood, in that it both makes sinners and makes righteous. Properly read, understood and applied, the Word of God exposes us as sinners. That we pray to our Father in heaven shows that we are exiled children. That we pray for the hallowing of his name shows that we do not hallow his name as we ought. That we pray for the coming of his kingdom shows that we are not living in it as we ought, and this helps to explain why we are exiled from our Father. That we pray that his will might be done on earth as it is in heaven is a confession that we do not obey or do his will as we ought, which further explains why we are exiled children. As for the petitions, we pray for our daily bread (taken by Luther to mean spiritual bread, and therefore Christ) because we cannot live for a moment outside God's grace. As for our praying for forgiveness as we forgive others, he says we may as well demand not to be forgiven if we will not forgive others. And so he goes, always tearing down every possible finger-hold for pride in us, and exposing our weakness and failings.

Yet all the while Luther is pointing the reader to Christ and his gospel, as the only means provided by which we may be strengthened, in whom we will have the things we pray for, and for whom they are given. This is a most encouraging exposition, as Luther both probes our wounds and applies the balm of Christ, if only we will humble ourselves before the Word of God. In this way the Scripture, properly expounded and applied, also makes righteous.

This edition was specially produced for the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. It includes a short sermon of Luther's on the Lord's Prayer, and an extract from his Catechism by way of an introduction to the Prayer. There are a few minor typographical errors, but the book is nicely produced, and at a size that will (just) fit in a jacket pocket. Highly recommended.

EJM

Exposition by Martin Luther of Isaiah 9:4-7

Watkin Maddy (trans)

The Huntingtonian Press, 2016. 16pp bklt £1.45

From the publisher, 72a Upper Northam Rd, Hedge End, Southampton, SO30 4EB

This little booklet contains Luther's own translation and exposition of a well-known passage. At the time of its translation it was not available except in the original German. Maddy was a graduate of St John's College, Cambridge, a published astronomer, and an ordained clergyman. The DNB says, 'His character was of the highest stamp.'

The manuscript was found among his papers, and was published in 1884. Its republication is to be welcomed, for, although Luther followed his own translation (Wonderful, Counsellor, The Stedfast, The Valiant, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace) his application is, as usual, full of spiritual comfort.

The first verse, v. 4, is taken to speak of 'death, sin, and the law, under whose lawful dominion fallen men are'. The only hope of those who are oppressed by this yoke of bondage is 'this Child which to us is born, and this Son which to us is given' (p.5). Luther goes on to speak powerfully of the true weight of sin, against which only Christ is offered and promised. Through the preaching of the gospel our hearts are awakened to love Christ (p.6), and only he can turn the law from being our executioner to being our guide.

Luther then expounds the names of Christ as set out by the prophet, and shows how each is wonderfully suited to answering the needs of guilty sinners, so that we might know the forgiving love and tender mercies of a gracious heavenly Father.

Though brief, there is much comfort and encouragement here, not least in the evident delight of Luther in the person of his blessed Saviour. May we all share his delight and love, as objects of grace and mercy.

EJM

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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.

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