

SEPTEMBER–OCTOBER 2019

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The Gospel Magazine

A scenic landscape photograph of a stone wall in a green field with trees in the background. The wall is made of large, grey, moss-covered stones. The field is lush green with some purple flowers. In the background, there are several trees, including a large, spreading tree on the right. The sky is blue with some white clouds.

'The soul longing for God' • Faith in the face of fear • Christ's death: a fruitful victory

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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.

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

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SEPTEMBER–OCTOBER 2019

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EDITORIAL

NORWICH Cathedral has installed a helter-skelter in its nave. The reason for this peculiar action is hard to discover. On the one hand, we are told that this will give visitors a different view of the inside of the building. As they climb the staircase to the top, and stand on the platform, they will be closer to the roof and its carved medieval bosses. It is true that some visitors are interested in aspects of the architecture that may not be so readily accessible, but is a fair-ground attraction really the best way of displaying them? One suspects not.

On the other hand, we are told that this is a creative way to share the story of the Bible. Really? Is it meant to teach the fall of man; that he was made in the image of God, but fell in sin through rebellion? Is it meant to teach the danger of sliding into sin, that dreadful consequence of the cooling of love and the diminishing of faith through a love of ease and comfort? Is it meant to warn of the danger of backsliding, where those who once walked with the Lord and submitted joyfully to his word now prefer their own

will and authority? If so, then perhaps—just, perhaps—there is a very poor reason for this otherwise ridiculous decision.

One suspects, however, that the real intention is to teach visitors that churches and religion are all about feelings and fun. There is a fleeting thrill in sliding down a helter-skelter, as anyone who has ridden one will admit. The cry of the child who has just come down is, ‘Again, again.’ They do not wait to see if the attendant parent has the price of another ride, but they grab the mat and head for the stairs once more. Perhaps the authorities at Norwich Cathedral are hoping that visitors will be so thrilled by their visit that they will want to come running back again. If so, this is likely to prove a vain hope.

Norwich is not the only cathedral to go in for gimmicks. Rochester Cathedral is reported to have installed a crazy-golf course in its central aisle. The obstacles are modelled on well-known bridges, and someone from the Rochester Bridge Trust (the developer and sponsor of the installation) said, ‘The idea behind the course is to try and encourage young

people and families to come into such a beautiful place to learn about the structures of different bridges.' A member of staff said, 'We hope that, while playing adventure golf, visitors will reflect on the bridges that need to be built in their own lives and in our world today.'

In both cases, those members of staff who defended the installation of these worldly entertainments in the cathedrals were ordained women.

Many churches, regardless of the size of building, are struggling with low numbers. Many are struggling to pay the cost of upkeep, heating and insurance. Many small congregations cannot afford to keep a minister, and must rely on help from outside. Some men support themselves in the ministry; sometimes as an act of conscience, and sometimes as an act of necessity. What should they do in order to secure—as far as any can—the future of such congregations?

When Robert Runcie was Archbishop of Canterbury, a man once described as an urbane unbeliever, he spoke of a policy of managed decline. The Church of England was shrinking at an alarming rate. It would be sensible, he argued, to admit the fact and act accordingly. It was on his watch that the Bishop of Rome came to England, amid much rejoicing from some, and in the face of protest from others.

When George Carey was Archbishop of Canterbury he oversaw the Decade of Evangelism, and attempted to reverse the decline by an apparent return to the church's true purpose, gospel preaching. The initiative predated Carey, having been proposed at the Lambeth Conference in 1988. And then, in the middle of the Decade, the Church of England announced that the outmoded doctrine of hell needed to be updated, and it reintroduced the old heresy of annihilation. Why bother preach the gospel to people, and

warn them to flee the wrath to come, if there is no wrath, only oblivion?

When Rowan Williams was Archbishop of Canterbury the press worked itself up into all manner of confusion as its reporters attempted to comprehend the mind of this great intellectual. At bottom, however, Dr Williams had a simple theology; God is as helpless as the rest of us in the face of evil, and he answers our deep questions by giving us a baby to contemplate.

The present incumbent of the office, Justin Welby, has been a successful businessman, and is said to have known something of the gospel in his earlier life. Everything he has done since becoming Archbishop fills the observer with a sense of despair, as he appears to be more concerned to make the Church of England a branch of the social services rather than the body and bride of Christ.

What should the church be doing? The answer is not hard to find. 'And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen' (Matthew 28:18–20). Christ has the power, and Christ gives the command. Obedience is therefore greatly encouraged, since the one who commands is the one who has authority to bring to pass the intended purpose. That purpose is the making of disciples among all the nations of the earth; not by presenting them with light entertainments, but by declaring to them the cross and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let the church return to its great commission, in faith and confidence in the Lord whose church it is, and we shall expect to see great things. Let the means of

grace be used as they have been given, with men filled with the Holy Spirit declaring those things they have both seen and heard. No man can preach who has not experienced the saving grace of God in Christ. No preaching will be effectual that is not moved by the Holy Spirit. No hearing will reap a harvest without the free grace of God working in those for whom Christ has died. But when these things conspire, in the gracious

will of our loving heavenly Father, then that demonstration of the Spirit and of power is seen, and sinners are wonderfully converted.

Such preaching may not save churches, but it will save sinners. That is, after all, the purpose of the church—to preach Jesus Christ, and him crucified. We may mock at the folly of cathedrals, or we may despair over their lack of faith. What are we doing that is more honourable to our Lord Jesus Christ? ¶

THE SOUL LONGING FOR GOD

by ANDREW GRAY (1633–56)

Oh that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat! Job 23:3

THESE words hold out the breathing and longing of a soul after the enjoyment and fruition of God; Job being, as it were, constrained to cry out, 'Oh! when shall I come and appear before God?'

I suppose, that if the question were asked of every one here today, 'Whom seek ye?' I doubt one in twenty could answer it thus, 'It is Jesus of Nazareth whom we seek.' There are many complaints of private and public losses; but it were a more suitable commendation in these days to complain of a lost God, and communion with him, that you may be made to cry out, 'Oh that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat!' It were a pleasant and most excellent thing if we could make this report today concerning you, that is in Mark 1:37, 'All men seek after thee.' Oh Christians and expectants of the crown of heaven! are you not longing for the sight of an absent God, and one that is lost? Strangers to God, are ye

not longing to get a sight of him, that is the excellency of the higher house, and makes all the hearts that are there to rejoice? I suppose that there is a great gulf fixed between God and us, 'that we cannot pass from hence to him, and he cannot come from thence to us,' (so to speak). Yea, some may be afraid that there is a sentence of excommunication past in heaven that they shall not see his face any more. And many of us may take up Saul's lamentation, and say, 'The Lord is departed from me and answereth me no more, neither by dream, nor vision, nor by prophet, nor by Urim, nor by Thummim, any more.' Believe it, Christ is a great loss when he is away. I can say no more; but they are well that above the clouds, without the reach of losing him: neither have aiming for such a desire, 'Oh that I knew where I might find him!' I suppose we might be made to present that mislearned desire that David hath, in Psalm 119:176, 'O Lord, seek thy servant.' It is a strange word to

bid the master seek the servant; but if Christ do not seek us, we will never seek him nor yet answer him: the loss of a stranger to God is, Christ is lost: and the loss of a stranger-seeker of Christ is, Christ is gone: but to come a little nearer to the words,

In the chapter we have Job answering two great accusations and challenges that were tabled against him: the *first* was, concerning his impatience under the cross. And the *second* was, concerning his hypocrisy.

As for the *first*, concerning his impatience, he answers it in the second verse, by two things: *1st*, 'Even today is my complaint bitter.' As if he said, 'Do not charge me with impatience: for to complain against God is exceeding bitter unto me.' And *secondly*, he said, 'My stroke is heavier than my groaning'; that is, as if he would say, 'Put my calamities in the balance with my complaints, you will see the one weigh down the other.'

From the beginning of the third verse to the close, he answers to a second challenge, which was concerning his hypocrisy, his friend bearing it upon him that he was not sincere. Do not say so, saith he, for I am so sincere, that I desire that God should judge me.

I. In the words read, we have two things. *First*, The excellent desire and request that Job hath to God; 'O that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat.'

The reason why he sets not down God's name, but points him out under the word 'him', is, *1st*, Because he supposed that all would know that none was worthy to be sought so earnestly beside God. And *2dly*, Because he was so much freighted and endued with reverence and high apprehensions of God, that he cannot express what he is; as if he had said, 'he is a matchless One; not that he wants a name, but that it cannot be

expressed.' His great end in tabling of the request is, That he might come even to his seat; or, as it may be read, Even to his prepared throne; which is, as if he had said, 'I have a sweet end in the tabling of this request,' and it is this, 'That I might come where he is, and have a sweet soul-refreshing joy and correspondence with him.'

From this great request or desire, we shall make six or seven observations. And,

First, That distance and desertion from God is a case not unordinary to the saints: for while he saith, 'O that I knew where I might find him!' it holds out that he had lost God, and was at a distance from him. I will not stand to prove it, the frame of the most part of professors doth prove it; it is written on the most part of our foreheads, 'Christ is gone, and shall never come again any more.' I shall point at seven steps, to which a Christian's desertion may go.

A *first* step is, a Christian may be so deserted of God, that he knows not where to find him. Not only may Christ be gone, but so far gone, that the believer knows not where to find him, or where to go and seek him, till he be forced to cry out, 'O that I knew where I might find him!' Job knew not where to find him. And will not others come in the like condition? Undoubtedly they will, as is clear, Song 1:7, where the spouse not only finds Christ absent, but so far absent, that she knows not where to find him, till she bids him tell her, where he feeds? And John 20:13, They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him. A Christian (as it were) may be put into the dark, so that he knows not how, nor where, to direct his steps; he is sometimes in the dark in desertion. A *second* step is, a Christian may go to desertion: he may be diligent about the use of means for the recovery of Christ, and yet the means be blasted unto him; he may be about

practice and obedience, and yet be useless in regaining Christ, as is clear, Song 3:2, where the spouse is much taken up about the use of means, yet her o'er-word is, I sought him, but I found him not; I called, but he gave no answer; so Song 5:6, She goes about all means, and yet she bath the same word: and this is a great step indeed, when the Christian is put not only to wrestle with an absent God, but with a silent God. A *third* step is, Christ may be gone, and the Christian not know that he is gone, nor yet so much as be affected with it, nor sorrowful for it. This is ordinary in our days; are there not many of us of whom it might be said, Christ is gone, and yet we seek him not, Song 5:2, where Christ is absent, and yet the bride is not affected with it. It is a sad evidence when absence from Christ makes us not to walk in sackcloth. A *fourth* step is, Christ may be gone, and yet the Christian may be somewhat formal and indifferent about the use of means to regain him, as is clear, Song 3:1, 'I sought him on my bed.' Christ is gone, and yet the bride seeks him in a lazy and indifferent manner. Many of us do not stir up ourselves to lay hold upon Christ, nor to enquire after him. A *fifth* step is, a Christian may be deserted not only in respect of love, but in respect of faith, tenderness, and diligence, so as the duties he goes about, may be gone about in a carnal and dead manner.

First, In respect of love, so as the heat of it is gone, and there is no sweetness to be found. *Secondly*, In respect of tenderness, whereas stupidity and hardness of heart is come over him. *Thirdly*, In respect of faith, whereas before he could read his interest in Christ, and say, 'I am his, and he is mine;' yet now he calls in question if ever he shall find him any more. *Fourthly*, In respect of diligence, whereas before he would have prayed six or seven times, now he will not pray once

or twice a day. I fear this be almost an universal evil in these days.

A *sixth* step is, Christ may be gone and yet the Christian not know of it. Sometimes Christ hath a silent departure, occasioned through want of watchfulness and spiritual tenderness.

A *seventh* step is, that all the means a Christian may use, may become tasteless to him. When those duties and means that serve for the recovery of Christ back again to the soul, become tasteless; when prayer loseth its lustre, and love loseth its hue, and hearing hath no life, and we have no delight in those things that serve to regain time, it is a great step of desertion indeed; I shall say no more but this to it, so long as a Christian is deserted, he may call himself Ichabod, 'my glory is departed from me': and his duties, Jebesh, for with sorrow doth he bring them forth. Absence from Christ and little affectedness with it, say that it is long to the breaking of our everlasting day. Christ hides his face, and we are not troubled with it. And surely some of us may be put to this question, is there any of the precious company about the throne that bore absence from Christ as we do? Are there any that have tasted that he is gracious, that lay so little weight upon his presence as we do? It is like, we care not for Christ, and there is too great appearance that Christ careth not for us. O Christians! is he not gone? And yet how few are there that cry out, O that I knew where I might find him! Some of us may be put to this question, shall ever Christ and we meet together again?

II. A *Second* thing which we mind to insist a little upon is, that a Christian ought to make it his great design to seek and to find Christ; which is clear from these words of the text, 'O that I knew where I might find him.'

Ere I prosecute this point of doctrine, I shall

speak a little to these two things: *First*, What it is to seek and find God. *Secondly*, I shall clear unto you, that it is your duty to make it your great design to seek and to find God.

As for the *first* thing, what it is to seek and to find God, It comprehends these six things: 1. To engage your heart and strength in the accomplishment of this great and excellent design, to seek and to find God, as is clear, Psalm 119:10, 'With my whole heart have I sought thee.' I suppose that the half of the heart is not engaged in the accomplishment of this precious work, which says, it is not our great design to seek to find God.

2. It is to be diligent about all the means, so that there is not a duty required of us, in which Christ is to be found, but we follow it; as is clear, Song 3:1, 2, 3, 4, where she declares it is her design to seek and to find Christ by the diligent use of the means. There you see her diligence about the use of the means is very large, which showeth that it is her great design to seek and to find Christ. And Job 23: 8, 9, 'Behold, I go forward, and look before me, and behind me, and on either side'; which shows his great diligence.

3. Notwithstanding of all the oppositions and disappointments he meets with in duties, and of his not finding of God at first, yet not to give over seeking, or his pursuit, but to seek till he find him; as the bride, Song 3: 4, 'Go a little further, and thou shalt find him whom thy soul loveth.' If thou go to prayer, and find him not there; and to hearing, and find him not there; and to reading, and find him not there; and to study and meditation, and find him not there; and about all the means wherein Christ is yet to be found, and find him not there, let go a little further, and thou shalt find him, say you, where shall I go to, since I have been about all the means? Be a little more diligent and a little more painful.

4. It is for a soul to lay bonds, ties, and resolutions upon his own heart in the accomplishment of finding of Christ, 2 Chronicles 15:12, They entered into a covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers, with all their heart and with all their soul; that is, to bind ourselves with all bonds, whereby our hearts may be engaged in seriousness in seeking and finding. It is a remarkable word that David hath, Psalm 63:8, 'My soul followeth hard after thee': that is, 'Though thou run away, I will follow hard after thee, and will not let thee go until I find thee again.'

5. It is to be instant in diligence about all commanded duties, and the use of means for regaining and finding of Christ. A soul that would find God, must not go on about the use of means for a day, but must pursue, going on till he find God; and when he has found him, he must make it his common exercise, that he may keep him; many of us have our diligence and make it but of one day's length, and ere two days are at an end our diligence is past, two days are most of our constant diligence.

6. It is to warn and summon all that is within us, in the accomplishment of this great design, to seek and to find God. It is said of Laodicea, Revelation 3:19, 'Be zealous and repent': ye that would be zealous, I shall say no more to it but this, be sure the first sight of an absent Christ will make up all your losses, or what is amiss: thou shalt forget thy seven year's work, when thou meetest with Christ whom thy soul loveth. Thy nine year's watch will appear as a watch by night. But the most part of us make it not our great design to seek and to find Christ, and communion with him. Absence from Christ is turned more to be matter and occasion of our discourse, than matter of our exercise.

As for the *second* thing, that it is our duty to make it our great design to seek and to find

God, we shall clear it unto you as we are able.

1. It is commanded, 1 Chronicles 22:19, 'Now set yourselves with all your heart, and with all your soul, to seek the Lord your God.' This is (as it were) to have our hearts fixed and bent about this work.

2. It is clear from the practice of the saints, that they have made it their great design to seek and to find Christ, Psalm 27:4, 'One thing have I desired of the Lord, and that will I seek to obtain.'

3. There is much talking of design now in these days, but O, if this were the design of all, to seek and to find an absent God, this were a sweet and precious design. In prosecuting of this more fully, we shall speak a word to six or seven things. 1. To some evidences or marks of those that are near finding him. From the text we shall give you these six or seven. And first, For a person to be under low and undervaluing thoughts of himself, and high and mysterious thoughts of Christ, as is clear from the text: for while he saith, 'O that I knew where I might find him!' he says, he knows not how to call him. These words contain an emphasis, 'I' and 'him'. I am persuaded a soul is never nearer finding of Christ, than when he is as the dust in his own eyes. Pride is that cloud that interrupts communion with God. A *second* evidence is to have high, mysterious, and reverend thoughts of Christ. There is an emphasis in the word 'him', and it is this much, 'O that I knew where I might find beautiful, spotless, compassionate, infinite him! omniscient, omnipotent him.' Job's thoughts are overcome with the thoughts of God. When he spake of God (as it were) he blesseth his lips. Our low and undervaluing thoughts of Christ is the reason why we seek not him as we should, and find him not: there are many of us that care not for him, there is no form nor beauty in him wherefore we

should desire him. He is grown like an old almanack out of date, and tasteless. A *third* evidence is, for a soul to be serious in seeking of God, and seriously exercised about his duty, 'O that I knew where I might find him!' His seriousness is pointed out by his framing of his desire. We but compliment with God, we should wrestle with him, as Jacob did, where he behaved himself as a prince, and is commended; if we would wrestle with God we should prevail. A *fourth* evidence is, for a person to take up the distance that is betwixt God and him. Job takes up the distance that was betwixt Christ and him, which made him to cry out, 'O that I might know where I might find him!' A *fifth* evidence is, for a person to be submissive to the doing of all duties that are required of him for the finding of Christ, for so the words may be rendered. 'O that any would show me the way!' Which shows he is willing and submissive to duty; which is, as if he had said, 'if any will show me the way, I will follow it with all my heart.' A *sixth* evidence for one near finding of God is, to be obedient to the counsel of others, and to take direction from them, for so much Job's words import, while he says, 'O that I knew where I might find him!' which is, as if he had said, 'O that any one would show me the way where to find him!' for so the words may be rendered, 'O that any would make me know where to find him.' A *seventh* evidence is, for a person to have high and mysterious ends in his seeking to find God, which is clear in this instance of Job; for he had two excellent ends in his seeking and finding of God: and the *first* end that he hath in his seeking is, only to find God, and nothing else beside him, either external or internal, but himself alone, as he was, and is. A *second* end or design that he hath in his seeking is, when he hath found him, to hold him fast, and not to let him go, as is clear, 'O

that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat!' or, as the words may be read, 'even to his prepared throne.' Would he say, 'If I had once my grips of him, I would make good use of him: I would improve it so, that I would cause him to bring me even where he is. Every step of communion, (would he say) I would cause to bring me more near to him (as it were) to make a stepping-stone of it for more communion with God, I would not sit down with finding of him, but I would cause him bring me even to his seat, that I might have the incomprehensible refreshing blinks of his presence, and be watered with his springs.'

The next thing that we shall speak to, shall be to some grounds or reasons, why folks in their seeking of God find him not: and here I will hint at these six or seven. And,

First, It is because they seek him not with the whole heart, Deuteronomy 4:29, 'Thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart.' And, 'Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart': would ye know why we seek so much, and find so little? it is even this, because our hearts are not engaged in the work as they should. I suppose that the most part of our desires are running in another cursed channel; we know what it is to tongue our prayers, but we know not what it is to heart our prayers.

A *second* reason or ground is, our woeful formality, and indifferency in the exercise of seeking and finding of God: there is the occasion of the distance betwixt God and many of us; we seek as if we cared not for an answer at all, as is clear, Song 3:1. The spouse sought him, and found him not, and the reason was, she sought him upon her bed. If we were real seekers of Christ, it would sometimes take away our night's rest from us: but the most part of us had rather want Christ ten hours, than our rest one hour. O! what cursed

formality there is in all our duties? that is the forerunner of some awakening from the Lord, Are there not many of us, that when we go to prayer, do exceeding soon return from it: because we find no sweetness at all in it.

A *third* reason or ground why we come so short in our finding of God when we seek him is, those woeful designs and ends that we have in our seeking of God, as is clear, James 4:3, 'Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that you may consume it upon your lusts.' We seek a sight of Christ, more to satisfy curiosity, than to strengthen love, and help faith.

A *fourth* reason or ground is, because we are not constant, but take all our religion by fits, and when we are not constant and diligent about the use of the means, what wonder is it that we find him not; for the promise of finding him, is to the diligent seeking as is clear, Hebrews 11:6, 'He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.' If Christians were up early in the morning, and busy all day, and up late at night about their duty, they would come better speed than they do.

A *fifth* reason or ground why we come so short in finding of God is, because of our too much dependence upon our own strength, and too little upon the strength of God; and likewise a resting upon our own duties; so we suppose that there is an infallible connexion between the seeking and finding of Christ; and Jesus Christ will have us taught that .our seeking and finding is free grace.

A *sixth* reason or ground is, our abusing of former mercies and enjoyments, as is clear, Song 3: 2, compared with chapter 4: 6, 'I sought him, but I found him not': what was the reason of all this? It was only the abuse of former enjoyments: and it is no wonder though Christ suffers us to seek long ere we find him, we thrust him to the door when he is present, and give him so little room in our hearts.

A *seventh* reason or ground is, our misbelieving way of seeking of God, as is clear, James 1:7, 'Let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord, that seeketh doubtingly.' The best way for us to seek, is in faith and spiritual boldness; the which if a Christian would use, he would undoubtedly find the good of it.

III. *Thirdly*, I shall propose some considerations to provoke you to be much taken up with this excellent design in seeking and finding of God. Indeed there are some that never think they want Christ, and that is the reason why they stir not up themselves to seek Christ. But to press the matter home upon you all, take these six or seven considerations along with you.

The *first* consideration is, that one taken up in seeking of Christ, shall want no good thing, Psalm 34:10. What would you have, sirs? Ye hear that seekers of God shall want no good thing, how much more enjoyers of him; if the truth of this were believed, it would put us to a more ardent pursuit after Christ. What want ye, but ye might have it, if ye were serious seekers of God? Enlarge your desires as the sea shore, and ye shall get them filled in this precious work, and accomplishment thereof; though ye would enlarge your desires as the sand that is by the sea shore for multitude, there is no way to get them filled, but in seeking God. Think it is an excellent bargain to seek and to find Christ. Alas! we take his promise for fair words that shall not be accomplished.

The *second* consideration is, if ye be a sincere seeker of Christ, no case, no condition shall be dark to thee, no truth of the conscience, but thou shalt have the knowledge of it, as is clear, Proverbs 28:5, They that seek the Lord, understand all things, If thou wert a seeker of God, nothing needful, but God would give thee the

clear and distinct knowledge of it And the reason why we walk in darkness concerning our condition and case, oftentimes is, because we seek not God to purpose. John says, 'He that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.' He would say, are there any that would have their ignorance removed; come, and let them follow me, or be a seeker of me, get your names enrolled in that generation, Psalm 24:6, There is no dignity under heaven comparable to it.

The *third* consideration is, O Christians! would you have your deadness removed? Be much in seeking of Christ, and then you will get your deadness removed; as is clear, Amos 5:4, 6, 'Seek ye me, and ye shall live.' Their hearts shall live that seek him. Why is it that there is so much deadness of spirit and stupidity? It is because there is but little seeking of Christ. Are there not many here to-day, that sought not Christ before they came here? And it is a doubt if they seek him now either; and what wonder is it that such find him not: but if there be a desire to have the heart living in him, be much taken up in seeking of him.

The *fourth* consideration is, would you have joy and delight in all contentments? Be much in seeking of God, and ye shall find it; as is clear, 1 Chronicles 16:10, 'The heart of them rejoiceth, at seek the Lord.' How much more in enjoying of God.

Fifthly, There is another excellent delight to be found in seeking of Christ, and it is this, when ye are standing upon the utmost pinch of time, betwixt time and eternity, a witness in thy bosom, that thou hast been taken up in seeking of Christ will comfort thee exceedingly, how much more real seeing of Christ? 2 Chronicles 14:11. Asa mentions it thrice, it was so pleasant to him to remember, his heart was glad, his heart was overwhelmed with it. The day is coming,

that ye will not think it ill-spent time, that hath been spent in finding Christ.

The *sixth* consideration is, He hath not said to the house of Jacob, seek ye my face in vain. Do not think it to no purpose to seek God. He hath passed his word for it, That I shall not seek his face in vain.

The *last* consideration is, the excellency of this precious object we press you to seek. Is there any thing in heaven more to be desired than he? Or is there any thing below comparable to him? Alas! we may preach and encroach, and in preaching press you to choose him, and to seek him; but there are hundreds here, that will take a thousand times more pains in seeking the things of the world.

There are three things in the world

more sought than God. 1. The applause of the world. 2. The riches of the world. 3. The pleasures of the world. Many are more taken up with the knowledge of Christ, than with Christ himself. But O! if all our designs were consumed under this blessed design, to seek and to find God.

I would persuade you, today if you would set about it, you would find it easier to-morrow. And what can you gain, if you lose this excellent prize Jesus Christ? Then will ye be persuaded to seek him? I shall not insist.

But may he that hath the tongue of the learned, teach you these things, and persuade you to begin this precious work, to seek and to find Christ. Amen. ¶

A SERMON ON ISAIAH 1:2–3

REV. C. TUINMAN (1659–1728)

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

Part 5

I have nourished

The Lord saith about those children, 'I have nourished them'. The word means to bring up (Isaiah 23:4; Genesis 21:8). Raising, just as children grow up by the care of the parents. (1 Kings 12:8; 2 Kings 10:6). God keepeth to the comparison of children, to whom he had acted as a loving and meriting Father, by whose care they had become from a small beginning great (Isaiah 44:3, 4). This God had done with special tenderness and faithfulness (Deuteronomy 1:31). Their beginning was very small and Israel was as a young child

under the slavery of Pharaoh (Deuteronomy 7:7). God himself saith about it, 'When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt' (Hosea 11:1). He led them and fed them in the wilderness (Hosea 11:3, 4; Psalm 78:24; Isaiah 63:13, 14.) He gave them a dwelling place in Canaan and favoured them with many blessings and deliverances (Isaiah 63:3), so that they increase in number, honour and goods (Exodus 23:30). This is shown by another parable (Psalm 80:9). Here the God of the Church is praised (Psalm 147:12, compare 1 Chronicles 29:14).

TO BE CONTINUED

THE ONLY WAY

by CARINE MACKENZIE

We recently made a visit to a town that we did not know very well. 'Can you tell us the way to the station?' we asked a passer-by. A very helpful man pointed us in the right direction. 'Just down that road, round the corner, not far on the right.' We were very grateful for the information.

Later in the day we were visiting a museum and then wanted to make our way to the art gallery. We asked a local man who was also visiting the museum, how to get there. He did not just tell us the way—he said, 'I am going that way myself. I'll give you a lift.' We gladly accepted and were taken right to the door.

Our life in this world is often referred to as a journey. The Christian life is a journey to heaven. How do we know the way to go? Where do we ask for help?

God's word, the Bible, is our instruction book—the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy God (Shorter Catechism Question 2). In it we learn about God. We find out what we are to believe and how we should behave. It tells us what God has done for us and what he requires of us.

How do we reach that destination—heaven? Not by merely following rules or doing amazing acts of service to God or to other people. Yes, these are lovely things to do, but they are not enough.

Jesus spoke to his disciples one day about the way to heaven. He told them he would prepare a place for them and receive them there. 'Whither I go ye know,' he said, 'and the way ye know.'

Thomas replied, 'Lord, we know not whither thou goest: and how can we know the way?' Jesus said to him, 'I and the way, the truth and the life: no man come through unto the Father but by me' (John 14:5-6.)

Jesus does not just tell us the way to the Father, he is the way and he takes us there personally. The Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came to this world to suffer and die for the sin of his people. He went to the cross to prepare a place for them in heaven. 'And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me' (John 12:32). By this he meant being lifted up to die on the cross. Those who are drawn by the Lord to trust in him, are described as being 'in Christ'. Because we are 'in Christ', we go to heaven with him. It is his finished work done for us.

This great sacrifice of Christ has made all the sacrifices of the Old Testament redundant. No longer do we have to offer an animal as a sin offering. When Jesus died the veil of the Temple was torn in two from the top to the bottom. This opened up the way into the Most Holy Place where only the High Priest would enter, only once every year.

By his death on the cross, Christ gave us access to the Father by one Spirit (see Ephesians 2:18). The Christian can enter the holiest place, heaven, by the blood of Jesus. There is 'a new and living way, which he has consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh' (Hebrews 10:20).

We face many problems and temptations every day. God in his word warns us often about this. But God is faithful to his people. With every temptation he has provided a way to escape (1 Corinthians 10:13) and that way is the Lord Jesus. He is our great salvation.

Bible Search

Find the missing word from the verse. The initials of the correct answers will spell out the subject of the story.

1. The meek will guide in judgment: and the meek will he _____ his way. (Psalm 25.9)
2. And an highway shall be there, and a way , and it shall be called The way of _____. (Isaiah 35.8)
3. There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the _____ thereof are the ways of death. (Proverbs 14.12)
4. And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became _____ unto death, even the death of the cross. (Philippians 2.8)
5. By a _____ and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say , his flesh. (Hebrews 10.20)
6. Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth and the _____: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. (John 14.6)
7. Jesus Christ the same _____, and today and for ever. (Hebrews 13.8)
8. That the Lord thy God may show us the way wherein we may _____, and the thing that we may do. (Jeremiah 42.3)
9. For through him we both have _____ by one Spirit unto the Father. (Ephesians 2.18)
10. Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the _____ of bondage. (Galatians 5:1).

THE SYNOD OF DORT

By THE REV. SAMUEL MILLER (1769–1850): Part 6

NO other proof of this is needed than the subterfuges to which Arminians and Pelagians have resorted in order to obviate the objections which they have felt pressing on their respective schemes. Some have denied the possibility of God's foreknowing future contingencies; alleging that such foreknowledge cannot be conceived or admitted, more than the power of doing impossibilities, or doing what involves a contradiction. Others have denied the plenary foreknowledge of God altogether; alleging that there are many things which he does not choose to know—the latter making the divine ignorance of many future things voluntary, while the former consider it as necessary. A third class to get rid of the same difficulties take refuge in the principle that the Most High is deficient in power as well as in knowledge; that his plan—so far as he has any—is continually thwarted and opposed beyond his power of control; that he would be glad to have less natural and moral evil in his kingdom than exists; would be glad to have many more saved than will be saved; but is not able to fulfil his wishes, and is constantly restrained and defeated by his own creatures!

Do not these boasted refuges from Calvinism shock every mind not thoroughly hardened and profane? Do not the allegations that God is not omnipotent; that he is not omniscient; that he is not acting upon an eternal and settled plan; that his purposes, instead of being eternal, are all formed in time, and instead of being immutable are all liable to be altered every day and are, in fact, altered by the changing will of his creatures; that there is no certainty of his predictions

and promises ever being fulfilled because he can neither foresee nor control future contingencies; that it is his express design to save all men alike while yet it is certain that all will not be saved; that he purposes as much and does as much for those who perish as for those who are saved; but is, after all, baffled and disappointed in his hopes concerning them; that he is certain of nothing because he has determined on nothing positively, and if he had is not able to do all his pleasure—do not such allegations fill every thinking mind with horror? Are they not equally contrary to Scripture, to reason, and to all the hopes and consolations of the pious? Would not such a God, with reverence be it spoken, be the most unhappy being in the universe? True, indeed, Arminians do not recognize these horrid consequences and therefore cannot be charged with holding them; but they are not, on this account, the less inevitable, or the less awful.

But though that system of grace, usually denominated Calvinism, is now in such bad odour with multitudes in the Church of England, and with many connected with her ecclesiastical daughter in this country—it was not always so. When the Synod of Dort convened, the same theological system which that celebrated Synod sustained, was the reigning creed in the Church of England and had been so, beyond all question, for more than half a century. This has, indeed, been denied but it would be just as reasonable to deny that such men as Cranmer, and Whitgift, and Hooker, and Hall, and Usher, ever occupied stations in the established Church of that land. Testimony to establish

the position which has been assumed, which prejudice itself cannot refute, crowds upon us and offers itself on every side.

The testimony of Peter Heylin, a bitter enemy to Calvinism, is clear and decisive. 'It cannot be denied,' says he, 'but that by the error of these times, the reputation which Calvin had attained to in both Universities, and the extreme diligence of his followers, there was a general tendency unto his opinions; his book of Institutes being, for the most part, the foundation on which the young divines of those days did build their studies.' Again he declares, 'Of any men who publicly opposed the Calvinian tenets in the University of Oxford, till after the beginning of king James's reign, I must confess that I have hitherto found no good assurance.' He speaks of two divines of inferior note, who secretly propagated Arminian principles, and compares them to the prophet Elijah, who considered himself as left alone to oppose a whole world of idolaters. Further: in the reign of Charles I, more than sixty years after the final settling of the thirty nine Articles, when a suppression of the Calvinistic doctrines was contemplated by Archbishop Laud, Heylin acknowledges that such was the general attachment of the bishops and clergy to these doctrines, that the Arminian party did not dare to venture 'the determining of these points to a Convocation' (See Heylin's *Quinq. Hist. Work* p.626 &c. See also his *Life of Laud* p.147). And he again explicitly informs us that, from the re-settling of the Church under Queen Elizabeth to the period already mentioned, 'the maintainers of the anti-Calvinian doctrines were few in number, and made but a very thin appearance.'

The famous Lambeth Articles, drawn up in 1595 during the reign of Queen Elizabeth, are acknowledged by all who ever read them

to be among the most strongly marked Calvinistical compositions that ever were penned. They were drawn up by Archbishop Whitgift, then at the head of the English Established Church, and one of its most conspicuous divines and fathers. The archbishop was assisted in this service by the bishops of London and Bangor, and by some others. After receiving the public approbation of these dignitaries, the Articles were sent to the Archbishop of York, and the Bishop of Rochester, who also subscribed them. Thus ratified, Archbishop Whitgift sent them to the University of Cambridge, with a letter, in which he declared 'That these Articles were not to be considered as laws and decrees, but as propositions which he and his brethren were persuaded were true, and corresponding with the doctrine professed in the Church of England, and established by the laws of the land.' Nor is this all: it having been suggested by some that the Archbishop agreed to these Articles rather for the sake of peace than because he believed them, Strype, his Episcopal biographer, repels the charge with indignation, declaring that such an insinuation is as false as it is mean and disparaging to the primate (Strype's *Life of Whitgift* pp.461-463).

Not long after the delegates to the Synod of Dort, from the Church of England, returned home, they were attacked by certain writers, who reproached them for having signed the Articles of the Synod, and charged them with having by that act given countenance to error, and also with having departed from the Articles of their own Church. Against this attack they thought proper to defend themselves, by what they called a joint attestation, which contains the following passage: 'Whatsoever there was assented unto, and subscribed by us, concerning the five Articles, either in the joint

Synodical judgment, or in our particular collegiate suffrage, is not only warrantable by the holy Scriptures, but also conformable to the received doctrine of our said venerable mother, which we are ready to maintain and justify against all gainsayers.'

Again, Bishop Hall, before mentioned as one of the delegates, in a work of his own, addressed to some who had charged him, and some other bishops of his day, with entertaining Arminian sentiments as to the doctrine of election, thus indignantly replies to the charge: 'You add, "election upon faith foreseen." What! nothing but gross untruths? Is this the doctrine of the bishops of England? Have they not strongly confuted it in Papists and Arminians? Have they not cried it down to the lowest pit of hell?' (*Defence of the Humble Remonstrance*, Works vol 3 p.246).

The same pious prelate himself tells us that, after his return from the Synod of Dort, where he had been, as we have seen, an advocate of Calvinistic doctrine and a warm and open opponent of Arminianism, he was distressed to find that heresy gaining ground in England. 'Not many years,' says he, 'after settling at home it grieved my soul to see our own church begin to sicken of the same disease which we had endeavoured to cure in our neighbours' (*Some Specialties of the Life of Joseph Hall Bishop of Norwich*, written by himself, prefixed to the third volume of his works).

That the thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England are Calvinistic has been so often asserted and demonstrated that a new attempt to establish the fact is certainly unnecessary. The seventeenth Article in particular bears ample testimony to this fact. I am aware, indeed, that it has been alleged that the qualifying clause toward the end of the Article shows that the framers of it meant to reject Calvinism. Now it so happens that the very qualifying clause in question is nearly

copied from Calvin's Institutes, and the latter part of that clause is a literal translation of that Reformer's caution against the abuse of this doctrine. For evidence of the former see his *Institutes* III.21.4, 5, compared with the Article, where every idea contained in that part of the Article will be found recited. For proof of the latter read the following: '*Proinde, in rebus agendis, ea est nobis perspicenda Dei voluntas quam verbo suo declarat.*' Instit I.17.5. 'Furthermore, in our doings, that will of God is to be followed, which we have expressly declared to us in the word of God' (Article 17).

A correspondent of the 'Christian Observer,' a clergyman of the Established Church of England, in speaking of the disposition of many in his own church to vilify the name and opinions of Calvin, makes the following remarks: 'Few names stand higher or in more deserved preeminence, among the wise and pious members of the English Church, than that of Bishop Andrews. His testimony to the memory of Calvin is, that he was 'an illustrious person, and never to be mentioned without a preface of the highest honour.' Whoever examines into the sermons, writings, &c, of our divines in the reign of Elizabeth and James I, will continually meet with epithets of honour with which his name is mentioned; the learned, the wise, the judicious, the pious Calvin, are expressions everywhere to be found in the remains of those times. It is well known that his Institutes were read and studied in the universities by every student in divinity; nay, that, by a convocation held at Oxford, that book was recommended to the general study of the nation. So far were the Church of England, and her chief divines, from countenancing that unbecoming and absurd treatment with which the name of this eminent Protestant is now so frequently dishonoured, that it would be no difficult matter to prove, that there is not, perhaps, a parallel

instance upon record of any single individual being equally and so unequivocally venerated for the union of wisdom and piety, both in England, and by a large body of the foreign churches, as John Calvin. Nothing but

ignorance of the ecclesiastical records of those times, or resolute prejudice, could cast a cloak of concealment over this fact. It has been evidenced by the combined testimony both of enemies and friends to his system of doctrines.’ ¶

FORMER DAYS

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

250 years ago: September & October 1769

THE **September** issue continues the series on Hebrews by the Rev. Edward Deering, and is followed by the second part the Biography of William Gouge. In the illnesses that afflicted him in later life it was said that he sometimes groaned but never grumbled. The Dialogue between Christian and Truth reaches the third chapter of the Song of Solomon. A correspondent, WS, submits six letters in response to claims made by John Wesley, and the first is reprinted. It concerns Wesley’s erroneous view of predestination, election and reprobation. A second letter follows, from the pen of the Rev. Anthony Boehm, German Lutheran Chaplain at St James’s Palace in London. In it he replies to a letter received about the dangers of card-playing. While he accepts that some card players abuse the games, he cannot see that there is a right use of cards. This is because there is no spiritual principle in the action of playing. This leads to a discourse on the necessity of the new birth, without which all actions are sin. A reader recalls an encounter with a sailor who wanted to purchase a Bible. Having one on him, the readers indicated a willingness to part with it, if he thought the sailor would love it as much as he did. The poor sailor replied that he could

not make such a promise, but he was sure that such a gift would be precious to him. For that he was given the Bible. Another letter, to a newly-ordained minister, urges him to preach Christ and not to try to please his hearers with fine phrases. The folly of pride is exposed, and two book reviews follow. The first is a warm commendation of a work by James Hervey, the second of a work by Henry Venn, in which Dr Priestly’s theology of the Lord’s Supper is critiqued. The issue ends with poetry.

The **October** issue opens with Deering’s lectures on Hebrews, 1:13–14, and the Biography is of the Rev. Hugh Clark of Oundle, then of Woolstone in Warwickshire. There, he suffered under the suspicion of non-conformity. His relief came when Archbishop Whitgift, hearing of his troubles, intervened on his behalf. The Dialogue between Christian and Truth reaches Song of Solomon 3:2, and Casuistical Divinity publishes a second letter from the Rev Anthony Boehm on the un-Christian nature of gaming. A correspondent, the Rev. John James of Oundle, informs the reader of his completed project, which is a ‘descant upon the doctrines’ contained in the Collects of the Prayer Book. The entry for the First Sunday in Advent is offered as an example. The

finished work ran to at least seven editions, as the copy in my library testifies. The second letter on John Wesley’s doctrines is prefaced by an editorial comment, stating that both the writer and the Editors have been attacked for daring to criticise Mr Wesley. They point out that any attacks have only been on errors on doctrine, and not the man, whom they commend for his gospel preaching, in so far as he serves Christ thereby. A book review and poetry conclude the issue.

200 years ago: September & October 1819

The issue for **September** begins with a piece entitled, ‘The importance of supra-lapsarian doctrines.’ The authors, Adelphos, speaks to grace, with particular reference to the question raised in an earlier issue, on whether Christ believed for his people; Adelphos maintains he did. Christ’s reply to the dying thief is treated next, with the error of purgatory in the author’s sights. The thoughts on aspects of the doctrine of the Trinity continue, with the future subjection of the Son to the Father as the main topic. Given the error or eternal subordination being taught today, this is of some importance. The author is very careful to distinguish between what belongs to the Son as Son, and what belongs to the Son as God. Nathan’s words to David, ‘Thou art the man,’ provide sober thoughts, and lead into an examination of Romans 8:18–22. A large number of reviews, some long, and some short, conclude the issue.

The **October** issue opens with an examination of the difference between law and grace. ‘On perfection’ examines the command of God to Abraham, ‘Walk before me, and be thou perfect.’ Matthew Henry is taken to task for his explanation of these words, which the author, Myra, considers to be a call to conversion. Eliezer writes on the divinity of Christ, to

assist a young friend lately fallen into the error of Socinianism, and A Lover of Truth writes on true, or inward, holiness. The long treatise on the Rainbow appears to be concluded, and the fact of Christ being filled with the Holy Spirit provides the theme for ‘Jesus completely qualified for his work.’ Questions inviting responses, and book reviews, complete the issue.

100 years ago: September & October 1919

‘Christ the vine’ is the opening piece for the **September** magazine, and the lifting up of the Son of Man, from John 3:14f, provides the second. The Song of Solomon is once again the subject of exposition, followed by sermon notes from Zephaniah 3:12. The benediction of Ephesians 3:12 is expounded, and the promise of Hebrews 11:4, concerning ‘some better thing,’ follows. Our debt to the Lord, from the words, ‘Pay me that thou owest,’ is considered, and the exhortation of Isaiah 8:20, and is followed by the concluding part of ‘Thou didst call’ from the previous issue. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s promotion in spiritualism, and his invoking the name of God in defence of his grievous sin, is exposed in an article that had recently appeared in the *English Churchman*. The one faith of Ephesians 4:5 provides the final devotional piece, and is followed by correspondence, including updates on the progress of the Enabling Bill (see the previous *Magazine* for more information).

The **October** issue opens with thoughts on ‘The Rock that is higher’ and is followed by the account of the conversion of a man by a dream. ‘A man who knew’ from John 9:25, and the Lord’s protection of David from Saul provide comfort for believers. Sermon notes, short expositions, correspondence, poetry and reports conclude the issue.

TO BE CONTINUED

FAITH IN THE FACE OF FEAR

A SERMON BY PETER MURCOTT (Isle of Man)

‘And the midwives said unto Pharaoh, Because the Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women; for they are lively, and are delivered ere the midwives come in unto them.’ (Exodus 1:19)

Pharaoh was afraid. When ordinary men are frightened, they are apt to do something foolish. When they are powerful men, like Pharaoh, they are apt to do something ferocious. Pharaoh was also a man of ignorance. He had no knowledge of the decisive moment in Egyptian history when Joseph had saved the nation from death and destruction. Exodus 1:8 declares the beginning of his reign by saying, ‘Now there arose up a new king of Egypt, which knew not Joseph.’

In Ignorance

You might think that this was odd. You would expect a ruler, above all people, to have been taught his nation’s history, without which he would be ill-equipped to govern. It was a bad omen, just as it is when a nation abandons its Christian heritage.

Pharaoh was afraid of the Hebrews’ numerical strength; his fears were fuelled by the thought that they might assist an enemy in the event of war, Exodus 1:9–10. He concluded that evasive action was needed; and since he had the power to put his thoughts into practice, he made life as unbearable for the Hebrews as he could. Exodus 1:14 sums up the situation: ‘And they [the Egyptians] made their [the Hebrews] lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service ... wherein they made them serve, was with rigour.’ Whatever Pharaoh hoped to achieve by this, he failed miserably, because we are told that their numbers continued to increase, Exodus 1:12.

Darker Devices

It was then that he turned to darker designs. Summoning Shiphrah and Puah, two Hebrew midwives, he commanded them to kill all Hebrew boys at birth, Exodus 1:15–16. It was an early instance of the more recent ‘ethnic cleansing’—a terrible phenomenon, if ever there were one.

Imagine the scene: two ordinary women came face to face with a tyrant. We are not given a description of Pharaoh’s throne room, or of how they reached it. Yet we can be sure that the very corridors along which they passed would have been more than enough to overwhelm the stoutest soul.

A Tale of Two Fears

This is the background: ‘But the midwives feared God, and did not as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the men children alive’, Exodus 1:17. You might describe it as a Tale of Two Fears—the fear of man, full to the brim with snares, Proverbs 29:25, and the fear of the Lord, which is a fountain of life to depart from the snares of death, Proverbs 14:27. It’s a timeless tale, full of sound wisdom and instruction for Christians in twenty-first century Britain. We turn first to—

1: THE DECISIVE FACTOR

Let us take up the account when Pharaoh had given his orders. The effect upon Shiphrah and Puah would have been immense. They were commanded to murder male babies

at birth on an ongoing and a colossal scale! Nothing is revealed of the penalty for disobedience; though it may be assumed that it was death. So we can take it as read that, as Shiphrah and Puah left Pharaoh’s presence, they were not only quaking, but they had been shaken rigid.

Given that this was the opening round of the tale of two fears — the reverential fear of the Lord as opposed to the ruinous fear of man, let us consider:

The Fear of the Lord, which is—

- 1: clean (Psalm 19:9)
- 2: the beginning of wisdom (Psalm 111:10)
- 3: to hate evil (Proverbs 8:13)
- 4: strong confidence (Proverbs 14:26) &
- 5: a fountain of life (Proverbs 14:27)

Moreover, the fear of the Lord tends to life (Proverbs 19:23), prolongs days (Proverbs 10:27), and by it are riches, and honour, and life (Proverbs 22:4). That’s a most impressive list of the blessings, gifts and graces from Almighty God, don’t you think?

In Comparison

What about the fear of man? What does it confer upon humanity? Ultimately, there is only one thing, succinctly summarised in Proverbs 29:25: ‘The fear of man bringeth a snare...’ These come in various shapes and sizes; but whatever the setting or the substance, the outcome never varies. The fear of man is part and parcel of the ongoing spiritual battle with which all Christians have to contend.

In Shiphrah and Puah’s case, their obedience to God could have cost them their lives. In our part of the world, the penalties are far less severe. For instance, in some countries, notably those which describe themselves as democracies, there is an increasing pressure, especially in the public sector, to promote

the canons of political correctness, some of which are obviously against the Word of God. A failure to do so could not only affect one’s promotion prospects, but also one’s chosen career.

Therefore it is essential that Christians clearly understand that the fundamental principle of faith is to fear God first and foremost. That was at the root of what Shiphrah and Puah did. They loved, revered and respected their Sovereign Lord, and they sought to obey and please him, far above and far beyond any thought or concern for their personal well being. Moreover, they found that God gave them the necessary faith and confidence to do so. (Proverbs 3:25–26 is especially relevant and instructive on how to live today.)

2: THE DEFEATED PHARAOH

In due course, their failure to obey Pharaoh reached his ears, and they were summoned to explain themselves. Undoubtedly, they were terrified, which is where faith comes into play. It stares fear fully in the face, and effectively declares like Joshua: ‘But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord’, Joshua 24:15. That is very honouring and pleasing to God, especially since it conquers compromise.

The Enquiry

Pharaoh knew that they had disobeyed him, so he came straight to the point: ‘Why have ye done this thing, and have saved the men children alive?’ Exodus 1:18b. We might observe that, in the circumstances, it was surprising, if not amazing, that he engaged in any enquiry at all. Given his absolute power, he could have simply had them put to death. The fact that he didn’t should make one say: ‘This is the Lord’s doing: it is marvellous in our eyes’, Psalm 118:8. What was their reply?

It was that the Hebrew women, unlike the Egyptians, gave birth so quickly that the child was already born by the time they arrived. The point that they were making was that, very strictly speaking, Pharaoh's command (and his word was law) required them to kill male Hebrew babies at the moment of birth, and not later, Exodus 1:19.

A strict moralist might say that they were telling a fairytale about the Hebrew women's delivery of children, and that they ought to have come clean. But God did not hold that against them. In so doing, he wasn't endorsing the telling of an untruth; but he remembered that they were but dust and that their faith in practice had already exceeded by far what many others might have done in like circumstances. (See: Psalm 103:14. Read also the previous verse: 'The Lord pitieth them that fear him.' In any event, on leaving Pharaoh's presence, Shiphrah and Puah may have confessed their weakness to God.)

As for Pharaoh, he simply accepted their submission of an apparent loophole in his command. This again is surprising; for he could have taken great offence at their boldness. The outcome was that he decreed that all newly-born Hebrew boys were thenceforth to be thrown into the river Nile—with which Exodus 1 closes, Exodus 1:22.

3: THE DAY HAS COME

But Shiphrah and Puah were allowed to go free; and the passage ends with God rewarding them for their steadfastness by giving them houses, Exodus 1:21.

Ah! it's all too easy simply to sit back and admire the fortitude and firmness of godly people of the past. But there's a clear lesson for this day and generation, when crises of conscience are again arising in many forms. The ongoing principle is this: where there

is a clear conflict between God's Word and man's, God is to be obeyed. If you are told to do something that is obviously wrong and therefore contrary to the Word of God, you mustn't do it. Peter and the other disciples made that perfectly clear in Acts 5:29 when they were taken before the Sanhedrin for preaching the gospel, saying: 'We ought to obey God rather than men.'

Time was when, in Christian school assemblies, children would sing these words of Mrs Cecil Frances Alexander's:

Do no sinful action,
Speak no angry word;
Ye belong to Jesus,
Children of the Lord.

Christ is your own Master;
He is good and true,
And His little children
Must be holy, too.

That's straightforward enough! But does it simply apply to children? Are we to impress upon them always to do the right thing, whilst modifying our attitudes, and, more to the point, our actions, to suit our own immediate, personal interests? Heaven forbid! A verse of another old children's hymn says,

I have a Guide, and in His steps
Where all the saints have gone,
Whether beneath was flinty rock -
Or yielding grass thereon,
They cared not, but with force unspent,
Unmoved by pain they onward went,
Unstayed by pleasures still they bent,
Until their course was done.'

(A verse, slightly altered, from 'My faith it is an oaken staff' by Thomas Lynch (1818–71).)

O Lord, by Thy grace, grant us, too, the faith so to live!

A VOICE FOR THE VOICELESS

O Shiphrah and Puah,
Two midwives, obscure,
Who signally showed their great worth,
Were shaken quite rigid
When Pharaoh insisted
They killed all male Hebrews at birth.

This, Shiphrah and Puah
Could never endure—
'Twas God whom they feared and obeyed;
And so they together
(Despite their dilemma)
Ensured that each baby was saved.

When Pharaoh enquired
Why none had expired,
They said: 'But our births aren't the norm!
Our women are lively,
So when we arrive we
Discover the baby's been born!'

There's much here to teach us:
Speak up for the speechless—
For those who have never drawn breath;
God richly rewarded
Those midwives, who thwarted
Those babies' appointments with death.

© Peter Murcott

(Read Exodus 1:8-22 & Proverbs 31:8)

If every member should be of an equal bigness, the body would be monstrous: but the body is so proportioned in its different members, that the lesser become serviceable to the greater, and so they orderly discharge their mutual operations. As in music there would be no harmony, if the strings were all of an equal bigness; but one string being the bass, and the other the treble, that makes the music to be more melodious. So it is in grace: the different degrees of grace make the body of Christ more harmonious. It is here as in some curious piece of needlework: if all the silks were of one colour, it would not set out the work with so much lustre and amiableness as the variety of colours will do.

Christopher Love

MAN'S SPIRITUAL DEATH AND CHRIST'S RESURRECTION POWER

BY WYLIE W. FULTON, USA

Only the Spirit of God—only the Son of God—only the Triune Jehovah—can take away spiritual death, bondage, inability and the stink of the natural man. The power of GOD alone can open the grave of my corruption and make me into a receptive child of grace.

The southern evangelist Maze Jackson tells an interesting story. It seems that a man who owned a funeral home in a certain Southern town had been listening to the traveling preacher and was deeply impressed with his earnestness to reach people for God. And so, during the course of Mr. Jackson's stay in that city, the mortician invited him to tour his funeral facility. As they wandered from room to room in this preparation house of the dead, finally they entered the cold room where a man's corpse lay waiting to be embalmed. The funeral man said, 'Now you know that the Bible says a sinner is dead and cannot hear, right?' 'Sure,' said Brother Maze. 'Then you will get a good illustration for your preaching here, won't you? Go ahead and say a few words to this man who died earlier today. You know he can't hear anything, nor feel anything nor do anything. He is dead!' the man concluded.

'Yes, this is so very true,' the preacher solemnly replied. He paused for a few minutes, reflecting on man's spiritual inability and

death—and then a flash of profound wisdom shined into Maze Jackson's mind and heart. He said, 'Yes, this dead man CAN hear something! He can hear the voice of Jesus! He can feel the touch of Jesus! He can respond to the commands of my Lord! No, I am powerless to reach him, and I thank you for the illustration. But,' said Maze, as his voice became more animated, 'the thing that I am excited about is that this corpse is not beyond the touch of my Lord. God can raise him up! Then God can quicken any lost sinner, even though I am not able to reach him! I serve a God of resurrection power!' Amen.

A living natural sinner is just as dead in the spiritual realm as the man in our story was dead physically. That spiritually dead sinner will never hear my voice, but can hear his! That is exactly what we are saying in opposing man-made offers, shallow invitations, schemes and means in evangelism, and any effort of the flesh to produce regeneration of those who are by nature spiritually dead sinners—indeed all gimmicks that smack of the flesh in Twenty-first Century preaching. 'Salvation is of the LORD' (Jonah 2:9), and if there is one place we see this and need to understand it, it's at the place of the initial quickening of the sinner.

No wonder if Christians differ sometimes, for Satan, the accuser of the brethren, is watching continually to sow discord among them, and to throw stumbling-blocks in their way: therefore these should 'watch and pray, lest we enter into temptation,' *Matthew 26:41*.

THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST

By J.E. NORTH (Totton, Hants)

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

IN our previous study on this verse, we considered the fact that the Gospel concerns the Person of Jesus Christ. We now turn to the title that is here given of Jesus Christ. He is the Son of God. But not only is this a title given to Jesus Christ, but it is the very nature of this Person; he is the Son of God. It is important that we are accurate when considering the Lord Jesus Christ. The title 'Son of God' is not an office the Lord Jesus took upon himself when he became incarnate. No! The Lord Jesus Christ is and always has been the Son of God, the Eternal Son of God. The Second Person of the Holy Trinity did not become the Son of God when he became incarnate. The Athanasian Creed states quite clearly the nature of the Godhead (including the Lord Jesus Christ) as the eternal Triune God:

... We worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity;

Neither confounding the Persons: nor dividing the Substance.

For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son: and another of the Holy Ghost.

But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one: the Glory equal, the Majesty co-eternal. Such as the Father is, such is the Son: and such is the Holy Ghost.

The Father uncreate, the Son uncreate: and the Holy Ghost uncreate.

The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible: and the Holy Ghost incomprehensible.

The Father eternal, the Son eternal: and the Holy Ghost eternal.

And yet they are not three eternals: but one eternal.

Here, then, in this first verse of, and the introduction to, Mark's Gospel we have this clear declaration of the Lord Jesus Christ as being the Son of God.

There are witnesses to the Lord Jesus Christ's being the eternal Son of God whom we will group together under five distinct headings.

Firstly, The Jews and the Sanhedrin,

Secondly, Satan and his infernal legions,

Thirdly, the Disciples in the Gospels,

Fourthly, The New Testament Epistles,

Fifthly, Other witnesses in the Scriptures.

Firstly, the Jews and the Sanhedrin

The Jews, of course, disputed the divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ. In John's Gospel we read of the response to the Lord Jesus saying that He and the Father are One: 'I and my Father are one. Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me? The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God' (John 10:30–33).

When the Lord Jesus was arraigned before the Sanhedrin and the High Priest, he was accused of blasphemy but they could not agree in their testimony, 'but neither did

their witness agree together' (Mark 14:59 *cf.* Matthew 26:60, 61). But when asked by the High Priest, 'Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?' Jesus answered and said, 'I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.' To which the High Priest replied, 'What need we any further witnesses? Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye? And they all condemned him to be guilty of death' (Mark 14:61–64). The Jewish authorities were quite clear in their understanding of the nature of the claims of the Lord Jesus Christ. He made himself to be equal with God, he claimed to be the Son of God, they said, rejecting his claims. And when they brought Jesus before Pilate they accused him, 'The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God' (John 19:7). And even when on the cross, they reviled him as the Son of God, saying, 'saying, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross' (Matthew 27:40), and again, 'He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God' (Matthew 27:43).

Secondly, Satan and his infernal legions

The devil and all his hosts knew the Lord Jesus Christ to be the eternal Son of God. When the Lord Jesus Christ was tempted of Satan in the desert he questioned the Lord Jesus' personage as the Son of God. 'And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread ... And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou

dash thy foot against a stone' (Matthew 4:3, 6). And on numerous other occasions during the earthly ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ the demons and devils cast out by the Lord Jesus not only recognised him, but were subject to his authority

Thirdly, The Disciples in the Gospels

His disciples and all the children of God acknowledge the truth of the Lord Jesus Christ as being the Eternal Son of the Eternal Father. At Caesarea Philippi the disciples were asked by the Lord Jesus Christ as to what men's opinions of him were, they told him that men thought he was John the Baptist raised from the dead, or Elijah, or perhaps another of the prophets. But then came the question directed to the disciples, 'But whom say ye that I am?' 'And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God' (Matthew 16:16).

But this was not the only occasion that the disciples had confessed the Lord Jesus Christ to be the Son of God. At the very beginning of his earthly ministry when calling his disciples to himself, Nathaniel who had been brought to the Lord Jesus by Philip addressed the Lord Jesus by saying, 'Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel' (John 1:49).

When the Lord concluded his discourse on his being the Bread of Life and many left him; 'From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him,' the Lord asked his disciples if they would also go away, then Peter replied on the behalf of the others, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.' Then follows another declaration of the Sonship of Christ, 'And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God' (John 6:66–71).

Fourthly, The Acts and Epistles

When Philip the Evangelist met with the Ethiopian Eunuch in the desert of Gaza he found him reading the 53rd chapter of Isaiah. Having the opportunity of speaking to him about the contents of that chapter, he 'began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.' When the Ethiopian Eunuch believed and wanted to be baptised, Philip said, 'If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest.' To which he replied, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God' (Acts 8:26–40).

Acts chapter 9 recounts the call by grace of the Apostle Paul. Here is a man who has met with the Lord Jesus Christ in a most dramatic manner. He saw the resurrected Lord Jesus, he spoke with him, and such was the glory that he saw, he was blinded by that sight, his sight only being restored when Ananias prayed with him and laid hands upon him. His sight being restored, he immediately preached Christ in the synagogues, 'that he is the Son of God' (Acts 9:1–22). His experience was such that he believed that Christ was and is the Son of God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, a belief which all true Christians must have in order to be saved.

When Paul greets the Roman Christians in his epistle to them he greets them in the name of Jesus Christ who was 'declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead' (Romans 1:4). The resurrection, says Paul, is the necessary proof. Likewise, writing to the Corinthians he says, 'For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but was yea...' (2 Corinthians 1:19).

Both the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles, including the Book of the

Revelation declare without doubt that the Lord Jesus is the Son of God.

There are **other witnesses in Scripture** who bear testimony to the Sonship of the Lord Jesus Christ, so fifthly, we consider, briefly some of these witnesses.

(i) Nebuchadnezzar

'Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God' (Daniel 3:24, 25). Strictly speaking, these verses are not declaring that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of God, but they are a recognition by Nebuchadnezzar that there is a plurality of Persons in the Godhead, one of whom is the Son of God. Nebuchadnezzar was a pagan, worshiping a multiplicity of gods, but in this chapter Nebuchadnezzar was brought to see that Almighty God was the One who is able to deliver His children when they refused to bow to the image that he had made. On numerous occasions in the Old Testament the pre-incarnate Lord Jesus Christ, the second Person of the Holy Trinity came to this earth and intervened in the affairs of man. These theophanies (as the theologians call it) reveal the Lord Jesus Christ before he became incarnate. But is it possible for a pagan to know anything of the Godhead? If we follow through to the next chapter of Daniel (Daniel 4) we read that Nebuchadnezzar was taught by the Lord that there is but one God, the Most High God and that He is the One who rules in the affairs of man. 'And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up

mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation' (Daniel 4:34). No! He did not have a clear view of the Godhead as we perhaps have, but he was taught by the Lord something of the nature of the Godhead, and we cannot go further.

(ii) The angel at the annunciation of the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ.

'And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God' (Luke 1:35). When the Angel Gabriel came to Nazareth to speak to Mary concerning the conception and birth of the Lord Jesus Christ he spoke of the eternal nature of the child she would bear/carry. The Greek title given to Mary was THEOTOKOS—bearer of God. Mary is not the mother of God for if she were, then the existence/nature of God ceases to be eternal. Under the inspiration of the Spirit of God Isaiah writes: 'For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given' (9:6). Christ was the child who was born in Bethlehem, but he was the eternal Son who was given to a lost world of sinful man to redeem his church (Ephesians 5:25).

Mary was the bearer of the Son of God! Mary was told that the child would be holy. The use of the phrase, 'That holy thing' was not to deny the true humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ and his truly human soul, but to distinguish him from having a fallen human nature like the rest of humanity. No! He is 'holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens' (Hebrews 7:26). But Gabriel also said that

He would be called 'the Son of God.' He declares that our Lord Jesus Christ is part of the Godhead, part of the Holy Trinity, and we accept what the Scriptures have to say about this.

(iii) The Centurion at the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus

'Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God' (Matthew 27:54). Here was another, like Nebuchadnezzar who we must presume was a pagan, one who did not accept the Lordship of the Triune God. But the Gospel of Matthew records that he witnessed the crucifixion. He was probably the one in charge of the soldiers who undertook the actual deed of crucifying the three victims that day. He witnessed the nailing of Jesus and the others to the cross. He heard the words of the Lord Jesus uttered whilst on the cross. He saw the sun darkened during the daytime. He heard the Scribes and Pharisees mocking Christ. He also heard the words of the dying thief and the Lord's response, 'Today thou shalt be with me in paradise.' He heard the cry of victory, 'It is finished.' He felt the earth shake and saw the rocks rent asunder. Only the coldest heart could not be affected on that day with those proceedings, but the Roman soldier was trained not to be overcome by such scenes. He was battle-hardened. He had seen many a gory battlefield after the slaughter of Rome's enemies. But here was something different. Is it too much to say that here may well have been a work of the Spirit of God in the heart of this centurion? That he may well have been brought to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ? Purely conjecture on my part, but Christ did pray, 'Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they

know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots' (Luke 23:34), and we know that the Father always heard and answered Christ's prayers. The 'Them' in his prayer may well have included the centurion and his band. But the important thing is that it is recorded that he bore witness to the Lord Jesus Christ being the Son of God.

I have tried to follow Scripture and what it has to say concerning the Son of God, and what is included in what Mark writes at the beginning of his gospel, 'The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God' (Mark 1:1). It is imperative that we are accurate in our view of the Lord Jesus Christ. To be otherwise is to be cast adrift and heading for the rocks and making shipwreck of the faith as some did in Paul's time: 'Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck: Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto

Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme' (1 Timothy 1:19, 20). Isaac Watts put reason before the Scriptures and queried the nature of the Godhead, so much so, that for a season he denied the Holy Trinity, but he was brought back to the truth by the work of the Holy Spirit in his heart and he went on to compose the hymn on the Trinity, 'We give immortal Praise/To God the Father's love', and concludes with the following words:

Almighty God to Thee
Be endless honours done,
The undivided Three
And the mysterious One.
Where reason fails with all her powers,
There love adores and faith prevails.

God grant that we may be brought by the Spirit of God to bow in true humility before the True God and love and adore the Eternal Son of God.

CHRIST'S DEATH: A FRUITFUL VICTORY

BY WILLIAM TIMOTHY FOLEY

THIS paper examines this most important matter of Christ's death in terms of the work of Professor Doctor Aulén's (1879–1978) book—*Christus Victor* (Latin for Christ is Conqueror). For it is in Aulén's work we have the theme of victory supremely set before us. Of course, other writers will come into the discussion but it is his contribution, in this area, which is foremost. However, it is only reasonable at the outset to acknowledge that

the Christian Church since the beginning has debated the nature, the event and the extent of the atonement. This has resulted in a whole range of historical perspectives which include Irenaeus (AD 130–202) and the recapitulation theory, with emphasis on Christ as the second Adam, who is victorious where Adam failed, and reverses what Adam did, from disobedience to obedience; and in Eastern Orthodoxy recapitulation is held in

direct opposition to Substitutionary atonement; Anselm's satisfaction theory, Luther's penal substitution view, Abelard (1079–1142) and the moral influence view, which is that Christ is a moral example to follow; the mystical view, with adherents such as Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834) who completely denied the vicarious atonement of Christ; Aulén and the classic view commonly known as the Ransom Theory; the socio-political view (the atonement in the context of liberation and political theology).

It is only right to acknowledge at this point that Aulén's book, *Christus Victor*, puts forward a thesis that the Early Church's view had been incorrectly represented, and therefore proposed a re-evaluated 'Ransom Theory' as a superior alternative to the Satisfaction Theory model. It is not a superior view in the light of Holy Scripture. However, the theme of 'victory' or Christ 'conquering' is an attractive proposition for considering, and this will be emphasised in this paper. Furthermore, this writer subscribes to the penal substitution view (see Romans 3:21–26 and 2 Corinthians 5:21) as being more in keeping with the teaching of Scripture, which cannot be broken. Some writers would argue, however, that each perspective makes a contribution to our understanding of the atonement. We will restrict ourselves to three views.

Ransom Sacrifice Theory

Actually, the Ransom Sacrifice Theory can be traced back to Origen (c. AD 184–c.253) and St. Gregory of Nyssa, (c. AD 335–c.395). The view avers that Christ was a ransom sacrifice, usually paid to death itself or paid to Satan. The idea that Christ paid Satan for something is ridiculous, and does not stand up to the scrutiny of the Word of God. Christ defeated Satan and death at the Cross. God

didn't pay Satan, neither has God an obligation to pay any of his creatures anything. Christ's death as a ransom paid to Satan is a complete distortion of the truth of the Cross, yet it was advocated as a position of the church for a long time. There are different emphasis and permutations within this theory.

Satisfaction Model

Anselm (1033–1109), Archbishop of Canterbury (1093–1109), propounded the satisfaction model of the atonement (sometimes known as the Commercial View). It is a perspective in theology that Jesus Christ suffered crucifixion, as a substitute for human sin, thus satisfying God's wrath and justice. Dying on the cross, Christ has earned infinite merit. Satisfaction carries with it the idea 'to make restitution'.

Penal Substitution

Martin Luther (1483–1546) introduced the idea of punishment, the penal substitute position, in a stronger sense to meet the demands of divine justice. Sin must be punished. Of course, John Calvin (1509–1604) subscribed to this view as can be found in his several writings. The penal substitute position is that God sacrificed himself, in the person of his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to suffer death, and the curse and the punishment, as the penalty for sin.

This is the proper and accurate scriptural view of the atonement. It is right to acknowledge that Christ made 'penal substitution' for the sins of his elect, which were donated to him by the Father in eternity. This view gives honour to the Blessed and Holy Trinity. The Lord Jesus Christ is punished (penal) in the place of wretched sinners (substitution) in order to satisfy the justice of God and the legal demand of God. The legal and forensic

aspects are clearly brought into view in the biblical position of penal substitution, and the whole doctrine of the imputed righteousness of Christ.

Conservative evangelical Christians clearly reason that the death of Christ is a vicarious, substitutionary 'penal' sacrifice 'for' to atone, with blood, for sins. This brings full, free and final redemption and forgiveness for all sins, to God's elect people, spanning the history of time. There can be no question that the cross successfully brought reconciliation between God and man. Through the blood of Christ we have been declared not guilty and declared judicially righteous by God Almighty.

The fruit of the death of Christ is victory and triumph in opening up the way of access to a holy God, so that believers can come boldly to the Throne of Grace, and find mercy, with God whose wrath has been satisfied forever. Sin has been fully, finally and forever punished. Christ took the wrath and the curse for all his people. Christ died for his people, because 'the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all' (Isaiah 53:6). Any theology which doesn't give exact and precise attention to the part that Christ's blood played, in our acceptance with God, is falling short of the revealed teaching of God's Word.

The blood of Christ is essential and vital for salvation. There cannot be any compromise on this doctrine, which is central to the cross-work of Christ. God is not merely satisfied with a debt of justice being paid by the Lord Jesus Christ, but God is satisfied with punishing the Lord Jesus Christ in the place of sinners. This is at the heart of penal substitution, which is the biblical position. Remember it was God who 'set forth [Christ] on the cross to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins' (Romans 3:25).

We are now 'justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him' (Romans 5:9). A theology without the blood of Christ is a Satanic invention, and is far from true biblical Christianity. The shedding of the blood of Christ is the central feature of Christ's death. The glorious resurrection is confirmation or ratification that Christ's blood sacrifice was accepted, as the basis of our reconciliation, by the Godhead for the redemption and forgiveness of the Elect, the people of God.

Paul says it so well, as follows, recorded in 2 Corinthians (5:18–21):

And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Verse 21 is full of meaning, for God made Christ sin on the cross of Calvary, for us, even though he never sinned. He was sinless by nature and by choice. He was and is impeccable. The cross-work was the encounter of sinlessness with sin. Because of the blood offering of Christ's sacrifice, we see God imputes the righteousness of God, in Christ, to us. There is penal substitution set before us, for wonderful contemplation, and praise. Yes, there is victory and power in the blood of Christ. God was in Christ, and God, in the flesh, took sin, and dealt a mortal blow to evil in Jesus' by his blood.

Just consider for a moment, if the High Priest under the Old Covenant had entered the Holy of Holiest, without blood, do you think he would be accepted? Do you think God would have accepted a bucket of water being poured or sprinkled on the Mercy Seat, instead of blood? Of course not, the High Priest would have been killed immediately, blood atonement is the only way of access to God. How much more should we consider this aspect in terms of the great High Priestly ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, both in his sacrifice and his intercessory ministry in the Glory?

Remember Christ himself is 'the mercy seat' and he has by his own blood entered in once into the holy place of Heaven, having obtained eternal redemption for us. Paul writes, 'And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance' (Hebrews 9:15). The blood of sheep and goats, and bulls, and pigeons, etc. never removed sin, only Christ was successful in this respect, both for Old Testament and New Testament saints. The blood removes the defilement of sin, and the saint of God, has true refuge in Jesus. He is truly the Saviour, because he is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Only those, who have the root of the matter in them, as imparted by Holy Spirit, will totally accept the blood. In the words of Isaiah, God shall 'make his soul an offering for sin ... for he shall bear their iniquity ... he poured out his soul into death' (Isaiah 53:10-12).

The Jewish people today stumble at Christ and his shed blood. They desire to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem, and restore the ceremonial offerings. They should read the Book of Hebrews and see that only

Christ's blood is acceptable to God, and animals sacrifice are no longer required. Pagan religions and liberals, who deny that Jesus is God, and his blood sacrifice are blind, and are still in their sin, and have no true saving knowledge of God. Victory is in Jesus alone. Jesus is first and Jesus is last and Jesus is in between. Jesus is the same, yesterday and today and forever. Christ is everything, to the true believer, and his vicarious penal substitutionary death is essential. His blood avails for me! Progress to the end of the journey, struggle on as the pilgrim, and overcome, fight the good fight of faith, and trust in the Lord who keeps his saints, in the day of evil. The victory, as believers, is in Jesus. We are more than conquerors through him, because of his blood, and his love.

Christ's Death: A Fruitful Victory

We will see, in this paper, the reasons why theologians have deduced that there is very much a fruitful victory for humanity in the atonement of Christ, in the light of Scripture and Aulén's thesis.

Macquarrie (p.317) makes an interesting comment on Aulén's thesis. He writes, 'It seems to me to offer the most promising basis for a contemporary statement of the work of Christ'. Whereas Milne (p.167) although pointing out that the classic view cannot be dismissed as unbiblical nevertheless is quick to state the deficiency of the theory. He writes, 'Sin is not only enslavement; it is also the disobedience which renders us unrighteous and under condemnation, and the moral uncleanness which brings us under divine wrath. In other words, our problem includes "past" guilt. The problem of the past finds no answer in the classic motif of atonement.' (The last sentence he borrows from Berkouwer.) Quick (p.226) believes also the theory 'is incomplete'. It is deficient.

Aulén's work links very much the incarnation with the atonement—God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself (p.76). He talks about the double aspect of the drama of the atonement and writes: 'that the double-sidedness of the classic idea of the atonement means that God is not only the Reconciler but also the Reconciled. It is not only that the world now stands in a new relation to God, but God stands in a new relation to the world.' His use of the term world seems to imply a type of universal atonement, which doesn't stand up to the searchlight of holy scripture.

In the classic theory of atonement Professor Colin Gunton (p.4) sees a contrast between it as a transaction and as a drama. Aulén (1931) writes, 'This type of view may be described provisionally as the "dramatic." Its central theme is the atonement as a Divine conflict and victory; Christ—*Christus Victor*—fights against and triumphs over the evil powers of the world, the "tyrants" under which mankind is in bondage and suffering, and in him God reconciles the world to himself.'

Furthermore, Gunton (p.59) observes too that there is a 'strong stress' that the cross of Christ is conceived metaphorically as a divine victory. This is evident in the following point made by Aulén, he writes, 'God in Christ overcomes the hostile powers which hold man in bondage. At the same time, these hostile powers are also executants of God's will. The patristic theology is dualistic, but it is not an absolute Dualism. The deliverance of man from the power of death and the devil is at the same time his deliverance from God's judgement. God is reconciled by his own act in reconciling the world to himself'.

Aulén believes that victory is a theme which finds echo in Martin Luther

(1483-1546); the great reformer's theology particularly in his Commentary on Galatians and his hymns, the most notable is 'A Mighty Fortress is our God', which is an amazing song of triumph. Aulén (p.117) maintains that Luther's theology has been 'grossly misinterpreted' regarding the atonement. Luther's successor, Melancthon (1497-1560) and his successors stray from the classic view and uphold the Latin or Anselmian model. (The reason: it is suggested that they believe it is more scriptural, but that view, too, doesn't emphasise the 'penal' dimension.) They do not appear to take up the theme of victory. Their focus, however, is very much on the substitutionary vicarious death of Christ.

Aulén dislikes the credit and debit system, mechanical or legalistic and rationalist views of the atonement. It seems that he doesn't like the idea of the great exchange, in its totality, that Christ took our sin, and we take his righteousness. His work seems to be more interested in the impact of the cross on us here and now rather than dealing with our guilt through the cross.

We must be very careful not to adopt a very limited view of the work of Christ, particularly, when we read in Scripture, that we have peace though the blood of Christ, now and forever. All aspects of the victory of Christ must be anchored in the shed blood of Christ, and forgiveness, and the removal of guilt are only available through the blood of Christ. The blood of Christ is superior to all the Levitical blood offerings, which never took away sin. Christ's blood alone has achieved the victory for God's people.

Clearly the concept of victory is evident in the New Testament and appears to be the dominating theme and integrating force in its theology. For example, the Apostle Paul brings out the theme of victory

by writing 'who hath delivered us from the power of darkness and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear son' (Colossians 1:13). Again, Paul writes: 'blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross. And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it' (Colossians 2:14–15). Indeed, it appears to be inconceivable that any successful theology of the cross can stand without victory in the light of the New Testament. By 'his cross comes the overwhelming victory bringing new life to man' (Macquarrie p.318). An emphatic statement in the Book of Revelation is 'the Lion of the tribe of Judah ... has conquered (Revelation 5.5). This is a clear reference to the crucified and risen Christ.

Aulén believes that the classic idea of the atonement can be found in the Greek and Latin Fathers and avers that the their views would be that of the New Testament.

For example, we find believers have victory over the law in Galatians; over Satan in the Apocalypse; over spiritual forces in Ephesians 6; and over powers, principalities and authorities in Romans 8. (Fiddes goes to some length in identifying the tyrants of sin, law, death and Satan.) Indeed, exemplified for us in the Epistle to the Philippians is the person and work of Christ tied together from the throne of glory, to the terror of the cross of Calvary, to the triumphant resurrection and exaltation of Jesus. (Calvary is the name of the hill in Jerusalem, also called Golgotha, where Christ was crucified.)

Aulén seems to centre the victory of Jesus in the cross whereas the New Testament would appear to attribute the victory not only to Christ's death but to his incarnation, sinless life, resurrection, ascension and reign. In other words, the victory is not limited to the cross, but the suffering of Christ on the cross and his shed blood are the pinnacle of the victory.

TO BE CONCLUDED

Adam was made perfect for the whole end of ruling the creatures, and living to God, for which he was made; which, without the knowledge of the nature of the one, and the will of the other, he could not. All this being lost by sin, a multiplication of tongues also being brought in as a curse for an after-rebellion, the whole design of learning is but to disentangle the soul from this issue of sin: and the light by which it is discovered (which the Lord knows is very little, weak, obscure, imperfect, uncertain, and conjectural, for a great part only enabling men to quarrel with and oppose one another, to the reproach of reason; yet I say, that which is attained by it) is not in the least measure spiritualized, or brought into that order of living to God, and with God, wherein at first it lay. This is wholly beyond its reach: for the darkness and ignorance that it strives to remove, being come upon us as a curse, it is not in the least measure as a curse, able to remove it, or take it away; so that he that hath attained to the greatest height of literature, yet if he hath nothing else, if he have not Christ, is as much under the curse of blindness, ignorance, stupidity and dullness, as the poorest silliest soul in the world. And the more the mind is furnished herewithal, the more it closes with the curse, and strengthens itself to act its enmity against God. All that it receives doth but help it to set up high thoughts and imaginations against the Lord Christ.

John Owen

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