

JULY–AUGUST 2019

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The Gospel Magazine



The bread of life • 'Without excuse' • Christ's death: a propitiatory sacrifice

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1766–2019

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.

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EDITORIAL

THE place of the law in the life of the believer has been a cause of controversy for as long as the Christian Church has existed. Christ corrected the wrong interpretation of the law when he preached the Sermon on the Mount. The Pharisees and others had come to understand the various laws in particular ways, but these ways were not according to God’s will and intention in giving such statutes. Our blessed Saviour showed that true law-keeping does not consist in an outward observance of the letter, but in a right understanding of the intention and meaning of each law. Thus the law on adultery is not kept by simply not committing the act, but by not having straying, impure thoughts regarding a member of the opposite sex. Observance of the outward act is quite straightforward—although its necessity is largely denied by the actions of many today—but to keep the true law requires that new heart and nature that comes only to the regenerate.

The debate over the place of the law was a little different in the times of the apostles. We know of those who came out from

Jerusalem, purporting to have apostolic authority to require non-Jewish converts to submit to circumcision in order to truly know the lordship of Christ. Paul in particular stood out against this denial of the sufficiency of Christ’s atoning sacrifice. His epistles are full of warnings against turning aside from faith to works, telling his readers plainly that to come under circumcision is to come under the whole law. Since the Jews themselves could not keep the law, how could they expect anyone else to do so?

Today the argument is different again. Some, saying that Christ is the end, or *telos* of the law (which is correct) then argue that the believer is free from the law. He *is* free from the law as far as righteousness goes, in that none can establish their right standing before God on the basis of law-keeping. He is *not* free from the law as regards his living as a believer. No believer may have other gods, or worship idols, or take God’s name in vain, or fail to keep the sabbath day holy, or refuse to honour father and mother, or kill, steal, commit adultery, bear false witness or covet.

Only a rank heretic would argue that a believer can do such a thing.

But what of those laws that are peculiarly Jewish, the law of Israel through Moses? Are we to ban mixed-fibre clothing, or the eating of prawn cocktails, or pork sausages? Are we to require men not to shave the corners of their beards, and so on? We know that the rules directing temple worship, and the Levitical priesthood, are not to be imported wholesale into the Christian Church; when attempts have been made, Roman Catholicism and Anglo-catholicism have been the dreadful results.

We distinguish between laws that are moral and laws that are ceremonial. We affirm that the former are of force today—not, as we have said, to establish our righteousness, but as the rule of life for the believer. After all, a moral is one that directs our manners, the way in which we live. A moral law distinguishes right from wrong. Therefore a moral law is commanded because it is just. A ceremonial law, on the other hand, is just because it is commanded, and may as easily be altered or abrogated at the will of the Law-giver. A moral law may not be altered, since it is by its very nature a reflection of the moral character of the Law-giver. Were our heavenly Father to change the moral law, we would be required to acknowledge mutability in the Godhead. And if God is mutable he is not constant. And if he is not constant we cannot trust his word since it too must be liable to change.

If the moral law reflects the character of God, how can it not be a rule of life for the believer? By what other standard will we judge our walk, and measure our adherence to or departure from the right path? How may we know that the sanctified life we live in the Holy Spirit is not merely a product of our own imagination? To propose that the

Holy Spirit grants an inner light or some other form of subjective direction, is to run perilously close to the worst excesses of extreme Anabaptism. This is a fault of modern Charismatics. We must not be guilty of such things.

Similarly, if we would be those who mortify the deeds of the flesh, how shall we know what to mortify and what to nurture? Unless there is an objective and absolute standard of right and wrong—morality, by any reasonable definition—we run the risk of trying to kill off what our heavenly Father gives and nurture what he does not.

The moral law has two other uses, as all who are familiar with Protestant doctrine know. It has a civil use, in directing the laws of a Christian commonwealth. It may be arguable whether we still live in such a commonwealth today, but where there is good government, its laws will have some acknowledgment of the moral law of God.

The other use of the law is in the awakening of the consciences of the careless and unbelieving. Many are convinced that they have done no wrong, or any wrong they have done is so minor as to merit no consequences. A right preaching of the moral law delivers hearers from such false and fatal misconceptions. It is not just careless and unbelieving people who need the moral law; any self-confessed Christian whose life is not right with the Lord will benefit from a reminder that the moral law is God's word and a revelation of his will. It is therefore the duty of all gospel ministers to rightly preach the law—not to establish righteousness, since none will be declared righteous through law-keeping. The law is preached that we may be a law-abiding people. What good will it do to obey the law of man, and not the law of God? Judge ye in this matter, and know whose law carries most weight. ¶

A SERMON ON ISAIAH 1:2–3

REV. C. TUINMAN (1659–1728)

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

Part 4

Children

The favoured ones were children. Understand by this Abraham's descendents, the Israelites and especially those from Judah, whereof God speaketh here by Isaiah. God even honoureth them by the honourable name of children, not only by creation (Malachi 2:10; Luke 3:38; Acts 17:28), but because they belonged to God's covenant with Abraham and his seed (Romans 9:4). This name is often given to them (Deuteronomy 14:1; Isaiah 63:8; Exodus 4:22). This was certainly an inexpressible felicity! And God wanteth to be called their Father by them. It was: 'Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My father, thou art the guide of my youth?' (Jeremiah 3:4). This was only in full power for the truly regenerated among this nation and of those it is said: 'Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember

him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the LORD' (Jeremiah 31:20, *cf.* Malachi 3:17; Psalm 103:13). Although the heir was still a child under the old dispensation (Galatians 4:1), yet the others enjoyed already many and great benefits from the covenant fellowship as well (Isaiah 5:4; Jeremiah 2:31; Micah 6:1). But they had made themselves unworthy of the name children (Deuteronomy 32:5, 6, 15). God doth call them children, but not 'my children', while they did not behave themselves as children of God, but as children of Belial. Therefore it follows: 'Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corruptors: they have forsaken the LORD, they provoked the holy One of Israel to anger, they are gone away backward' (v.4; *cf.* Psalm 50:16).

TO BE CONTINUED

THE BREAD OF LIFE

by CARINE MACKENZIE

ISN'T it amazing to see the vast number of products that are on offer in the supermarket. I probably only buy about twenty items each time I go, but I almost always have bread in my trolley. There are many types to choose from but bread is a staple item in my shopping. We use it every day—toast for breakfast, or a sandwich for lunch perhaps.

Bread is important for our daily nourishment. When Jesus taught his followers how to pray, one of the petitions is 'Give us this day our daily bread.' We are dependent on God for every bite of food we take and for all our needs.

Jesus was led out into the wilderness after he was baptised and there he was tempted by the devil (Matthew 4). He fasted there for forty days and forty nights, and he was hungry. The devil tempted him saying, 'If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.' Jesus resisted the devil with wise words from the book of Deuteronomy (8:3). 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.'

Food for our body is important for life but there is a more vital priority—food for our never-dying souls. That food is found in God's written word which is inspired, inerrant and trustworthy. We need to feed on God's word day by day. This causes us to grow in grace.

Jesus knew that hungry people need feeding. He miraculously multiplied two little fish and five small loaves of bread to feed a vast crowd of 5,000 men plus women and children (Matthew 14:13–21). Jesus had compassion on the crowd and satisfied their physical hunger.

Jesus is the only one who can truly satisfy our spiritual hunger. Sometimes we think that new clothes or more toys or a special holiday will satisfy and make us happy. But we soon learn that that satisfaction does not last. Even if we get all we could wish for, we still have an emptiness in our heart.

After Jesus had fed the 5,000, many came looking for him (John 6:25). Jesus accused them of just looking for him because they had eaten the miraculous bread he had provided. Jesus told them not to labour for the food which perishes. 'Labour for that meat (food) which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you.' How do we receive that food? By believing in God and in his Son whom he has sent.

God gave the children of Israel manna, bread from heaven, on their journey through the wilderness. God gives true bread from heaven which gives life to the world. The folk who came to Jesus quickly asked, 'Sir, give us this bread.' Jesus replied 'I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believe that on me shall never thirst' (John 6:35).

Some hear about Jesus, the living bread, but do not believe (v.36). The Father draws those whom he wills to his Son. Whoever comes to him, he promises never to cast away. The words of the gospel are powerful to draw people to himself. It is the Father's will that everyone that looks at the Son and believes in him will have eternal life (v.40).

Jesus gave us a visible sign in the Lord's Supper. In the upper room with his disciples, Jesus took bread, and after he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'Take, eat: this is my body which is broken for you.' We commemorate this event every time we celebrate the Lord's Supper. The bread, of course, is not literally Jesus' body but it is a visual aid for us, reminding us of the nourishment we receive from the Lord and his word. The bread is broken to remind us of Jesus' suffering on the cross—wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities. Christ died for the ungodly (Romans 5:6). The wine in the Supper is the visible symbol of Christ's blood shed for his people. This cup of wine points us to the amazing fact that Christ died for sinners. The shedding of his blood has brought the forgiveness of sin.

When followers of Jesus Christ eat and drink the bread and wine at the Lord's Supper they proclaim the Lord's death till he come (1 Corinthians 11:26). In this way the Christian witnesses about his trust in the Lord Jesus and he is strengthened in his faith.

Every time we sit down to eat our food, whether it is bread or anything else, we should remember that all that nourishing provision has been given to us by God. Whatever we do, whether we eat or drink, we should do all to the glory of God.

Every good gift comes from our loving God. The most wonderful gift of all is the Lord Jesus Christ, God's Son. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish but have everlasting life.

Bible Search

Find the missing words. The initial letters of the correct answers will spell out the subject of the story.

1. I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed _____ bread. (Psalm 37:25)
2. And Jacob vowed a vow, saying If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and _____ to put on. (Genesis 28:20)
3. Come, _____ of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled. (Proverbs 9:5)
4. I will _____ bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread. (Psalms 132:15)
5. And Boaz said unto her, At mealtime come thou hither, and eat of the bread, and _____ thy morsel in the vinegar. (Ruth 2:14)
6. Wine that make the glad the heart of man, and _____ to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man's heart. (Psalm 104:15)
7. And when his disciples were come to the other side, they had _____ to take bread. (Matthew 16:5)
8. When the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is manna: for they wist not what it was. And Moses said to them, This is the bread which the _____ hath given you to eat. (Exodus 16:15)
9. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of _____. (Proverbs 31:27)
10. Behold, he smote the rock, that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed; can he give bread also? can he provide _____ for his people? (Psalm 78:20)
11. If thine _____ be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink. (Proverbs 25:21)

THE SYNOD OF DORT

By THE REV. SAMUEL MILLER (1769–1850): Part 5

THE National Synod of Holland has never met since the adjournment of the Synod of Dort, in 1619. ...

The venerable Dr. Scott was prompted, he tells us, to undertake the translation of the official history and canons of the Synod of Dort by the persuasion that they had been greatly misapprehended by the religious public, in which he had himself, for many years, largely participated. The truth is, the misrepresentations of the proceedings of that Synod by Peter Heylin and Daniel Tilenus, are so gross and shameful that it is difficult adequately to animadvert in strict temperate language. As to Peter Heylin, he hardly knew how to speak the truth when Calvinism or Presbyterianism was in question. And, with respect to Daniel Tilenus, who was a theological professor in the Presbyterian seminary at Sedan, in France, and had once been a Calvinist, but afterwards joined the Arminian ranks, his prejudices against his old opinions became, after his apostasy, so perfectly bitter and blinding, that he seemed incapable of representing them otherwise than under the most revolting caricature. No wonder that those who believed these men regarded the Acts of the Synod with abhorrence. Dr. Scott, as the reader will perceive, declares himself satisfied that the proceedings of the Synod had been greatly and criminally slandered; that their canons were among the most scriptural and excellent formularies he had ever seen; and that he thought it incumbent upon him to do all in his power to remove the veil from the false statements concerning them, which had been so confidently made, and to the

circulation of which had he himself, in some degree, unintentionally contributed.

...

The following remarks of Mons. Bayle, in his Biographical Dictionary, under the article Arminius, are so apposite and pointed as to form a very appropriate extract for this Introductory Essay. Bayle himself was, probably, neither a Calvinist nor an Arminian, but a cool, insidious, sceptic. His judgment, therefore, on this controversy, may be considered as the decision of a shrewd, and as to this point an impartial mind on a matter concerning which he had no point to gain or party to serve.

It were to be wished that he (Arminius) had made a better use of his knowledge. I mean, that he had governed himself by St Paul's rule. This great apostle, immediately inspired by God and directed by the Holy Ghost in all his writings, raised to himself the objection which the light of nature forms against the doctrine of absolute predestination. He apprehended the whole force of the objection, and he proposes it without weakening it in the least degree: 'God hath mercy on whom he will have mercy and whom he will he hardeneth' Romans 9:18. This is Paul's doctrine and the difficulty which he starts upon it is this, 'Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault, for who hath resisted his will?' This objection cannot be pushed further; twenty pages by the most subtile Molinist could add nothing to it. What more could they infer than that, upon Calvin's hypothesis, God wills men to commit sin? Now this is what St Paul knew might be

objected against him, but what does he reply? Does he seek for distinctions and qualifications? Does he deny the fact? Does he grant it in part only? Does he enter into particulars? Does he remove any ambiguity in the words? Nothing of all this. He only alleges the sovereign power of God, and the supreme right which the Creator has to dispose of his creatures as it seems good to him. 'Nay, but O man, who art thou that repliest against God?' He acknowledges an incomprehensibility in the thing which ought to put a stop to all disputes, and to impose a profound silence on our reason. He cries out, 'O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways are past finding out.' All Christians ought to find here a definite sentence, a judgment final, and without appeal in the dispute about grace. Or rather, they should learn from this conduct of St Paul, never to dispute about predestination, and immediately to oppose this bar against all the subtleties of human wit, whether they arise of themselves, in meditating on this great subject, or whether others suggest them. The best and the shortest way is early to oppose this strong bank against the inundations of reasoning, and to consider this definitive sentence of St Paul as a rock immovable in the midst of the waves, against which the proudest billows may beat in vain. They may foam and dash, but are only broken against them. All arrows darted against this shield will have the same fate as that of Priam.

Further on the same writer says, To a system full of great difficulties, Arminius has substituted another system, which, to speak truly, involves no

less difficulties than the former. One may say of his doctrine what I have observed of the innovations of Saumur. It is better connected and less forced than the opinions of Mr Amyraut; but, after all, it is but a palliative remedy, for the Arminians have scarcely been able to answer some objections which, as they pretend, cannot be refuted upon Calvin's system. Besides, they find themselves exposed to other difficulties which they cannot get over but by an ingenuous confession of the weakness of human reason and the consideration of the incomprehensible infinity of God. And was it worth while to contradict Calvin for this? Why was Arminius so very difficult at first, when at last he was obliged to fly to this asylum? Why did he not begin here, since here he must come sooner or later? He is mistaken who imagines that after entering the lists with a great disputant he shall be allowed to triumph only for some small advantage which he had over him at first. An athlete who throws out his antagonist in the middle of the race, but has not the advantage of him at the end, is not entitled to the palm. It is the same in controversy. It is not sufficient to parry the first thrusts. Every reply and rejoinder must be satisfied and every doubt perfectly cleared up. Now this is what neither the hypothesis of Arminius, nor that of the Molinists, nor that of the Socinians, is able to do. The system of the Arminians is only calculated to give some few advantages in those preludes to war in which the forlorn hope is sent out to skirmish. But when it comes to a general and decisive battle, this detachment must retire as well as the rest behind the intrenchments of incomprehensible mystery.

Perhaps it may be said that no theological system was ever more grossly misrepresented or more foully or unjustly vilified than that which is commonly called Calvinism but which has been drawn from the word of God and preached by some of the best men that ever lived many hundreds of years before Calvin was born. The truth is it would be difficult to name a writer or speaker who has distinguished himself by opposing this system, who has fairly represented it or who really appeared to understand it. They are for ever fighting against an imaginary monster of their own creation. They picture to themselves the consequences which they suppose unavoidably flow from the real principles of Calvinists, and then most unjustly represent these consequences as a part of the system itself as held by its advocates. Whether this arises from the want of knowledge or the want of candour is not for me to decide, but the effect is the same and the conduct worthy of severe censure. How many an eloquent page of anti-Calvinistic declamation would be instantly seen by every reader to be either calumny or nonsense if it had been preceded by an honest statement of what the system as held by Calvinists really is?

The enemies of the system allege that it represents God as really the author of sin, and man as laid under a physical necessity of sinning, and then as damned for it, do what he can. They insist that our doctrine of depravity and the mode of inheriting it, if true, destroys moral agency, reduces men to the condition of mere machines, and of course makes all punishment of sin unjust and absurd. In short, they contend that the views which we give of the plan of salvation makes a system of heathenish fate or of refined Antinomianism equally destructive of holiness and of comfort, and that, under the guise of free grace, we build up a fabric

of favouritism on the one hand, and of fixed necessity on the other, at once making God a partial being and a tyrant, and man a mere passive subject of his arbitrary will. But is it true that Calvinists embrace any such system as this? Nothing can be further from the truth! It is a shameful misrepresentation which has no correspondence with any thing but the caricatures of prejudice and bigotry. Calvinists abhor such sentiments just as much as their uncandid accusers do. Many wise and excellent men have been of the opinion that Arminian principles, when traced out to their natural and unavoidable consequences, lead to an invasion of the essential attributes of God, and, of course to blank and cheerless atheism. Yet in making a statement of the Arminian system as actually held by its advocates, what candid man would allow himself to introduce into the delineation any thing different from or beyond the actual admissions of those advocates? The system itself is one thing, the consequences which may be drawn from it another.

It is not pretended that the Calvinistic system is free from all difficulties. When finite creatures are called to scan either the works or the revealed will of an Infinite Being they must be truly demented if they expect to find nothing which is incomprehensible. Accordingly when we undertake to solve some of the difficulties which the Calvinistic system presents it cannot be denied that such knowledge is too wonderful for us, it is high we cannot attain unto it. How to reconcile what the Scriptures plainly reveal on the hand concerning the entire dependence of man, and, on the other, concerning his activity and responsibility, how to explain the perfect foreknowledge and predestination of God in consistency with the perfect freedom and moral agency of his intelligent creatures, is a problem which no thinking man expects

fully to solve. But the question is, Are there fewer difficulties attending any other system? Especially, are there fewer difficulties attending the Arminian or Pelagian system, one or the other of which is usually the resort of those who reject Calvinism? There are not; nay, instead of being less, they are greater—far greater both in number and magnitude. For example, it is easy, and, in the estimation of the superficial and unreflecting, it appears conclusive to object that Calvinism has a tendency to cut the nerves of all spiritual exertion; that if we are elected we shall be saved do what we will, and if not elected we shall be lost do what we can. But is it not perfectly evident that the objection here lies with quite as much force against the Arminian or Pelagian hypothesis? Arminians and Pelagians both grant that all men will not actually be saved, that the salvation or perdition of each individual is distinctly foreknown by God, and that the event will certainly happen as he foresees that it will. May not a caviller then say with quite as much appearance of justice in this case as in the other, The result as to my salvation, though unknown to me, is known to God, and certain? If I am to be saved, no anxiety about it is necessary, and if I am to perish, all anxiety about it would be useless.

But would an Arminian consider such an objection as valid against his creed? Probably not. Yet it is certainly just as valid against his creed as against ours. The truth is, the Arminian, by resorting to his scheme, does not really get rid of one particle of the difficulty which he alleges against the Calvinistic system; he only places it one step further back, but must meet it in its full strength after all. Until we can bring ourselves to swallow the monstrous absurdity, that what is to be will not be; that what God foresees as certain may never happen; the cavil, such as it, is remains unanswered. If there be a God who is endowed with perfect foreknowledge, and who is and always has been acting upon a plan of which he knows the end from the beginning—and there is such a Being or there is no God—then all the difficulty which lies against the doctrine of sovereign, unconditional, predetermination lies equally and in all its unmitigated force against the doctrine of foreknowledge and certain futurity in any form that can be imagined, and all the shocking consequences with which they charge Calvinism are quite as legitimately chargeable against any and every scheme, short of atheism, which may be embraced to get rid of them.

TO BE CONCLUDED

FORMER DAYS

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

250 years ago: July & August 1769

THE **July** issue opens with a lengthy portion of Deering on Hebrews, and the Biography is of the New England Puritan, Cotton Mather. The Dialogue between Christian

and Truth reaches Song of Solomon 2:15–16. Casuistical Divinity continues the answer to Question 51, ‘What are the causes of love to Christ waxing cold?’ The chief answer, from Matthew 24:12, is the abounding of iniquity.

The Miscellaneous section begins with a letter from a man to his son, in which he seeks to help him with a problem. The son, in the place of employment, is forced to hear blasphemy and irreverent jokes against Christ, his gospel and his ministers. The father takes Deism to be the underlying fault, and advises his son to write out a copy of a short book entitled, *The short method with the deists*, written in the seventeenth century. The author was the Rev. Charles Leslie (1650–1722), and the actual title is *A short and easy method with the deists*. The work ran to at least six editions, and includes a refutation of Le Clerc's notorious attack on the veracity of the Pentateuch. The poem 'The Rainbow' is concluded, which speaks of God's covenant to save in Jesus Christ. 'On Prayer' speaks of the superiority of our prayers over those of angels, since we have sin to confess and a Saviour to glorify. Two brief pieces, a longer one on the words, 'Brethren, pray for us' (2 Thessalonians 3:1) and poetry conclude the issue.

The **August** issue sees more of Deering's Lectures on Hebrews, at 1:8–9. They are well worth reading. The Biography is of William Gouge (1575–1653), and the Dialogue comes to those wonderful words at Song of Solomon 2:17. Casuistical Divinity continues to answer Question 51. The Miscellaneous section includes the continuation of an examination of the first and great commandment, from page 271, and the piece on 'Brethren, pray for us', from the July issue, is concluded. A book, *Arguments against the doctrine of general redemption considered*, is reviewed and subjected to a (deservedly) scathing attack. The author (who did not put his name to his work) professes to find Scripture to teach that we must perform certain conditions in order to be saved. His errors are laid horribly bare. Various poems, including one by John Flavel, conclude the issue.

200 years ago: July & August 1819

The first item in the **July** magazine is a sermon entitled, 'The glory of the Redeemer in the perpetuity of his work.' It deals, in general, with the providence of God. The second piece, 'A peep into the professing world', shows that regenerate men and women may once have been among the vilest sinners, who were made more vile by being shown themselves as they truly are. This was part of the wonderful purpose of God in bringing them to newness of life, and the author proposes, in passing, a return to such preaching as speaks the same truth. Myra's 'Thoughts on acceptance with God' continue, then a short piece on 'The forgiveness of sins' speaks of the blessing of knowing our sins to be forgiven in Christ.

Next comes a dialogue between a minister, Compulsion, and a female member of his congregation, named Grace. He takes her to task for failing to attend his preaching; she replies by pointing out that his preaching, though occasionally containing terms like 'election', 'perseverance' and 'justification' never makes any attempt to explain them, or to work out their implications. This is why Grace has ceased attending such preaching. Many are in much the same situation today.

The distinction of the three persons of the Trinity continues from an earlier issue. Correspondence on a previously-published piece on Regeneration is also continued. Various other matters are continued in the rest of the correspondence. Poetry concludes the issue for the month.

In **August** we are shown the spiritual meaning of the various additions to the meat offering—salt, oil, incense and so on—all of which have their fulfilment in Christ. 'A word of relief for a saint in difficulties' is followed by the second part of the dialogue between Compulsion and Grace. A sermon on the words of the

dying thief is followed by thoughts on aspects of the doctrine of the Trinity.

The correspondence on the subject of progressive sanctification continues, and is followed by thoughts on the covenant of grace. 1 Corinthians 15:28 is treated to show that it does not support an Arian reading. Correspondence and poetry conclude the issue.

100 years ago: July & August 1919

Psalms 121:7–8 provides the text for the **July** family portion (quoted from the Revised Version, showing how easily people can fall for the promise of a 'better' translation than the Authorised Version). A commendation of Dr. Gill is followed by an exposition of John 8:12. Revelation 21:25 is also treated, in another exposition, and 2 Kings 19:1 is the text from which sermon notes are reproduced. The concluding part of a sermon on Revelation 21:23 comes next.

Some devotional pieces from various

texts and subjects take up much of the rest of the issue. Of particular interest is the continued attention paid to the Enabling Act, which would permit the Church of England to move in an overtly Romeward direction, and mention of a court case, in which a legacy for the saying of masses for the deceased was ruled illegal by the Court of Appeal.

The **August** issue begins with a sermon on Psalm 147:14, occasioned by the signing of the Treaty of Versailles on June 28. We know how short-lived the celebrations were, the Treaty itself being a major cause of the Second World War. The same general occasion prompts a sermon on Daniel 6:10, 'A Prime Minister on his knees.' Further sermons follow, from Zechariah 3:8–9 and Matthew 12:20. Pieces on Peace, Reconstruction and Holding Fast continue to apply current themes to the spiritual condition of the nation. The end of the War supplies most of the thoughts behind the rest of the issue.

TO BE CONTINUED

WITHOUT EXCUSE, OR 'THE COMPELLING CALL'

A SERMON BY PETER MURCOTT

'And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.' (Luke 14:23)

FICKLE promises are frail securities. Since things are more easily said than done, some will say *anything* than speak the truth from their heart. They will promise more in a moment than they can perform in a month.

They are, as James says, double minded, and unstable in all their ways (James 1:8).

So it was with the men, who made excuses. When summoned by a lord to his supper, one by one they fell by the wayside.

Their excuses were not particularly original or compelling, and they showed beyond all doubt that their word was not worth a fig.

Badly Let Down

The various excuses understandably made him angry, because he had been badly let down. Here are just three of them. They weren't the only ones of course—since the parable says that 'A certain man made a great supper and invited many;' (Luke 14:16), rather they represent the *type* of reason given for the non-attendance at the feast. Notice in each case that self was at the centre; for each invited guest began with 'I'—

THE FIRST EXCUSE

'I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it.' Oh! Doesn't one normally do that *before* buying it? Land has always been valuable, since its availability is finite. Maybe the excuse was intended to sound impressive—that the man had just become a landowner.

Worth and Wealth

Those who measure worth by wealth, rather than by character, will assume that others act likewise. Therefore, since reputation is commonly measured by the acre, the man who proffered the first excuse must have assumed that his host would at least be impressed, if not envious, of him.

Richard Jukes, a hymn writer and preacher in the early nineteenth century, spoke of true worth when he wrote:

Let others boast of heaps of gold,
Christ for me, Christ for me,
His riches never can be told;
Christ for me...

It has also been well said that six feet of earth make all men equal; and there are several portions of Scripture that warn against making possessions a priority. Many will already know of Christ's words, as recorded by Matthew: 'Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal' (Matthew 6:19–20).

Never has that cautionary advice been more applicable than to the present age; yet, as the Psalmist warns, 'Men will praise thee when thou doest well to thyself.' But it goes to say: 'They will never see light'—that is, the light of life.¹

The Root Problem

A root problem, then, with this first excuse was that its maker placed a greater value on his possessions than on his word. Regrettably that has become rather commonplace. On the other hand, what does Psalm 1 say of those who will dwell in God's holy hill? One of their characteristics is complete reliability, despite any personal inconvenience, saying: 'He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not' (John 6:27). Alas, in this case, that was not to be.

What was the second excuse? Ah, it was again about possessions!

THE SECOND EXCUSE

At first sight, this excuse sounds simply like a variant of the first one; and it certainly can be understood as such, since theirs was an agrarian society where the ownership of cattle was a sign of success. So it was in the British Isles before the Industrial Revolution: that is why we still refer to possessions as goods and *chattels*—the latter originating from the word 'cattle'.

But he added a qualification: he was going to try his oxen out. He was going to do some work. That was a clever piece of manipulation. He wasn't just going to *look* at his property, but he would put it to good use. Who could argue against that?

It is obvious that this was not a case of necessity; rather he was saying, in a slightly more sophisticated way, that he just couldn't be bothered to keep his word. Notice in both cases how casually the invitation was treated. This was like the people of Athens, who responded to Paul's sermon on Mars Hill, by saying: 'We will hear thee again in this matter,' (Acts 17:32b) or like the Roman procurator, Felix, who told Paul, 'When I have a convenient season, I will call for thee' (Acts 24:25). It is commonplace for the lost to deceive themselves that they will be given endless opportunities to be saved, and that God is at their beck and call. They are sadly and badly mistaken (see Christ's instructions to his disciples on what they should do whenever the gospel was rejected: Matthew 10:14; Mark 6:11; Luke 10:10–12).

Those who have been truly awakened to their lost condition take a very different view, and will call out, like Blind Bartimaeus: 'Thou Son of David, have mercy on me' (see Mark 10:47–48) or will say, in Fanny Crosby's words: 'While on others Thou art calling,/Do not pass me by' ('Pass me not, O gentle Saviour'). What was the third excuse?

THE THIRD EXCUSE

Rarely do men and women get married on the spur of the moment. There was a time when couples could, on an impulse, make for Gretna Green in Scotland and marry at the famous blacksmith's forge. Before 1856, provided that each respective party was over

sixteen and was not already married, there was no residency requirement, or any need for notice.

But one thing is certain: the third man to make an excuse had not been a party to any such whirlwind romance. The reason is that marriage in New Testament times involved a long period of preparation. There was the betrothal stage, lasting up to twelve months,² when the woman did not live with the groom but was regarded as already married to him. That is why Matthew's Gospel recounts how Joseph initially considered divorcing Mary quietly during their betrothal when he heard that she was expecting a baby (Matthew 1:18–25). After the wedding ceremony, the bridegroom would bring his bride home amidst great celebrations. We read something of this in the account of the Wedding at Cana-in-Galilee and in the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins (see John 2:1–11 and Matthew 25:1–13).

Therefore the wedding would have been known about well before the supper invitation was accepted. Anyway, as the Bible commentator, Matthew Henry, has observed, he could have always asked if his wife could come as well!

The Lord's response

Understandably the host was *angry* at their contemptuous response. Given that he represents Almighty God himself, this is a both solemn warning, and, for some, surprising; for it puts paid to the common misconception that, because God is love, He overlooks everything that men do, however defiant.

It is true that God is slow to anger, (Nehemiah 9:17b) but plenteous in mercy (Psalm 103:8). He is ever ready to pardon the penitent, who trusts in his Son. That is beyond

¹ Psalm 49:18 & 19. James 5:1–6 gives some startling advice to those who place all their trust in riches. See also James 1:10 & 11 and Colossians 3:2

² During the betrothal and the first year of marriage, the bridegroom was excused military service: Deuteronomy 20:7 and Deuteronomy 24:5

doubt. But it is of the utmost folly to imagine that, because God is love and is not *easily* provoked (1 Corinthians 13:5b), he cannot therefore ever be angry. Such a thing would mean that he was no longer perfect in all his ways, having no more regard for his own Word than that shown by men of the world.

The Servant Commanded

What did the lord in the parable do? He turned to others, whom some would simply disregard: those in the highways and byways, showing that God has mercy on whom he will have mercy (Romans 9:18), being totally uninfluenced by earthly position or power (see Acts 10:34b). And what did he command his servant? 'Compel them to come in' (Luke 14:23). That doesn't mean that the gospel is to be forced upon those who reject it. It means that, properly preached and understood, the gospel call is so compelling that no one in his right mind would reject it.

The compelling

Compel them to come in! This was the command ringing in the servant's ears. That should speak equally loudly to us. It means that a Christian's calling, and especially those who preach, is to understand that the gospel is so unique and effectual as the power of God unto salvation (Romans 5:7b), let alone divinely-inspired, that it must not be added to, or subtracted from, or otherwise altered, in any way whatsoever (Deuteronomy 4:2; Proverbs 30:6; Revelation 22:19).

The True Condition

Compel them to come in, therefore, requires this: to tell the world of its true state if without Christ, nothing wavering. Present the facts as they are, and not as people want them to be. Make it clear that sin is the transgression of the law (1 John 3:4)—that is of

God's law, which does not change. That if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves; and the truth is not in us (1 John 1:8). Let none be misled into thinking that, because he has not committed this or that sin, he is pretty well sinless.

Compel them to come in requires the Gospel of Jesus Christ first of all to be burning in the bones (see Jeremiah 20:9) of those who profess it. Who will heed a trumpet that makes an uncertain sound? (see 1 Corinthians 14:8). Don't be deterred by an unbelieving and indifferent generation. On the contrary, be like Paul, who declared confidently and convincingly of Jesus: 'Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins' (Acts 14:38).

This is the glorious Gospel of Christ that is surely so compelling: that 'though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool' (Isaiah 1:18b). How can this be? Your sins are abhorrent in God's sight; (see Habakkuk 1:13) but when you trust in Christ, God sees not your sin, but the sinless Saviour who bore them on the cross at Calvary. This means that not only are they cancelled for ever, but so is the everlasting punishment for them.

The Cost

In view of this, one might wonder: 'Why did the three men make such pathetic excuses?' Read beyond Luke 14:15–24 from whence this parable comes. Confessing Christ in this world is costly. Jesus summarised it in Luke 14:27, saying: 'whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.' Therefore the underlying reason for the three men's excuses was not so much that they didn't want to attend the great feast in heaven, but they shrank from the cost

of confessing Christ on the way there. Like Demas, who deserted Paul, (See: 2 Timothy 4:10) they loved the present world too much, and they loved Christ too little.

To reject Christ's call for whatever reason is tragic. Charles Wesley wrote:

'Have me excused!' why will ye say?
Why will ye for damnation pray?
Have you excused—from joy and peace?
Have you excused—from happiness?

'Excused from coming to the feast!
Excused from being Jesus' guest!
From knowing now your sins forgiven,
From tasting here the joys of heaven.'³

O what a blessing to respond like this:

'Out of my shameful failure and loss,
Jesus, I come; Jesus, I come;
Into the glorious gain of Thy cross,
Jesus, I come to Thee.

Out of earth's sorrows, into Thy balm,
Out of life's storms and into Thy calm,
Out of distress to jubilant psalm,
Jesus, I come to Thee.' Amen.⁴

See p.127 for the words and music of
'Making Excuses.'

THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST

'The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God' (Mark 1:1)

By J.E. NORTH (Totton, Hants)

IN our last consideration of this verse we looked at the fact that the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ was promised. I would like us now to consider that

The gospel is centred in a Person

That is, in the Lord Jesus Christ: 'The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.' We are told a number of things in this verse about our Saviour:

- (A) The gospel is concerning JESUS
- (B) The gospel is concerning CHRIST
- (C) The gospel is concerning THE SON OF GOD.

It is important that we consider every

³ Missing verses of 'Come, sinners, to the Gospel feast.'

⁴ From 'Out of my bondage, sorrow and night' by William Sleeper, 1840-1920

facet of the Lord Jesus Christ—the Apostle Peter speaks of the 'Manifold grace of God', that is, having many forms and aspects. We are to consider aspects of the names of the Lord Jesus Christ as set out in this verse of Scripture.

(A) The Gospel concerns JESUS

The name Jesus is the Greek form of Joshua, which means Jehovah is salvation. In Matthew 1 we have recorded for us Joseph's dream in which it is recorded that an angel appeared to him and told him that he should not be afraid to take Mary to be his wife, and then gave the reason, 'Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy

wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins' (Matthew 1:20, 21). Paul tells us, 'But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law' (Galatians 4:4). This man, this God-man is the One who came and was given the name of Jesus to tell us that he is the saviour, that He is the One who save his people from their sins. He did not come to make salvation possible; he did not come to put man in a salvable state. He alone is the Saviour of sinners. As Mrs Alexander says in her beautiful hymn on the death of the Lord Jesus Christ:

There was no other good enough,
To pay the price of sin,
He only could unlock the gate
Of heaven, and let us in.

There is no other, and he neither gives his glory in salvation to an other, nor does he share it with another. 'Christ is all, and in all' (Colossians 3:11); 'Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith' (Hebrews 12:2).

And what a mercy it is if we are brought by faith the Lord Jesus Christ for 'he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him' (Hebrews 7:25).

It is not the Lord Jesus Christ plus what man can do that saves a sinner; it is Christ Jesus alone. The cry of the Protestant Reformers was 'Christ alone, by grace alone, through faith alone.' Not Christ and the church, not Christ and the so-called seven sacraments of the church. No! Salvation is by the Lord Jesus alone. Said the Apostle Paul, 'But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel

unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed' (Galatians 1:8, 9). That is how important it is to be right about the saving name of the Lord Jesus Christ. That little word 'alone' is most important in the salvation of the sinner. Justification is by faith alone, by Christ Jesus alone. Look at Psalm 40:1-3 and see what the Lord Jesus has done for the sinner: (1) Jesus inclined to me, (2) Jesus heard my cry, (3) Jesus brought me out of the pit of sin, (4) Jesus set my feet upon a rock, (5) Jesus established my goings, (6) Jesus gave me a new song. Oh, what a merciful God this is to the guilty sinner. And the acts of man; and the ability of man is excluded. 'Where is boasting then? It is excluded' (Romans 3:27).

But by taking this name of Jesus, there is the indication that we are in need of a Saviour. 'I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance' (Matthew 9:13). This tell us that man is unrighteous, and that he is unable to save himself. It can only be the Lord Jesus Christ who can save us. Mary, when she is told that she will be the mother of Jesus' humanity sings in her song of praise that she rejoices in God her Saviour. Not only does she confess that she is a sinner, but she confesses that she has a need of a Saviour. What a mercy if we are brought by the Holy Ghost to that place to see our need of a Saviour. That Saviour is Jesus, for 'he shall save his people from their sins.' But also notice this, it is 'his people', that is, those given to the Lord Jesus in covenant bond; those whom he has loved with an everlasting love (Jeremiah 31:3).

(B) The Gospel Concerns CHRIST

'The gospel of Jesus Christ.' Our Saviour is the Lord Jesus Christ, the anointed of God, for that is what the word 'Christ' means. He is the anointed of God, and is also the

anointed by God. We read of the anointing by the Holy Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ on two occasions, namely at his baptism by John in Jordan and when he spoke in the synagogue quoting the words of Isaiah 61.

We will look, the recounting of the Lord's baptism as recorded, firstly in Mark's Gospel. 'And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan. And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him: And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased' (Mark 1:9-11). Each of the other gospels record further details of the baptism. Matthew tells us that when John remonstrated with Jesus that He said, 'Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him' (Matthew 3:15). Matthew records the anointing of the Lord Jesus by the Holy Ghost: 'And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him' (Matthew 3:16). The other two Gospels record in similar manner that anointing: 'It came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased' (Luke 3:21-22); 'And John bare record, saying, I saw the

Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God' (John 1:32-34). Each of these Gospels tell us of the anointing by the Holy Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ. Luke further tells us of the Lord Jesus speaking of that anointing when he was in the synagogue at Nazareth: 'And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord' (Luke 4:16-19). We notice that after the Lord Jesus had read these words, he says, 'This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears' (Luke 4:21). He read from the 61st chapter of Isaiah which had been placed in front of him. He declares openly that he is the Christ of God, and then speaks of the Sovereignty of Almighty God which so irritated all those in the synagogue that they tried to thrust him over the precipice of the hill upon which Nazareth was built. 'But he passing through the midst of them went his way' (Luke 4:30). They were powerless in the presence of the Lord Jesus. He was anointed by the Holy Ghost and could not perish until his work was completed when he laid down his life for his sheep.

There were three offices, people or men in Israel who were anointed with oil. These were the prophet, the priest and the king. The Lord Jesus fulfilled all these offices! Isaac Watts speaks of the offices of the Lord Jesus Christ in his hymn 'Join all the glorious names....' I will refer to individual verses of this hymn as we consider these three offices of Christ.

(i) The Prophet

Great Prophet of my God,
My tongue would bless Thy name;
By Thee the joyful news
Of our salvation came;
The joyful news of sins forgiven,
Of hell subdued, and peace with heaven

The witness of those who heard the Lord Jesus is that 'never man spake like this man.' His are the words of life. He took the little maid by the hand and said 'Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise.' To the man sick of the palsy he said, 'Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.' To the woman taken in adultery, He said, 'Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.' And so we could go on with further examples of the Lord Jesus speaking prophetic words to those to whom he ministered. But there was a time when many of his followers were not comfortable with the words of the Lord. They walked with him no more, and the Lord asked his disciples, 'Will ye also go away?' To which Peter replied, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.'

The woman at the well recognised the Lord Jesus as a prophet: 'Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet' (John 4:19). Her witness to Christ was that he told her of all that she had done in her life, and came to see in Him that well of water springing up into eternal

life. Oh that we seeing the Lord Jesus Christ as the Prophet, the true Prophet might have the same well of water in us, in our hearts springing up into eternal life, then, and only then will we be able to worship God in Spirit and in truth.

Moses speaks of One who would come after him. 'The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken' (Deuteronomy 18:15). The law was given by Moses but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the prophet raised up by Almighty God, and we are to hearken unto him. God grant that we may be brought by the work of the Spirit of God in our hearts not only hear him speak, but to hearken to his commandments. 'For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous' (1 John 5:3).

(ii) The Priest

Jesus, my great High Priest,
Offered His blood and died;
My guilty conscience seeks
No sacrifice beside.
His powerful blood did once atone,
And now it pleads before the throne.

The Apostle Paul writes at length in the Epistle to the Hebrews about the priesthood of Christ. He shows that the Aaronic priesthood together with the Levitical offerings and sacrifices could never finally take away sin because they continued to be offered year by year—there was no perfection in those offerings and sacrifices. And it was the same with the priesthood. It descended from Aaron through his son and through the continuing generations—it was always changing.

Because of that continual change, and continual repetition these things could

never, once and for all, cancel the debt of sin.

Paul then goes on to quote from Psalm 110:4 'The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.' He draws an analogy between The Lord Jesus Christ and Melchizedek. Of Melchizedek he says, 'Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually' (Hebrews 7:3). Then he compares Christ with him saying that just as he, because there is no record of his birth and death, so the Lord Jesus Christ being the eternal Son of God with neither beginning of days nor ending of days but is alive for evermore (Revelation 1:18), has an unchanging priesthood. What is more, the Lord Jesus Christ was declared and revealed as an unchanging Priest for ever by the oath of God (Hebrews 7:21). His priesthood is superior to all other priests.

But not only is his priesthood superior, so is his offering, his sacrifice. Listen again to the Apostle Paul: 'But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God' (Hebrews 10:12). The Levitical sacrifices had to be repeat; the work of the Aaronic priest was never ended. There was no place to sit and rest in the tabernacle and temple. But when the Lord Jesus Christ had finished the work of redemption, he sat down! His cry on the cross was 'It is finished.' The Messianic Psalm 22 concluded with the words, 'That he hath done this.' The word 'this' is in our Authorised Version in italics which denotes that that word is not there in the original Hebrew text, but is placed there by the translators. The original says that 'he hath done,' that he hath finished. What a mercy! What a foundation for our salvation—a finished redemption. The price has been paid! The

child of God is redeemed by the precious blood of Christ 'as of a lamb without blemish and without spot' (1 Peter 1:19). And the wonder of it is that that redemption is applied to guilty, hell deserving sinners who are brought to the Lord Jesus, quickened and made spiritually alive by the work of the third Person of the Holy Trinity. They are given the gift of faith and are brought by faith to him.

His work on earth was finished and now the Lord Jesus continues his priestly work in heaven. 'But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself' (Hebrews 7:24–27). What a mercy it is that the child of God has an advocate in heaven, Jesus Christ the righteous who daily pleads for him before his Father's throne. While on earth He prayed for his people: 'Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world' (John 17:24). And so he continues with that work of intercession.

Dear dying Lamb, Thy precious blood
Shall never lose its power
Till all the ransomed church of God
Be saved, to sin no more.

He pleads the worth of his blood before his Father. He prepare a place for his people (John 14:3), and all those for whom he died

and for whom he pleads will be brought to that place.

There is one final work the Lord Jesus undertakes for his people and that is that he will return for them. 'And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself' (John 14:3). The work of resurrection undertaken by the Lord Jesus Christ at the tomb of Lazarus: 'Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth' will be repeated at the tombs of a multitude that no man can number when the Lord Jesus returns for his own church.

(iii) *The King*

My dear almighty Lord,
My conqueror and my King,
Thy sceptre and Thy sword,
Thy reigning grace I sing:
Thine is the power; behold I sit
In willing bonds beneath Thy feet.

We have a king. He has conquered! But what has he conquered? He has conquered sin; he has conquered death and he conquers sinners.

(a) *He has conquered sin.* Sin is known by a broken law. Sin is any want of conformity to the will of God. The law of God is revealed in the twentieth chapter of Exodus.

Sin entered into the world by one man's disobedience. Adam and Eve disobeyed the direct command of God. Spiritual death followed, and they were banished from the garden of Eden, banished from fellowship with God and physical death eventually followed. But with the judgment of God upon Adam and Eve there was the promise of the Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ (Genesis 3:15). In the fulness of time the Lord Jesus came to fulfil the law in all its jot and titles, born under the law to redeem those who were under the curse of the law, being

made a curse for them as it is written, cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree. He was stretched out upon the cross, nailed to the cross and hanging between earth and heaven he bore the curse for all those given in covenant bond to him. What a mercy that he should do that.

(b) *He has conquered death.* Death came into the world as a direct consequence of man's disobedience. 'For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ' (Romans 5:17). But in the death of Christ that death has been conquered. What a wonderful conclusion draws to as he completes the 15th chapter of his first Epistle to the Corinthians, 'Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.'

(c) *He conquers sinners.* Sinners who were rebels against Almighty God. Sinners who had lifted up their hands against God. Sinners who had said, 'We will not have this man to reign over us.' He conquers them by the power of the Holy Ghost working in their hearts and lives. He brings us to know our sinfulness by the spiritual application of the law of God. Paul says that he had not known sin but by the law. When the law came to his heart he was brought to see his state and standing before God. 'But when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died' (Romans 7:9). The same applied when the rich young ruler came to the Lord Jesus with the question, 'Good Master what shall I do to inherit eternal life.' The Lord Jesus pointed him to the law and, being a proud young man, he made his boast that he had kept the commandments, but Jesus knowing

the hearts of man pointed out to him that there was more in the keeping of the law. By refusing to give all his wealth away, he broke the first, second and third commandments &c. 'Sin revived and I died.' When we are brought under the law of God by the application of the Spirit, we feel its bondage, we are brought to see that we are spiritually dead. And herein lies a spiritual paradox. For the

dead have no feelings. We see our spiritual death by being quickened, being made alive. And what a mercy it is that we are then brought by faith to the Lord Jesus Christ, and we see that we are conquered by him, and he lives within us giving us the hope of everlasting life with him in heaven.

Thine is the power; behold I sit
In willing bonds beneath Thy feet.

TO BE CONTINUED

CHRIST'S DEATH: A PROPITIATORY SACRIFICE

BY WILLIAM TIMOTHY FOLEY

IN this paper we are going to look at the doctrine of propitiation, or Christ's death as a propitiatory sacrifice on the cross. The writer subscribes to the penal, substitutionary and vicarious blood sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ on Calvary, as necessary for the eternal salvation of God's elect. Aspects such as the wrath of God, and expiation are covered in the context of propitiation.

It is an inescapable fact that the blood of Jesus Christ is mentioned in the New Testament, and it clearly points to the violence that was done to Jesus Christ, and the suffering Christ endured. Here are a number of factors that arise from the death of Christ.

We are reconciled by his blood, Ephesians 2:13.

We are justified by his blood, Romans 5:9.

We are redeemed by his blood, 1 Peter 1:18, 19 with Ephesians 1:7.

We are cleansed by his blood, 1 John 1:7.

We have propitiation through his blood, Romans 3:25.

We are in Christ, by God's choice, from eternity, and we have reconciliation, redemption, justification, cleansing and propitiation. We have been adopted into God's family. We are 'heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ' (Romans 8:17).

The word 'propitiation' is a word which will be the subject of our attention. The key text on the subject of propitiation is found in Paul's discourse in Romans. He writes, 'Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God' (Romans 3:25). The NIV Bible translation renders propitiation, as the 'sacrifice of atonement', but that is inadequate, as propitiation means appeasement of God's wrath.

Some significant aspects about propitiation need to be carefully considered. It means, not only to appease, but to placate, to avert anger or the wrath of God by blood sacrifice. Christ's blood is fundamental to

the gospel of God. It is essential for every Christian to have a theological understanding of the blood. Our knowledge must be informed from God's Book, the Bible.

Every saint of God, in every age, or dispensation, has been purchased or redeemed by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, and they are forever covered by his blood and kept cleansed by his blood. There is truly power in the blood, of our blessed Lord, and it is at the heart of the gospel of the grace of God.

God has 'set forth' or shown Christ to the world at Calvary. The crucifixion didn't happen in obscurity. The remission of all Old Testament saints was at Calvary. The ceremonial system of Judaism is finished, and done away with. God showed great forbearance under the Old Covenant. All aspects, concerning Christ, and God's unfolding plan for Jews and Gentiles came to fulfilment in Christ.

The longsuffering of God must not be underestimated or skipped over and treated lightly, when we are reading or pondering the teaching of the Old Testament. God supremely showed, time and time again, his great patience with disobedient Israel, and the great wickedness of the surrounding nations. They did despite to the Spirit of grace. But, specifically, the saints of God in the Old Testament had their sins atoned for at Calvary, but not until then. It is in that way we need to look at the forbearance of God. The blood of animals, or any offerings never removed the condemnation due to the sinner, only Christ was the 'one' way to do that.

The New Covenant in Christ's blood has been ratified on the cross of Calvary. It is no accident that Paul used the term 'faith in his blood', in Romans 3:25. If we don't rely, trust or show faith in Jesus' blood, all is lost, we are lost. It is the blood of Christ that makes atonement for our undying souls. God is

unquestionably placated through the blood of Christ. It is incumbent upon us to fully trust the blood for salvation, otherwise we will face eternity in the fires of Hell. Saving faith is the instrument that God uses to show us the efficacy of the blood of Christ. Faith is the open hand that receives salvation.

When we apply the blood, by faith, God's judgment will not touch us. In Exodus 12 we read that the children of Israel were preserved and protected by the shed blood of the Lamb. The Lamb was innocent, just like Christ.

So, the Apostle Paul saw the significance of this historical incident and refers to Christ accordingly. He said, 'Christ our passover is sacrificed for us' (1 Corinthians 5:7).

Christ is our Passover Lamb sacrificed for us, and this is altogether wonderful for the true believer. To remove or deny the blood of Christ, the Lamb of God, is to portray an image of Jesus that is far removed from the way Christ reveals himself to be in Scripture. Human beings in their strange opinions, and intellectual formulations of Jesus, have completely missed the significance of his blood of propitiation. Jesus didn't come into this world to be merely an example, but to die, and rise, and ascend to glory, where he is interceding for his dear people.

Even at Christ's future Second Coming we will still be reminded of his blood. At the marriage supper of the Lamb we will be able to say, 'Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God' (Revelation 19:7-9). This is a heavenly marriage ratified in the

everlasting blood covenant of the Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Again, note what John writes about the blood of the Lamb at his Second Coming, he says, 'And he (Christ) was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God' (Revelation 19:13). There is no getting away from the blood in Scripture, and, in particular, the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the King of kings, and Lord of lords. Christ has trodden the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. This is unquestionably a great victory.

Notice the way the Lamb is connected with wrath. Blood and wrath are therefore closely linked in the mind of God. Therefore, theologians and preachers should carefully consider the close affinity and preach this truth unashamedly. Humanity will cry someday in fear of the terrible wrath of the Lamb. Sinners will speak and cry to the mountains and rocks, 'Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?' (Revelation 6:16-17). Only those who have been saved by the blood of Christ will escape the judgment and condemnation of the Lamb of God.

When John the Baptist encountered Jesus, he said to the people, 'Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world' (John 1:29). He recognised Christ as fulfilling all the Old Testament Levitical sacrificial system, especially in using the word the 'Lamb'. John believed in the blood of the Lamb of God. He believed savingly in the blood of the Lamb. He held before the people this most important doctrine. In no way did he dumb down the need for the blood of the Lamb. Modern preachers and theologians should follow his example.

John the Baptist saw the blood of Christ as fundamental to the gospel, otherwise he would never have referred to Christ as the Lamb of God. Of course, John the Baptist understood this great matter by the revelation of the Holy Spirit. No mere mortal, no matter how brilliant, would never or ever have come to this amazing spiritual insight or understanding or knowledge. The work in John the Baptist's soul was all of God. He referred to Jesus as not just the Lamb, but the Lamb of God, and so he knew that Jesus was sent to redeem and save his people from their sins. John the Baptist used the term 'taketh away the sin'. This term alone gives us a major insight into John the Baptist's theological understanding. He believed that the Lamb's mission was to remove sin, and this was going to be through the blood being shed of the Lamb of God. He knew the Old Testament Levitical sacrificial system and saw that Christ was going to atone for sin by his own blood on the tree.

John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ, preached about the wrath of God to Pharisees and Sadducees who came to his baptism. John, 'said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?' (Matthew 3:7; cf. Luke 3:7). John believed in the wrath of the Lamb. John preached judgment, and he fully recognised that the Lamb would be the complete and perfect instrument of God's judgment upon the world. He warned the leaders of his day and he was murdered for standing up for righteousness. John the Baptist believed that God's wrath had to be placated with blood and that Christ was the Lamb, who was going to propitiate God's fierce wrath. That's why John the Baptist preached to the religious leaders and people of his generation to bring forth fruits fit for true godly repentance. He knew that repentance doesn't save, only the

Lamb of God saves by himself, his own people. Nevertheless, true repentance does show a changed life in beliefs and behaviours.

Oddly enough, some might say, we don't find John the Baptist preaching about depression, addictions, financial problems, about feeling low, low esteem, or, panic attacks, bipolar disorders or health problems, and motivational theory such as self-actualisation. And these people are right in their conclusion! The job of Christian ministry is to reach the lost and preach the gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven.

Some preachers preach only about health and prosperity and motivate people to part with their money—the unfortunate people hope they will be healed, happy, and prosperous. Also, these preachers preach a social gospel, and they major on homelessness, family conflicts and broken marriages, instead of preaching the word of God.

It is shocking to witness preachers acting more like clairvoyants rather than teachers of the word of God. They find out as much details about a person who they target in their mega churches and they memorise their details, then they call out their names in a public service. They are asked to come up on stage and cleverly manipulated by the interviewing preacher to confirm details that the person would only know and the preacher is hailed a prophet and credited with the gift of prophesying. The money basket is passed around and the preacher's income has significantly increased by the end of the service.

In contrast, John the Baptist, a humble believer, preached an undiluted and unvarnished message of the gospel, warning people to flee from the wrath to come. He was concerned to preach for souls to be saved. It is extremely important and God honouring to preach the gospel, in all its fullness. We

who seek to be faithful to God's Word need to preach the whole counsel of God. Paul, who is our supreme example, said, 'I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God' (Acts 20:27).

Preachers and Christian people need spiritual wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord. Daily we need to pray that the eyes of our understanding be enlightened to recognise the issues we are facing in the world, with the world, the flesh and the devil. We must preach propitiation, and witness and proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ Jesus, our Lord. We need to preach to the children of wrath—we were all in that plight once, until Christ rescued us; indeed, until we were made nigh by the blood of Christ. We need to preach the cross—the doctrine of the atonement and propitiation.

In a sermon on the doctrine of propitiation, in Romans 3:25, Dr. M.L. Jones (1888–1991) was supporting his argument by recourse to Dr. John Owen (1616–1683).

The great puritan, John Owen, said that propitiation implies four things—these are paraphrased as follows:

1. An offence has to be taken away, or removed.
2. A person, who has been offended, has to be pacified, which is obviously God.
3. An offending person has committed the offence, which is the sinner.
4. A propitiatory sacrifice of atonement is required to deal with sin, and to appease the wrath of God.

The Christian gospel says that God's wrath has been placated by Christ on the cross. Christ is the only means of propitiation of God's wrath.

All four aspects are vital to keep in mind in respect to the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ.

There is wrath in God. It is part of God's nature. It is part of his very essence and character. Wrath means God's settled opposition to evil, he hates evil. God hates sin. He abhors iniquities and wickedness. God is opposed to all sin and the sinner. The wrath of God abides on the sinner, not just in respect to the sinner's sin. Mercy, too, is in the nature of God. Wrath is in the nature of God; don't let any professing Christian tell you otherwise. Always in God's wrath, remember God's mercy, and all his attributes, they are equally at work. There is no imbalance or unfairness in God.

God's love is revealed in the great light of the doctrine of propitiation. It was God who sent God, the eternal Son, to the cross. The whole way of salvation was devised by God, from start to finish, in eternity. The answer to the appeasement of God is found in the everlasting covenant of redemption, which was a great display of the love of God. Remember that the blood is the only means of atonement for sin. God never pardons any trespass, sin, or wickedness without the blood. The holy shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ is the central feature of the reconciliation of the sinner with God. Belief in the blood of Christ is pivotal to true Christianity.

The Greek word for propitiation is *hilasterion*—the place of propitiation—the action of appeasing God—and it carries with it the idea of propitiatory blood sacrifice. Specifically, the word *hilasterion* is used by the Septuagint, and in Romans 3:25 and Hebrews 9:5 for 'mercy seat'. Like this, this word is only used twice in the New Testament.

The lid of the ark of the covenant was the mercy seat, and it was made of pure gold, speaking of deity, with the Cherubim looking down, speaking of God's approval. The mercy seat was sprinkled with atoning

blood, by the High Priest, on the Day of Atonement, once per year, as can be noted in Leviticus 16:14.

Christ is himself the *hilasmos*. Christ is called the 'propitiation for our sins' (1 John 2:2; 4:10) and he showed that by becoming our substitute, carrying our guilt, taking all our liabilities, taking the wrath of God on our behalf, covering all our sins, by his own blood, all through the vicarious punishment he endured on the cross. Christ honoured the law of God by taking the sentence for law breaking. He fulfilled the law in all points. Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. (See Romans 10:1–4.)

On the Day of Atonement the high priest fulfilled his duty by carrying the blood of the sacrifice he offered for all the people of Israel within the veil, and he sprinkled the blood on the 'mercy seat' and in the process made propitiation. (The High Priest was not a woman—women were never called or ordained to such a ministry.)

When Christ died on the cross, the veil was torn from the top to the bottom in the Temple in Jerusalem. This indicates that the way into the Holy of Holiest was now open, because Christ's sacrifice on the cross had fully satisfied the wrath of Almighty God. Note too that the veil symbolises Christ's flesh. The Lord Jesus Christ, 'By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh' (Hebrews 10:20).

Reconciliation with God is only through blood. Human beings in their reasoning and thinking cannot comprehend this idea of sacrifice by blood. It must be revealed to sinners by the Holy Spirit. Pagan religions and so forth have a conception of appeasing the gods through their blood offerings, often babies were cruelly sacrificed. Yet, this cannot, in any

way, relate to the Lord Jesus' death on Calvary.

In Christ's agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, and in his cry of dereliction on the cross, we get some idea of the terrible wrath of God being poured out on Christ in his agony, intense pain and terrible suffering. Christ's suffering and dying on the cross was no light matter.

Sinners must realise that sin is infinitely abhorrent to God, and Christ's suffering and being forsaken by his Father should give us serious cause to ponder our plight and the heinous nature of our sin, and the serious cost and voluntary sacrifice of Christ dying on the cross, on our behalf, in order for us to be pardoned by a Holy God. What great Love the Trinity has shown in our eternal redemption, and deliverance from the slavery and bondage of sin.

It is a complete insult to the Lord God Almighty that we can by our own devising think that we can placate or please the Lord God with our merits, works or deeds, our religious performance, or deservings. If that were the case that would completely undermine Christ and his obedient life, and his glorious victorious dying on the cross. God takes vengeance on anyone or any system of religion that tries to steal any glory from Christ and his accomplishments.

God is jealous for his glory and he will not, under any circumstances, give his divine glory to another. Neither will God tolerate the devil, his fallen angels, or any earthly power or personage, such as the Pope of Rome, or any antichristian system, or any Antichrist, to rob him of his glory. Every human being should give glory to God and every person, whether they like it or not, will ultimately bow before the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ at the Judgment.

In our so-called postmodern philosophical thinking, and in our religious and moral

thinking, in our sinful wills and behaviours, we try and do something to please God. We almost want God to look at our reputation and say to God, please consider that we are 'doing the best' we can.

We create an image of God and Christ which is idolatry. We can see this in the so-called Christian gay movement, political correctness ideology, evolutionary educational programmes, and government recognition of sin, in the name of equality and diversity. John, the beloved, writes, 'And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness' (1 John 5:19). It is a wicked world from God's perspective, despite what prominent people may say.

Theological seminaries and religious institutions are increasingly adjusting to and mirroring this sinful world. False teachers and false religions abound, and are now tolerated and encouraged and promoted in the false belief that God accepts them. The shockwaves of God's wrath, or the Lamb's wrath will be felt unless God sends revival for his glory.

The Bible is clear: there is not one single righteous thing that we can do or contribute to our eternal salvation. The whole world is under the wrath of God, and the Lord God is against all unrighteousness, and ungodliness, and therefore we are all guilty before a Holy God. When we reject our Saviour and choose to think we can please God in our own way, we show our great ignorance, folly and madness, and disregard for the teachings of the Word of God.

Blood and wrath are met together at Calvary. The blood of Christ won the full, final and free victory. The blood of Christ has forever secured satisfaction for sin, and propitiated God's wrath. Justice has been satisfied. God's law has been honoured. Satan and his hordes have been defeated. God's

prophecies have been fulfilled. Truth has gloriously triumphed. Sovereign grace has been manifested to unworthy sinners. The chains of slavery have been broken. There is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. Freedom in Christ has been fully obtained. Sinners have been justified by blood. Conquering love has been displayed. A great victory has been won by Christ.

Paul said, 'But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him' (Romans 5:8-9).

And again, Paul says, 'Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification' (Romans 4:25). We owe a deep debt of gratitude to Almighty God for sending Christ to the cross, and for pouring out his wrath on Christ, rather than us, and raising him by the Spirit of Holiness from the grave. Never forget: we are hell deserving sinners. That's our state, but we now have a new standing, in Christ.

Thank God for Jesus and his blood atonement. Everything in the universe is upheld through the Lord Jesus Christ. All things were created by him. We have been chosen in Christ in love before the foundation of the world. All blessings are ours in Christ. Christ's great propitiation has brought us now full salvation! Think of the blood that flowed from the wounds of Immanuel's body. His blood covers an infinite number of sins. Take full cognizance of the merits of Christ's blood, and contemplate the innumerable benefits he won.

It is only right and fitting to give God all the glory for our salvation; but, only and exclusively through the Lord Jesus Christ will God grant salvation.

Let's clarify the difference between expiation and propitiation.

Expiation means the removal of guilt through the payment or offering of atonement. It is the difference between what Christ did on the cross, and the result of Christ's work. So, the consequence of expiation is propitiation. God's wrath is turned away, propitiated by Christ's blood.

Propitiation brings about a change in God's attitude, so that He moves from being at enmity with us to being for us. Through the process of propitiation, we are restored into fellowship and favour with Him. Paul said, 'What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?' (Romans 8:31).

Propitiation has to do with God's wrath being appeased. We know that appeasement of God's nature is necessary from Scripture.

Christ's infinite accomplishment on the cross is that He placated the wrath of God. The wrath of God would burn against us were we not covered by the sacrifice of Christ. The book of Revelation shows the wrath of the Lamb burning against the human race, and Jesus spoke about the wrath of God during his earthly ministry. Even the beloved disciple, John, whom Jesus loved, spoke in John's Gospel (3:36) about the wrath of God.

Beware of any theological system or denomination or teacher or preacher that argues against placation of God, or denies the fact of Christ satisfying the wrath of God. Shun their teaching because they are against the gospel and are determined to lead souls astray. Simply, the gospel is at stake! The gospel is authentic when the doctrine of the blood is preached, but it is synthetic, false, and defective, when the blood and the wrath of God are denied or avoided.

The very essence of biblical salvation is being covered by the atoning blood of Christ.

Jesus Christ has redeemed sinners from the frightening danger of damnation in Hell,

which every person deserves. Sinners should be made aware, in preaching and teaching, that it is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of God Almighty. He is a Holy God and he is a God of wrath, as well as a God of Love.

However, for true believers in Christ, there is no wrath whatsoever, only God's love. This is the best news for those whose sins have been paid for on Calvary. That is what salvation is all about. So, rejoice! The vessels of mercy have been chosen and forgiven and are everlastingly loved. It is for the Elect's sins that Christ has propitiated God. Christ is the victor and we have the victory in him alone.

Any Minister, or pastor-teacher, who tries

to 'void' the blood of Christ is being led astray by Satan; indeed, any professing believer who seeks to 'avoid' the blood of Christ, and its function is in the grip of counterfeit theology. The blood of Christ is the fundamental and essential aspect to the gospel.

Propitiation is totally biblical, and is more precise than expiation. Any Bible translation which substitutes expiation for propitiation is going down the route of interpretation, rather than translation. No compromise can be tolerated by God, neither should it be the case with his servants, in his glorious service. God's wrath is real, and has been fully appeased, forever, in Christ Jesus, our Lord. ¶

THE THEOLOGY OF THE LORD'S DAY

BY EDWARD MALCOLM

IN considering the theology of the Lord's Day we are looking for the doctrinal underlying the day. We are seeking to answer some questions: to what purpose was the day given, to whom was it given, and is it of abiding relevance? We will also need to enquire into the nature of the law concerning the day of rest; of what sort is it, ceremonial, moral, or perhaps something of both? Many Reformed Confessions of Faith include chapters on the Lord's Day, usually connected with worship. In our lawless age, however, coupled with a widespread ignorance of historical and confessional theology in many churches, it is not enough to refer to a Confession of Faith. The spirit of Doubting Thomas is very much abroad, and unless people are shown the proof for themselves, they will not receive

anything on the testimony of any witness—not even if that witness is a minister of God duly authorised to teach.

Our method will be to begin with the Old Testament instruction and commandments concerning the day of rest, before looking at one or two prophetic passages that point to something beyond a bare adhering to a command. We will then see what the New Testament has to say, and finally attempt to bring the matter to a conclusion.

The origin of the Lord's Day

Where did the day begin? It began at the end of the week of creation. No matter what questions we may wish to ask about days before the creation of the sun and so on, it is abundantly clear that, in the mind of the author

of Genesis, whom we are to take to be Moses, the six days of creation ended with a seventh day of rest. This is recorded in Genesis 2:2–3.

We need to spend a little while looking more closely at what is said. A number of questions may well be asked. First, why is the account of the seventh day put at the beginning of Chapter 2, and not at the end of Chapter 1 with the first six days of the week? Secondly, why is the record of the first seventh day markedly different from that of the first six—and not because of what was done on those days, which cannot be repeated. Thirdly, why is the record of the seventh day here at all? ought it not to be at the end of Chapter 2?

As to the first question, it is answered to some extent by the second. There is a change in style of writing, and this is reflected in the division of the chapters as we have them. As to the second, the change of style is seen in the omission of two things: first, the lack of the refrain, 'And God said...', secondly, the lack of the refrain, 'And the evening and the morning were the seventh day.' The first refrain is omitted because it is the act of speaking that is the effectual means of creation; 'And God said, Let there be light; and there was light.' By not speaking God puts a clear difference between his actions on the seventh day and his actions on the first six days. We are told that on the seventh day he rested, having finished his creating work. Instead, God both rested on that day from his work, and he blessed and sanctified the day. The second refrain is omitted because, on the second first day, God did not return to his work of creation. The demarcation of the day is not needed with reference to God because he is still resting from his creating work. He is not resting from being God, or from ruling over his creation, from ordering it according to his will and from providing

sustenance and life to all his creatures at his good pleasure; but he is resting from the work of creation.

Why then is the record of the seventh day here, and not at the end of Chapter 2? Unless we hold to source criticism, that verses 4 to 25 are a second account of creation, we must acknowledge that what takes place in those verses is a restating of what was recorded in 1:24–31. Why restate it?

The focus of Chapter 1 is on the actions of God, with the creation as the object of God's actions. The world, the heavenly bodies, the flora and fauna, and man himself, are viewed from afar. We are given no personal information about any of them, nothing to distinguish bird from bird; even the sun and moon are not named. When God speaks to the man and the woman, it is not by way of intercourse but command, with the people dumb actors in the drama. Come Chapter 2, however, and the focus has shifted. Man is now the subject of God's actions, which are mostly for the purpose of ordering—even to the point of creating the woman to assist the man in his God-given role of retaining order in the place where he has been put. The reality is, therefore, that God rested after he had planted the garden eastward in Eden, put the man in it, caused him to show his lordship over the creation by naming the animals, given him that suitable helper, and brought them together in marital union, complete with the command to eat freely from the fruit of every tree bar the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The rest day was not ordained until all of this was finished.

For whom, therefore, was the day of rest given? It cannot be for God. He was in no way diminished by his work of creation, and had no need of rest as we do after labour. He rested in that he ceased from the work of creation. Had he required a break due

to any kind of tiredness we would have to confess mutability in God, meaning that he is not God, for 'I am the Lord, I change not' (Malachi 3:6).

If not for God, then for whom? For man, and to this the words of Christ agree when he said, 'the sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath' (Mark 2:27). As to the day of rest being the sabbath, the Hebrew word for rest is 'yishbot' from the same root as 'shabbat.' We rest on the rest day, or we sabbath on the sabbath.

Why might man need to rest? Consider God's command to Adam, to tend and keep the garden. The tending of the garden is plain; it is the work of planting, sustaining, pruning and so on. It would also involve the harvesting of ripe fruit, nuts and seeds for food for himself and Eve. The keeping of the garden is another matter. This involves the guarding of it, protecting it from harm, from outsiders—note that the serpent, 3:1, is a beast of the field, the wild, uncultivated land, not the ordered and tended garden. It is the same duty that the priests were charged with, to keep or guard the sanctuary from all that would pollute the holy place, Numbers 1:53 etc. Yet man is more than an animal charged with being a constant gardener. He has a relationship with his Maker, who comes to the garden in the cool of the day, not so much to admire the flowers and foliage but to commune with his vice-regents, the man and the woman whom he has charged with subduing the earth and ruling over it, 1:28. They know that their coming before God is to be in holiness and righteousness, which is why, when their eyes were opened through disobedience to behold their nakedness, they hid from him, 3:7, 10. They were therefore always aware that they come before God as worshippers and suppliants, not as equals. That they taught their children to do the same, 4:3,

shows that they knew of a day of rest from labour in which the worship of almighty God was to be undertaken. How can this statement be justified? Look at the words of 4:3, 'And in process of time ... Cain brought of the fruit of the ground' etc. The phrase 'in process of time' is literally 'at the end of days', or 'at the end of *the* days.' Which days? It seems perfectly reasonable to take this as being at the end of a cycle of six days; the seventh day was kept for the worship of God.

But in that there are cycles of days we are reminded of the awful truth of Chapter 3, that now the man and the woman, and their offspring even to our day, labour in a very different environment to the one first enjoyed. The entrance of sin through the disobedience of our first parents has had a devastating effect on the whole creation, and in particular on man's nature, and on his relationship both the rest of creation and to God. The rest of creation is no longer willingly under his rule, but he must act like a tyrant towards it. The ground must be broken open, and seeds cast over it, and worked into the soil. What grows is generally no longer able to be taken at will, but hard labour must be used in harvesting and storing the produce until the next growing season causes the cycle to be repeated. Life is now backbreaking toil, and we know the truth of the curse, that we eat our bread in the sweat of our brow.

In this context, how can man, especially faithful man like Abel, give himself to the worship of God? He needs a day in which he may lawfully set apart the effects of the curse in relation to his labour, and know that he can instead give himself to prayer, praise, spiritual exercises and to all the pertains properly to worship.

Therefore we may conclude this first part by saying that the establishing of the day of rest was for the sake of man and not God. It

was a day in which worship was to be conducted, the normal work of the week being lawfully set aside. That work would resume the following day. What man lacks in time, and energy, to accomplish during the six days—right worship—God provides for in the rest of the seventh.

If it be objected that the brief reference in Genesis 4:3 to what was done in process of time, seems to argue too much, note that Noah sent out the raven and the dove at intervals of seven days, and knew about the right worship of God, 8:10, 12, 20ff. This leads us on to the second part.

TO BE CONTINUED

MAKING EXCUSES

LUKE 14:16-24

Making excuses, O full of excuses,

When called to a supper, prepared by the Lord,
Many invited, but O how they slighted

The summons when given, with common accord!
'I've bought a field; what will it yield?

I'll have to inspect it, pray, have me excused.'

Another then spoke of oxen, five yoke

(The third had got married): 'Pray, have me excused!'

Deeply offended at what they pretended:

'My supper they've slighted, with common accord!
Servant, go quickly to lanes of the city,

And bring in the poor and the maimed,' quoth the Lord.
'Bring them all in, the Saviour from sin,

The Master is calling: Come, taste of my feast!'

In thousands they came; the servant again

Was sent to proclaim there was room for the least.

'Go to the by-ways, the hedges and highways,

My house must be filled; there is room for each one!
My supper they'll taste, therefore go out with haste,

The Master is calling: compel them to come.

Bring them all in; the Saviour from sin,

The Master is calling: 'Come, none is refused!'

Bring them all in, the Saviour from sin,

The Master's still calling: 'Come, none is refused!'

'Come, none is refused!'

Making Excuses

SUPPER CALL Irregular Peter Murcott

♩ = 100

Introduction to each verse

v.3 only

Omit for v.1

Omit for v.3

vv. 1 & 2 v. 3

After verse 3 only

"Come, none is re....fused....."

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