

JULY–AUGUST 2020

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The Gospel Magazine

The excellency of Christ • God's blessing on Obededom • Does John 17:3 disprove the Trinity?

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1766–2020

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

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EDITORIAL

SOLOMON declared, 'As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country' (Proverbs 25:25). No doubt a number of explanations could be offered for this statement. The best explanation understands good news as the gospel of grace. Scripture provides a number of brief sketches, in which we may behold the truth of this proverb. Beholding the truth of it, we may be moved to see the larger truth that it breathes.

When Hagar and Ishmael were cast out they wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba. Abraham had provided bread and water for them, but 'when the water was spent in the bottle, ... she cast the child under one of the shrubs' and 'she said, Let me not see the death of the child' (Gen 21:15f). She cried out to the Lord, and he showed her a well of water, v. 19. I doubt she was much concerned with the temperature of the water at that moment, though we all know how refreshing cold water can be. When Israel came to Rephidim, Ex 17:1ff, there was no water to drink. They cried against Moses, and the great prophet was commanded to go

on to the rock, on which the Lord would be standing, and to strike it with his rod. This he did, and the water flowed. When Samson had slain a thousand men with the jawbone of an ass, he was thirsty, Judges 15:18f. He cried to the Lord, complaining of his thirst; and the Lord provided drink for him from within the jawbone of the ass.

We perish without water, though of course the Lord once destroyed all living by sending a flood of water on the earth. But the Scripture speaks of life-giving streams, and of water in dry places, causing life to spring up in the most unlikely of places. Such is the necessity and benefit of water.

When Joseph's brothers returned to their father, Gen 45:26, they had momentous news: 'Joseph is yet alive.' The man who had mourned his son, believing him to have been taken by a wild beast, was now filled with joy. 'It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die' (v. 28). Those to whom good news comes in a far country may share the same joy. 'When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion,

we were like them that dream' (Psalm 126:1). Joys unlooked for, because they seemed to be impossible to obtain, suddenly filled them.

The good news that goes out into all the world is of the turning of a greater captivity than Judah endured. The refreshment granted far exceeds anything we can obtain from water, no matter how cold and pure. The good news in which we delight is the gospel of grace, the good news of Jesus Christ. The life we have through a right receiving of this news is eternal, and the refreshment is unending. It is in us a well of water springing up unto everlasting life. How thankful we are that this good news came to us, and that by it we were brought to Christ.

Our nation is waiting for good news. The nation longs to be able to shop freely, to return to pubs, restaurants, theatres and the like. The nation longs to be able to end the social distancing measures, which have for the last three months separated loved one, and have caused such anguish. Above all, the nation longs to hear that there is a vaccine, so it can resume its old life of sin.

But such changes are as nothing in comparison to the real situation all are facing. Many wish to purchase goods and services to satisfy the flesh. How many are willing to exchange all that they have for the pearl of great price, the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ? Many wish to be able to feed the body and indulge its appetites. How many are aware that they have an eternal soul that needs the nourishment of the bread sent down from heaven? Many wish to be reunited with loved ones, and to hold new infants in their arms, or even old lovers. How many understand that their greatest need is to be reconciled with the God against whom they sin continually in thought, word and deed?

The situation has been made more serious by the closure of our churches and chapels.

Pulpits stand silent. The lectern Bible remains unopened and unread. The sound of praise does not ascend to heaven from the gathered congregation. The people are not called to hear the word of the Lord, nor to confess their sin, nor to cry out for mercy and forgiveness. In a word, the work of the church has been cancelled, at least as far as public testimony is concerned.

Most worryingly, the key player in this appears to have been the Church of England. Afraid for the damage that might be done to its reputation, should it be thought to be a spreader of the virus, it has opted for the safest course, of cowering in a corner in the hope that it might survive the plague. That Jesus Christ promised that the gates of hell should not prevail against the church appears to weigh little with our archbishops and bishops. The established church, in spite of its history and role in the Reformation in this nation, has chosen to act as though the gates of hell are just about to prevail, and only cowardly hiding will serve.

The Church of England is not the only manifestation of the church in this nation. Up and down the land, in small causes and great, the work of the gospel goes forth in faith. The labourers may be few, and they may not be particularly young. They may not all possess the same degree of theological insight and understanding as has been the case at certain times. Yet they are all keenly aware of their calling and duty, and they all desire to serve their Master as he commands them. The water may only be theirs to carry, but carry it they will, to all to whom they are sent. Having drunk deeply of it themselves, they long to share it with others, that they too might quench their thirst unto everlasting life. May the good news of Jesus Christ go forth with power in our day, and may Christ be glorified in all we do for him. ¶

THE EXCELLENCY OF CHRIST

by THE EDITOR

‘Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee’ Psalm 73:25

THIS psalm, written by Asaph, is a humble confession of wrong thinking, corrected only by the right contemplation of the Lord and his saving mercies. He confesses the goodness of the Lord, especially towards the righteous, v. 1. Then, vv. 2–12, he describes the state of the ungodly as he perceives it. They prosper and live without any of the trials and tribulations that seem to beset the child of God. Their casual blasphemies do them no hurt, and nothing appears to trouble them. This leads Asaph to cry that his pursuit of righteousness has been foolish, vv. 13–16, as one who has endured all manner of trials. And then he went into the sanctuary, and contemplated the Lord his God. In that setting, and in that time, he came to see the reality previously hidden from him. The prosperity of the wicked is only an apparent prosperity, and is a light and passing thing. Their security is not to be trusted, v. 18f, for their times in the Lord’s hands. This leads Asaph to confess the folly of his wrong thinking, v. 20ff, seeing that the Lord was with him in his trials, v. 23, and that his path through life, though beset by many problems, will end in rest and glory, v. 24. And so he cries, in the words of our text, ‘Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.’ Bodily weakness, v. 26, is as nothing compared with the Lord’s strength, seeing he has put such a difference between the wicked and the righteous, v. 27f.

Which leaves us to consider what the

Holy Spirit intends us to understand by the words of Asaph in our text. Whom have we in heaven, beside the Lord? And is there any on earth we desire beside him?

Consider, first, what drove Asaph to speak *For Asaph, the Lord is all-sufficient, his portion and his delight.* ‘Whom have I in heaven but thee?’ Let the fulness of the glory of eternity be what it may, it is only worth desiring because the Lord is there. Let all the blessings of the life of faith be mine, they are only blessings because they are from the hand of the Lord. Whatever good I know and experience in this life is only good because of him from whom it comes. Take the Lord from heaven, and it is no more heaven. Let my blessings be from another, and they are no longer blessings. No other hope, no other King, no other Lord, no other Father, may I have but thee, O Lord. There shall be showers of blessing, Ezek 34:26, but only because the Lord so wills it. And anything that is not from him cannot be counted a blessing. As Thomas declared, ‘My Lord and my God’, so the righteous person looks no further than his Saviour. As Mary chose the better part, so we would leave off serving to sit at Christ’s feet. Whom have we in heaven beside thee, O Lord?

For Asaph, the presence of the Lord was worth more than that of any other. ‘There is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.’ He had a mother and a father, perhaps brothers and sisters, even a wife and children—besides friends and neighbours. He was even

the friend of the great king, David, and yet he was content to declare that he desired none in comparison with his Lord. Jesus said, 'If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple' (Lk 14:26). So great is our desire for the Lord that, in comparison, we hate those whom nature dictates we should love. This does not mean that we are devoid of natural affection: it does mean, however, that in any situation where a choice must be made, we will always side with the Lord.

Not only does Asaph desire the Lord more than those whom nature says he should love, but more than anything the world can offer. This is a key test for many. It requires us to submit all our affections to the Lord, including the love we have for ordinary things. Some love their gardens, some their pets, some their jobs, and some their hobbies. We are to set all such things aside in comparison to our love for Christ. The sun is shining, and the garden calls: but today is the Lord's Day, and we are to set aside all such pursuits to spend time in the worship of Christ. Who wins? Where does our affection truly lie? Do we give up Christ for the world, or the world for Christ? It matters very much how we answer—and, more significantly, how we act. When we come to church, is it to meet friends, such that we feel it was a wasted trip if Mr Smith or Mrs Jones was not there as well? Or is our first love the presence of our Saviour? Do we come to church to sing, or to be the one to read the Scriptures before the congregation, such that we feel slighted if we were not able to do these things? Or is our joy full when we enter into the presence of the Lord, knowing that, compared with him, nothing else is worth even a thought? We are to desire the Lord above all things, and the

true child of God knows this already.

Consider, secondly, why this should be so

First, there is none worthy of our love and adoration more than our Lord. Consider who he is in himself. He is God, the Lord of lords and King of kings. He is the self-existent one, who declared to Moses and to Israel, 'I AM THAT I AM.' He swears by himself, because he can swear by none higher. He has no equal, nor even any that come close to him. Man may have been made a little lower than the angels, but the angels were made: God, however, is neither made nor created. His glory outshines the sun, and his power exceeds anything we can imagine. To him all honour and worship is due.

He is the Creator of the universe, without whom we would not exist. There would be no stars, no sun, no moon: there would be no trees or flowers, mountains, rivers or lakes. There would be no birds, no beasts, no insects. There would be neither colour nor scent. There would be no breeze, no stillness, no winter or summer, unless the Lord had created it. He sustains all things by the word of his power, so that we depend on him moment by moment for our very existence.

He is the Judge of all the earth. He is righteous and holy, and all his ways are truth. There is no shadow of turning with him, because he can never be convinced of sin. His standard is the only standard, and his verdict on us is true and final. Consequently, we dare not offend such a God, since our eternal state depends on our being found just before him. All sin is a direct affront to his holiness, and is contrary to his revealed will, as well as his perfect character.

Secondly, that he has manifested himself to us in love. For all his holiness, justice and power, he has manifested himself as our heavenly Father. He has not dealt with us after our sins, no rewarded us according to our

iniquities, Psalm 103:10. He has been merciful and patient, slow to anger and of great kindness, repenting him of the evil. How has he done this? By turning a blind eye to sin? No. 'Thou art purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity' (Hab 1:13). The Lord's knowledge of our sin cannot be overlooked nor forgotten. Rather, he has dealt with it. He did so in the Old Testament by the system of sacrifices, which all pointed towards that great sacrifice of the promised seed, whose coming should be for the redemption of his people.

He has sent forth the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, making him to be sin, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him, 2 Cor 5:21. He was made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, Gal 4:4–5. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, 1 Tim 1:15. Did we have to become righteous before he did this? 'God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us' (Rom 5:8). Christ redeemed us by shedding his own blood on cross, being made a curse in our place. He is our substitute, the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world. In Christ alone is there salvation, and in him is fulness of grace.

Thirdly, he has set forth the means of grace. 'He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers' (Eph 4:11). This was so that the gospel of grace might be preached, being first sounded forth by those who were eyewitnesses of these things, and who saw and handled the very word of life. They, by conviction as well as by revelation, delivered that which they received, how that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scripture, and that he rose again, and was seen of many thereafter, until the day when he was taken

up into heaven before their very eyes. The Holy Spirit came down on them in power, filling them with the light of truth, with understanding, and with zeal in the Lord. In the face of much opposition, resisting unto blood, they went out into all the world and preached the gospel. And each one of us who hears it today, does so because of their testimony. The word does not come to us directly from heaven, but is mediated through the printed page, and in the mouth of the preacher. And yet this is a means of grace, for no man preaches truly in his own name, or in his own power. The gospel may be foolishness unto many, but it is the power of God unto salvation to all who believe it.

With the preaching of the gospel we have the signs and seals of our salvation. We have the seal of baptism, by which we are sealed as the Lord's people, in making that public declaration of faith in Christ. We signify the mystical washing away of sin, not with water but with blood, the blood Christ. We partake of the Lord's Supper, remembering his death until he come. We confess our constant need of spiritual sustenance through faith in the crucified, risen, ascended Saviour. We feed on him in our heart by faith with thanksgiving.

And to this we add prayer, that communion of the soul with our Saviour. We lift up our voices in prayer and praise, glorifying his great name, and thanking him for all the blessings of this life. We look to him for all the promises of the life to come, and we seek from him the strength to walk the path set before us, to run the race of life, until the incorruptible crown is on our heads.

All this is confirmed in the reading of Scripture, in our meditating on it, and committing ourselves to the life of obedience, by grace. Christ is everything to us, and we delight to see Christ in all the Scriptures. Every

page breathes the beauty of his presence, and we see in the word, in types, shadows, promises and prophecies, exhortations to the good things of his person and kingdom. Christ is everything to us, and all our hopes and joys are bound up in him. All he gives is worth having, and nothing he does not give is worth desiring. Such is the place reserved for Jesus Christ in our hearts, minds, wills and affections.

Application

Let me apply this to us, in the weakness and reality of our life on earth, in days of trial and hardship.

Let me look, first, to the weak believer. Here is one who has faith, but not such great faith that they feel any confidence in living the life of faith. They must always have something to hold on to. It is not that they have Moses's confidence—'If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence' (Ex 33:5)—but that they do not even know to desire the Lord's presence. Why not? Because they have not yet learned what it means to desire none but him in heaven or upon earth. They have gone through life testing nothing, trying nothing, and feeling that they have sufficient strength to bear up. They are like the recently-launched vessel, allegedly capable of taking on the roughest seas, but as yet untested. All the while the going in easy they can boast of the potential, without ever having to put that potential to the test. The one who truly believes all the claims will not be troubled when the going gets difficult, because he will already trust in the Lord. But the weak believer is not ready to trust, because he lacks confidence in the promises. Let such a one learn what is his in Christ, and he will soon see that the promises are well grounded. Fear will then give way to trust.

Let me look, secondly, to the over-confident

believer. Here is one who, for either of two reasons, has never cast himself on the Lord. Either he has found that his own strength is sufficient, because, like the weak believer, he has never put the Lord to the test, so to speak. Over time he has convinced himself that he can cope with anything, and so does not need the Lord. Or, he is one who believes that he is righteous in himself, having confidence in his own understanding. This one has never considered that he is at fault, making the same mistakes over and over. He has made them so many times that he is convinced he is right. The groove of his life is so deep that it has become a rut, out of which he cannot climb. In either case, a right look to the Lord Jesus Christ will show him that he is in grievous error, and that he must look away from himself to Christ. He must not trust in the arm of flesh, even if it appears to have sustained him 'til now. Only Christ can bear us through the storm, carrying us safely across Jordan to our eternal rest. In our own strength we will find that the waters close over our heads. Let us learn to live in Christ in all things, now.

Let me look, thirdly, to the faithful believer. Here I would say just a few words. Go on looking to Christ. Continue in the joy of his presence. Judge all by him, measure all against him, weigh all opposite him. Remain in the light of his countenance, knowing that with him is fulness of joy for ever more. Be encouraged to go on, and ignore all attempts at distraction and diversion. There is none better, and you know it. You have been through the valley of the shadow of death, and you found the presence of his rod and staff to be a true comfort. Why, then, would you change? Go on with your Saviour!

Let me look, fourthly, to the backslider. Here is one who, having known the joys of the Lord, and the peace of salvation, has

turned back to his old ways. He is no longer concerned for his eternal state, and is content to live in his own strength. He is not so content that he has dismissed all fear, nor is he so unconcerned that he does not worry about eternity, but he puts off serious thought as much as possible. He fills his mind with distractions. This is the devil's work, and, left unchecked, will smother the conscience until spiritual death results. Let such a one contemplate the beauties and glories of Christ. Let him look to the cross, and see the one who hung and suffered there, pouring out his blood to save sinners. Let not that look be in vain, but see the blood and water flow, and know that the way of life is open for all who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Let him repent of his backsliding, and let him come back humbly to the only Saviour.

Let me look, finally, to the unbeliever. Here is one who, knowing some of the facts of the gospel, has never put his faith in the Saviour. Why not? Because his knowledge resides in his head, but has not touched his heart. He has not been moved by the truth

of his condition as a sinner, nor the justice of the sentence that goes out against all sinners. The wages of sin is death, says the Lord, but the unbeliever cannot bring himself to believe this. This is because he values himself too highly, and Christ too little. But a right contemplation of Christ will change this. When he sees, truly and without obstacles, the actual person of Jesus Christ as set forth in Scripture, he will see that Christ is the treasure for which all else must be abandoned. Christ is the pearl of great price, the treasure hidden in the field. A man will readily exchange the whole world for Christ, once he has seen the true value of the Son of God. Do not concern yourself with the opinion of those who have not yet found Christ, but only of those who have. They know whereof they speak, and they testify to the glory and grace of knowing Jesus Christ. At the last day, they look for the welcoming arms of the Saviour. Will you be gathered in with them? May Christ grant mercy and grace to all, to know him in his true nature and self. AMEN. ¶

GEORGE HOPE-HALL (GFHH)

Personal recollections by PAUL HOOPER and CHRIS RICHARDS

I FIRST meet George Hope-Hall back in the summer of 2016 at St Silas Church, Wolverhampton. The Church is part of the Church of England (Continuing) congregations. George, being the Lay reader, took the service from the Book of Common Prayer. I was struck by his appearance, his manner, and voice, of that of a dignified gentleman, one who you might find in a rural church setting, and not one ministering at

an inner-city church. Scripture tells us not to look at the outward appearance of a man (1 Samuel 16:7). If you looked at George's heart you would have seen a man's heart committed to the cause of the Lord Jesus Christ, a trophy of the Saviour. George and his wife had grown into a living evangelical faith through the ministry of the late Edward Malcolm. George, faithfully travelled from Stafford each week to conduct services, a

round journey of 30 plus miles. It was a sad day for us at St Silas when George was unable to continue taking part in the congregation, because of age and infirmity. However, his labour for the gospel did not end there, He and his wife conducted a prayer ministry from home, praying for the furtherance of the gospel and the mission of true evangelical churches. Corresponding with him regularly through letters, our relationship deepened. He always took an interest in the Continuing Church and its true witness to the evangelical way. As I read through a letter written to me in January, George thanked me for sending him a tract by J.C. Ryle, 'Are YOU born again' which we had begun to use, in our gospel outreach. On the back of the tract, Bishop Ryle sets out the TEST of the six great marks of a born again Christian. 'Only those who are born again have these six characteristics, and those who do not have these marks are not born again.' Laid out by the apostle in 1 John, George exhibited these true marks. George believed in Christ, he practiced Righteousness, George Loved other Christians, and finally, like all True disciples, he had overcome the world. George heard his Masters's voice. 'Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things,...enter thou into the joy of thy Lord' (Matthew 25:21).

'George and his wife Bel were amongst the founder members of the St Silas congregation, Bel served as a church warden and George held several offices before eventually becoming a Lay Reader. In those early days, the church did not have its own building, but met at several venues. Despite living some distance away George and Bel always arrived early to help to set up for the church services, and remained behind afterwards to put away church items. When the congregation purchased its own building which was in a semi

derelict state, the congregation undertook as much of the work needed as possible to renovate the building. George was very active in helping at this time in moving rubbish and other work. His contribution in this way along with others in the congregation saved the church much money which would have to have been spent on hiring professional builders. Having been a schoolmaster during a period of his working life, George's natural ability to teach, coupled with his spiritual gift to preach were very evident when George was in the pulpit or leading the mid-week Bible study. Several of George's sermons were recorded and can still be found on the church website. His written contributions to *The Gospel Magazine* and *The Journal* [of the Church of England (Continuing)] were always articles well worth reading.'

'After the minister of the congregation Bishop Edward Malcolm died in 2013, George assisted by Bel undertook the full responsibility and ministry at St Silas. Despite failing health and walking difficulties, George continued to faithfully serve the Lord and the congregation until mercifully God provided a new member of the congregation to take up the mantle.'

Mr Hall's funeral took place at Stafford Crematorium on Friday 22nd May. The service was conducted by the Editor, who preached from Psalm 39:7, 'And now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in thee.' As a consequence of the present restrictions, only two people outside the immediate family attended, although a number of others were able to view the chapel service on a live stream, though not the committal. The Lord willing, a memorial service will be arranged for a later date. ¶

A SERMON ON ISAIAH 1:2–3

REV. C. TUINMAN (1659–1728)

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

Part 9

The ox and the ass were often put together as being to somebody's goods (Exodus 20:17). Thus the ox has a possessor, an owner to whom he belongs, whose work he does by ploughing, threshing etc., who gives him food and looks after him. This is different to the beast that walks around in the wilderness without a lord. And thus the master of the ass has a crib, where his food is given. This is different to the wild donkey and the unicorn that walks around in the wilderness (Job 39:8–15). The ox and the ass are not only animals without understanding, but the most stupid of these (Proverbs 7:12 and 24:3; Psalm 32:9). But even so the ox knows his owner. By continuous association with him and by the good things he enjoys of him, the ox knows his lord and benefactor. He has in his manner affectionate

unto him and lets himself be driven by him and obeys him, because the word for knowing among the Hebrews implies these. Thus the ass knows the crib of his master, because he is used to finding his food, given by his owner, there.

But these people were even more without understanding: Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.

Israel

Whom God just called children becomes clear, because he calleth them Israel. This name was given to Jacob because of his wrestling with the angel (Genesis 32:28). But this is put forth to name his children and offspring (Psalm 149:2; Isaiah 10:22). And so it was their duty to behave themselves worthy of the name.

TO BE CONTINUED

SOMETHING NEW

by CARINE MACKENZIE

We all love to get something new—perhaps a new book or something nice to wear. If our shoes are getting shabby or too small, it is great to get a new pair.

When Nicodemus came to speak to Jesus one night, Jesus told him that he needed a new birth. He had to be born again, if he was to see the kingdom of God. We each need a **new** birth—described as regeneration of the soul by the Spirit and grace of God. This is completely the work of God.

When a baby is born one of the first evidences of life is the cry. When a soul is born again, one of the first evidences is the cry of prayer. We may not be aware of the exact time of our new birth, but we should be aware of the signs of life—prayer, love to the Lord, love to his people and the fruit of the Spirit. We don't remember being born, but we know we were born because we are living today. If we have doubts about whether we are actually born again we should be looking for some of these signs of life. The apostle John said, 'We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren' (1 John 3:14). That sign of love to other followers of Jesus, is an assurance to us.

'If any man be in Christ he is a **new** creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new' (2 Corinthians 5:17). This **new** life is because the Christian can say that Christ lives within him. 'The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me' (Galatians 2:20). When Jesus dies on the cross he bore the punishment due to his people for all their sins. If we trust in the Lord Jesus Christ our sins are washed away.

The prophet Ezekiel spoke God's word to his people. 'I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean from all your filthiness... A **new** heart will I give you and a **new** spirit will I put within you' (Ezekiel 36:25–26). When God deals with a sinner in his love, he takes away the hard stony heart and gives a new heart which loves God because he first loved us.

This love should lead to a **new** way of life. In Galatians 5:22–23 we are told about the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. These characteristics are evidence of the work of God in a person's life. 'If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.' (Galatians 5:25). The **new** life from God should be evident by a new behaviour.

Another gift which the Lord gives to his people is a **new** song. That song is 'praise to our God' (Psalm 40:3). It is our joy and privilege to obey God's command to 'serve the Lord with gladness: come before his presence with singing' (Psalm 100:2). 'O sing unto the Lord a new song: sing unto the Lord, all the earth' is the Psalmist's exhortation in Psalm 96:1.

When we are happy we can sing praise to God (James 5:13). But also when we are sad or in trouble, the Psalms are so suitable for us. Even when Paul and Silas were locked up in prison, they sang praises to God (Acts 16:25). The other prisoners heard them too.

God's love and mercy to us never fail. His compassions to us are **new** every morning. (Lamentations 3:23)—always sufficient for our needs. He delights in mercy (Micah 7:18). God is rich in mercy. His love is so great that he sent his Son to the world and in due time 'Christ died for the ungodly' (Romans 5:6).

When Jesus was in the upper room with his disciples, he gave us a **new** commandment 'that ye love one another ; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another' (John 13:34). That love is described for us in 1 Corinthians chapter 13. That love means being kind, not being envious or boastful, thinking about what is right and true. Our natural inclination is to put ourselves first but real joy comes from putting Jesus first, Others next and Yourself last.

Perhaps we don't get anything new very often. But we can receive some wonderful new gifts from God when he gives new life in Christ, a new heart, a new song and compassions new every morning. As we walk in this new way let us pray that we would obey Jesus' new commandment.

Our life here is not the end of the matter—‘we look for **new** heavens and a **new** earth, wherein dwellers righteousness’ (2 Peter 3:13), and there we will have a **new** name. (Revelation 2:17).

We cannot yet understand what God will do but we do know that he does all things well. ‘Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him’ (1 Corinthians 2:9).

Bible Search

Find the missing words from the verses. The initials of the correct answers will spell out a phrase from Revelation 21:5.

1. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision _____ any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. (Galatians 6:15)
2. Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new _____, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us. (1 Corinthians 5:7)
3. As Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we should also walk in newness of _____. (Romans 6:4)
4. Therefore every scribe which is instructed into the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which brings the forth out of his _____ things new and old. (Matthew 13:52)
5. Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new _____ and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel. (Ezekiel 18:31)
6. Therefore if any man be ____ Christ, he is a new creature ; old things are passed away; behold all things are become new. (2 Corinthians 5:17)
7. These signs shall follow them that believe; In my _____ shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues. (Mark 16:17)
8. His compassions fail not. They are new every morning: _____ is thy faithfulness. (Lamentations 3:22–23)
9. Sing unto him a new song; play _____ with a loud noise. (Psalm 33:3)

10. Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was _____ man yet laid. (John 19:41)
11. Having abolished in his flesh the _____, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances, for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace. (Ephesians 2:15)
12. Behold I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth: shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the _____, and rivers in the desert. (Isaiah 43:19)
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GOD'S BLESSING ON OBEDEDOM

by J.E. NORTH (Landford Wood)

'And the ark of the LORD continued in the house of Obededom the Gittite three months: and the LORD blessed Obededom, and all his household' 2 Samuel 6:11

AFTER the death in battle of Saul and Jonathan and other of his sons, David came to the throne of the Kingdom of Israel. He reigned in Hebron 7 and a half years and in Jerusalem 33 years (2 Samuel 5:5). The fifth chapter of Second Samuel also tells us that David conquered Jerusalem, although it was considered by the Jebusites to be impregnable, but, nevertheless, David conquered that city and enlarged it (2 Samuel 5:6-10). He also fought against and conquered the Philistines.

The chapter from which we are considering the text at the head of this study tells us that David had a desire to bring the Ark of the Covenant up to Jerusalem—David, having made Jerusalem his capital wanted the centre of worship to be in his capital.

The Ark of the Covenant had 'rested' in the house of Abinadab in the hill (v. 3).

You will recall that the ark had been captured by the Philistines and taken into their country. They kept it for 7 months (1 Samuel 6:1), but the Lord had visited them with various plagues until they sent the ark back to the Children of Israel. They made a new wagon and tethered two cows to it, and placed the Ark, together with an offering, on that cart, and let it go on its own way. They did this to discern whether the plagues were a visitation from the Lord or not (1 Samuel 6:7-9). If the cows pulled the Ark towards the Israelites, then, they said, the visitation was from the God of Israel, but if not, the plagues were just a chance happening.

The Ark of God returned to the Israelites,

to the area inhabited by the men of Beth-Shemesh. The men of Beth-Shemesh rejoiced to see the Ark returned, placed it on a great rock, and used the wood of the wagon and the cows to make an offering to Almighty God. They then looked into the Ark, and because they did so, the Lord slew 'fifty thousand and three score and ten men.' They then sent for the men of Kirjath-jearim to fetch the ark who, when they had done so, placed it the house of Abinadab in the hill where it rested for twenty years (1 Samuel 6:10-7:2).

It is important to take note of these events because it shows us that those who dealt with the Ark of the Covenant were ignorant of the way in which that essential piece of the Tabernacle's furniture, integral to the worship of God under the Mosaic covenant, should be treated. Throughout the book of Exodus we are told the purpose of the Ark, and how it should be transported. It was not left to man to decide how they should conduct themselves in the presence of the Ark.

Now, if we look at what happened to the Ark of the Covenant we see that it was the Philistines who placed the Ark on a wagon. They had some excuse, for they were ignorant of the laws of God: but when it came to the men of Beth-Shemesh, they had no excuse in those things they did. They sacrificed when they had no authority to do so, they looked into the Ark when they should not have done so. Again, the ark should have been covered.

These things do give an indication of the state of the nation as it had become during the time of Saul as king of Israel, and the things which prevailed in those times. We are told that in the period of the Judges, 'In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes' (Judges 17:6), and that seemed to have prevailed during the reign of Saul.

So the ark rested long in the house of Abinadab in the hill and, after David had conquered Jerusalem, 'he went with all the people that were with him...to bring up from thence the ark of God' (2 Samuel 6:2). Disregarding what had happened 20 years earlier and ignoring the clear instructions of the Mosaic law, the Ark of the Covenant was again placed upon a new cart, 'And when they came to Nachon's threshingfloor, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook it. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God. And David was displeased, because the LORD had made a breach upon Uzzah: and he called the name of the place Perezuzzah to this day. And David was afraid of the LORD that day, and said, How shall the ark of the LORD come to me? So David would not remove the ark of the LORD unto him into the city of David: but David carried it aside into the house of Obedom the Gittite' (2 Samuel. 6:6-10).

We are told that whilst the Ark of the Covenant was in the house of Obedom, the Lord's blessing was upon that house. Obedom is also mentioned in other places of Scripture. In 1 Chronicles 15:18 Obedom is listed as being amongst the porters, and in 1 Chronicles 15:24 he is mentioned as being a doorkeeper for the Ark of the Covenant. Other places mention his being a musician (1 Chronicles 16:28). 2 Chronicles 25:24 refers also to Obedom as being one of the treasurers of the temple, but that is obviously a descendent of the Obedom we are considering in this article. However, we note that all the mentions of Obedom as being involved in the tabernacle worship of Almighty God were subsequent to his 'hosting' the Ark for three months in his house where he and his family were blessed.

The chapter goes on to recount that David having heard of the Lord's blessing resting with Obededom and his family, sought to bring up the Ark of God to Jerusalem, this time following the requirements of the Mosaic law.

It is, however, that I want, with the Lord's help, to consider the blessings that rested upon the House of Obededom.

Did he deserve the Lord's blessing because he allowed the Ark to remain within his property? Of course not! There was nothing meritorious in this or any other man, rather the contrary. We know nothing of the life of Obededom prior to the Ark of the Covenant being lodged in his house, except the name that was given to him. His name means 'Servant of Edom' or 'Servant of Esau,' which tells us much about this man. In Hebrew names were given to persons (and animals as in the case of Adam giving names to the beasts of the field, Genesis 2:19, 20) to indicate something of their nature and characteristics.

We have noted above the meaning of the name of Obededom and commented that his name means 'servant of Edom or Esau.' Esau was referred to by Paul as being a profane man. But here is Obededom receiving the blessings of God, and the foundation of that blessing, or the first cause of that blessing is rooted in the mercy of God. It can be no other! Paul tells us in Hebrews: 'Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright' (Hebrews 12:16). Obededom was a servant of profanity. When the Lord Jesus Christ spoke to those Jews who, we are told, 'believed on him,' he said, 'If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.' They replied that because they were Abraham's seed, they were never in

bondage to any man. The Lord Jesus replied, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed' (John 8:31-36). The Greek word here translated as 'servant', also has the meaning of 'slave'. Jesus is telling these men that they are the slaves of sin, and no less with the name Obededom, he was the slave of profanity. But there was to be a change in this man. The Ark of the Covenant was to come into his house! And there, we are told, there was blessing upon him and his household. His name and his nature tells us that there was nothing in him to deserve the blessing of God. Oh, he had his ancestry, he was born of the Priestly tribe, but he was a sinner. Naaman, we are told, was a great man in the kingdom of Assyria, all his good and great characteristics are laid before the reader. Then we are told, 'but he was a leper!' The same applied to Obededom, 'But he was a leper!'—the leprosy of profanity! From whence, then, came the blessing of God? It was the Lord's free Grace upon him and his household.

So what were the blessings that were upon Obededom? There are a number of blessings to consider, of which we will just consider four:

1. The blessing of the Lord's Presence
2. The blessing of the Lord's Covenant
3. The blessing of the Lord's Mercy
4. The blessing of the Lord's Fellowship

1. The Blessing of the Lord's Presence

When the Children of Israel were crossing the desert on their pilgrimage from Egypt to the Promised Land of Canaan, they encamped at the foot of Mount Sinai where Moses received the tables of the Law, written by the finger of God. It was also there that the Lord gave Moses the pattern for

the Tabernacle. Amongst the instructions and laws given to Moses was the manner in which the camp was to be set out. The various tribes of the children of Israel were given their pitch on either the North, or South, or East or West of the camp. Inside the square of the tribes of Israel, the Levites were to pitch their tents and in the centre of the camp the tabernacle was to be erected. And when they encamped in the wilderness, the Lord who had led them through the desert to that place by the fire and cloudy pillar, came and dwelt between the two cherubim which stood above the Ark and the Mercy Seat. The children of Israel knew they had the presence of the Lord with them, dwelling with them. Wherever the Ark of the Covenant went, they had the presence of the Lord with them. We read in Exodus 40 that when the tabernacle had been made and built according to the pattern shown to Moses in the Mount that 'a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. And when the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the children of Israel went onward in all their journeys: But if the cloud were not taken up, then they journeyed not till the day that it was taken up. For the cloud of the LORD was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was on it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys' (vv. 34–38). The Lord was with his people.

It was no less with Obededom, the servant of Esau. What a mercy that the Lord comes to this man; this man whose name tells us that he was the servant of profanity. And it is no less the same today, the Lord comes to each of his people, those given to Christ in covenant bond, those whom he

has loved with an everlasting love, and those whom he has drawn to himself. The Lord Jesus comes to each one and calls them by his grace from the darkness of nature to the light and liberty of new life in Christ Jesus, and they have the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ with them at all times. 'And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest' (Exodus 33:14).

There is a lovely promise to be found in the prophecy of Isaiah: 'In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old' (Isaiah 63:9). What a mercy that Christ has promised to be with his people and with his church at all times! Not just when things are well with us, but also when things seem to go wrong. Consider the promise in Isaiah 43: 'But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee' (Isaiah 43:1, 2).

Sovereign Rule of the skies!

Ever gracious, ever wise!

All my times are in thy hand,

All events at thy command.

And the child of God has the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ in those events.

2. The Blessings of the Lord's Covenant

Obededom had the Ark of the Covenant in his house. There were three items which were placed in the Ark of the Covenant—each one bearing witness to the covenant made with Moses. 'And after the second veil, the

tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all; Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant' (Hebrews 9:3, 4). The three things, then, were the golden pot which contained the manna; this speaks of the continual provision that was made for the children of Israel as they journeyed through the wilderness, the Ten Commandments which summed up the Mosaic Covenant and Aaron's Rod which speaks of the one who was called to be the Priest of God, and his continual ministry. These symbols were there in the house of Obededom, this servant of profanity showing that there is provision for the worst of sinners. Again, what a mercy!

But the old covenant, the Mosaic covenant has been fulfilled, abrogated and superseded in, by and through the Lord Jesus Christ. Is he not our heavenly manna? Is he not the bread of life, the bread from heaven (cf. John 6), and, just as the Children of Israel were provided for in their pilgrimage to the promised land so the Lord Jesus provides all that we need in our redemption and pilgrimage to the heavenly Canaan.

Does not Paul tell us that Christ is all (Colossians 3:11) and that 'Christ Jesus... is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption' (1 Corinthians 1:30). The Lord Jesus says of himself that he is 'Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending' of our salvation (Revelation 1:8, 11 etc.). Is not the Lord Jesus Christ our Great High Priest? with the rod that is continually budding? Always bearing fruit, the fruit of his atonement, and bearing fruit in the lives and hearts of his people? The budding rod speaks of the continual work of the Lord Jesus Christ now in heaven as 'he is able also to save them to the

uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them' (Hebrews 7:25). He was called of God, not after the order of the Aaronic priesthood, for that was always, by reason of the frailty of human flesh, subject to death and constantly changing. No! Christ was 'called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec' (Hebrews 5:10). His was and is an unchanging priesthood, with neither beginning of days, for He is the eternal Son of God, and ending of days for he is the one who was dead and is alive for evermore (Revelation 1:18).

And the third thing in the Ark of the Covenant was the tables of stone upon which the law was written by the finger of God (Exodus 34:18). 'The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ' (John 1:17). Said the Lord Jesus Christ, 'For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled' (Matthew 5:18). All was fulfilled by the Lord Jesus Christ in the work he came to accomplish. 'I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do' (John 17:4). 'But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons' (Galatians 4:4, 5), and having fulfilled the law in very jot and tittle, he redeemed every one of his people and brought them into the liberty of eternal life: 'Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree' (Galatians 3:3), therefore, says Paul, we are to 'Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage' (Galatians 5:1) for we are 'not under the law, but under grace. What then? shall we sin, because we

are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid!’ (Romans 6:14, 15).

Oh! The blessings of the covenant, all to be found in the Covenant of Grace for each and every one of those who are the children of God by faith. See it all in the Lord Jesus Christ:

A fulness resides in Jesus our Head,
And ever abides to answer our need! [store
The Father’s good pleasure has laid up in
A bountiful treasure to give to the poor

Whate’er be our wants, we need not to fear;
Our numerous complaints his mercy will
hear:

His fulness shall yield us abundant
supplies;

His power shall shield us when dangers
arise.

3. The Blessings of the Mercy of God

Throughout the Scriptures we are told and constantly reminded that the God whom we love and serve is a merciful God. When Moses went up the mount the second time, and received the Ten Commandments we read that ‘the LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children’s children, unto the third and to the fourth generation’ (Exodus 34:5,6). ‘The Lord God, merciful and gracious... Keeping mercy for thousands...’

Oh, Obbededom knew something of that mercy, did he not? He, like the rest of

mankind, was possessed with a sinful nature; he was a rebel against God.

Isaiah speaks of the mercy of God as Remembered Mercy. The Lord had forsaken Israel, but he remembered them as his people and he gathered them with great mercies: ‘For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer’ (Isaiah 54:7,8). Not only had Israel known something of the absence of God, but so had Obbededom known that forsaking of God himself.

It may well have been that Obbededom had been amongst the company of those who had gone to fetch up the Ark of the Covenant from the house of Aminadab, and was one of those who placed the Ark on the new cart. But here is the mercy of God, that when the Ark was placed in his house, he and his family knew something of the blessing of God (2 Samuel 6:12). What a mercy that the Lord Jesus remembers his people. Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom, cries the dying thief, and so do all those for whom Christ died.

Jeremiah speaks of the mercy of God as Recorded Mercy. We deserved to be consumed by God’s anger against sin and the broken law; if left to ourselves we are consumed by sin—as we noted above, those that commit sin are not only the servants of sin, but they are the slaves of sin. But in the Lord’s mercy, the Lord becomes our hope and our portion and these promises are renewed day by day upon all the Israel of God. ‘This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope. It is of the LORD’s mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. The LORD is my portion,

saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him' (Lamentations 3:21-24).

David speaks of the mercy of God as Revealed Mercy. God's eye is upon each one of his children. David speaks in Psalm 139 of the child of God being always in the presence of God. He prays that every one of God's children might have that mercy and hope poured out upon them. 'Behold, the eye of the LORD is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy; To deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine. Our soul waiteth for the LORD: he is our help and our shield. For our heart shall rejoice in him, because we have trusted in his holy name. Let thy mercy, O LORD, be upon us, according as we hope in thee' (Psalm 33:18-22).

But here in his house was the Ark of the Covenant, and on the top of which was the Mercy Seat. That place had received the sprinkled blood on the Day of Atonement. The blood was sprinkled seven times before the Ark and the Mercy Seat, and seven times on the Mercy Seat. The contents of the ark, the tables of the law demanded complete and utter perfection.

The law knows no mercy; the law can show know mercy to the guilty sinner. All the law can do is to condemn. Ah, but there is the blood sprinkled Mercy Seat! There the Cherubim looked down, as it were ('And the cherubims shall stretch forth their wings on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and their faces shall look one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubims be' (Exodus 25:40) and marvelled at the mercy of God towards rebellious sinners, they looked down and saw the sacrifice that had been made by the priest of the atoning lamb.

The child of God is no less a recipients of God's mercy for we have a Mercy Seat in

the Lord Jesus Christ. In the Epistle to the Hebrews where Paul is writing about the Tabernacle he refers to the Mercy Seat and says, 'And over it (that is, over, on the top of the Mercy Seat) the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercy seat; of which we cannot now speak particularly' (Hebrews 9:5). The Greek word he uses for 'Mercy seat' is the same Greek word he uses in his Epistle to the Romans, where it refers to the Lord Jesus Christ and is the propitiation for our sins: 'Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God' (Romans 3:25). The Apostle John also uses the same Greek word in his First Epistle: 'And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world... Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins' (1 John 2:2, 4:10). The Lord Jesus Christ is our Mercy Seat; he is the appeasement of our sins; he is the covering for our breaking the Holy law of God. 'Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other' (Psalm 85:10). And where did they meet? Only in the Lord Jesus Christ. Only in his life and atoning death; only in his active and passive obedience. Indeed, what a mercy!

One final word about the Lord's mercy towards his people is that it is everlasting. In Psalm 136 the Psalmist reminds the people in every verse of that psalm that 'His mercy endureth for ever.'

Truth and mercy meet together,
Righteousness and peace embrace;
Each perfection of Jehovah
Meets and shines in Jesus' face;
Here the Father
Can be just and save by grace.

Here's a cord which can't be broken;
 O my soul, with wonder tell;
 God himself the word has spoken,
 Zion with her Lord shall dwell;
 And with Jesus
 Live in spite of earth and hell.

4. The Blessing of the Lord's Fellowship

Twice we are told in the Book of Exodus that the Lord would meet with his people at the mercy seat: 'And thou shalt put the mercy seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee. And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel' (Exodus 25:21, 22) and, 'And thou shalt put it before the vail that is by the ark of the testimony, before the mercy seat that is over the testimony, where I will meet with thee' (Exodus 30:6). The Ark of the Covenant with the mercy seat atop was there in the house of Obbededom, 'The LORD hath blessed the house of Obbededom, and all that pertaineth unto him, because of the ark of God' (2 Samuel 6:12).

The Lord has fellowship with his people. We do not bow down to stock and stone. We do not have images in our places of worship because the Lord has forbidden us to do so. We do not pray before a crucifix or a statue of Mary or any other of the supposed 'saints'. No! The child of God has fellowship with God through the Lord Jesus Christ, through him who is the Way, the Truth and the Life (John 14:6). But notice, it is only because the blood has been shed by the Lord Jesus Christ, and full atonement has been made by him.

The Lord delights in having communion with his people, and the saints, the true saints of God delight also in that communion.

'Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ' (1 John 1:3). That fellowship is through the work of the third Person of the Holy Trinity.

John knew something of that communion when he was exiled from his people in the church at Ephesus, and on the Isle that is called Patmos. We are told, 'I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day' (Revelation 1:10). Notice the capital letter at the beginning of the word 'Spirit'—John is speaking of the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Trinity. We are also told in the first verse of this book of the Revelation that it was 'The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him...', that is, God the Father, the first Person of the Godhead and again, in vv. 4 & 5 of this same chapter the greetings from John are 'from him which is, and which was, and which is to come... And from Jesus Christ.' The first description is referring to God the Father.

John had sweet communion with the Lord Jesus Christ on that day so many years ago, when he saw the Lord Jesus Christ walking in the midst of the golden candlesticks.

At the time of writing the people of God are forbidden to enter into their places of worship because of the pan[dem]ic caused by Covid-19. But we need not buildings in order to enjoy fellowship and communion with God our Saviour. We may share in streamed services over the internet and enjoy the 'fellowship of kindred minds' and fellowship with Almighty God in our hearts, but we have to remember that this is not full Christian fellowship; it is not the fellowship of the gathered church. We have to remember Paul's exhortation, 'Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching' (Hebrews 10:25). When the lockdown is fully lifted it will be a mercy

to be able to enter into the courts of the Lord with thanksgiving in our hearts and with praise on our lips and to be able to enjoy that fellowship and communion the gathered church has with the Triune God. 'Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name. For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations' (Psalm 100:5). For it is there the Lord meets with his people—the blood stained mercy seat.

From every stormy wind that blows,
From every swelling tide of woes,
There is a calm, a safe retreat;
'Tis found beneath the mercy seat.

There is a place where Jesus sheds
The oil of gladness on our heads,
A place than all beside more sweet;
It is the blood-stained mercy seat.

There, there, on eagle wing we soar,
And time and sense seem all no more,
And heaven comes down our souls to great,
And glory crowns the mercy seat.

Oh let my hands forget their skill,
My tongue be silent, cold and still,
This bounding heart forget to beat,
If I forget the mercy seat. ¶

What follows is an article on John 17:3. It is a careful argument from the Greek text, by a Greek, and it contains a good deal of Greek. I trust those who cannot read Greek will nevertheless be able to follow the argument (almost all the Greek comes with a translation). The subject is very important, and the method adopted by the writer shows us the necessity of paying proper attention to the text of Holy Scripture.

DOES JOHN 17:3 DISPROVE THE TRINITY?

by PAUL KARAGEORGIS (London)

Αὕτη δέ ἐστιν ἡ αἰώνιος ζωή, ἵνα γινώσκωσί σε τὸν μόνον ἀληθινὸν Θεὸν καὶ ὃν ἀπέστειλας Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν. (John 17:3)

ONE of the most controversial verses in the Bible causing heated debates is John 17:3. It is arguably the favourite verse of those holding to a unitarian view of Christ, that is, denying the deity of Christ and consequently also rejecting the doctrine of the Trinity. This paper is an examination and analysis of the verse from both a linguistic and theological perspective. John 17:1–3 is quoted below:

These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

These verses are a small excerpt taken from the pericope commonly known as the Farewell Prayer or the High Priestly Prayer (John 17:1–26). This prayer itself is part of Christ's Farewell Discourse (chapters 14–17) to his disciples. There is a danger of taking 17:3 out of context and coming to a wrong conclusion. Unitarians reading the words, 'that they might know thee the only true God, AND Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent' will emphasise the AND. As Christ is speaking to the Father, they reason that 'the only true God' must be referring to the Father. The word 'and' separates Jesus Christ from 'the only true God'. The interpretation is that Jesus Christ is excluded from God. He is not God but is merely sent by God. The Father is 'the only true God' and Christ is the one sent. The conclusion is Christ cannot be true God. This interpretation would most probably be acceptable if John 17:3 were the only source of information available concerning God and Christ. Whether Christ is equal to God is a theological question.

At least, grammatically speaking, in the clause 'they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent' the words 'God' and 'Jesus Christ' are considered equal. The word *καί*/'and' is a coordinating conjunction linking the phrase 'the only true God' with 'Jesus Christ'.¹ 'God'/'Θεὸν' and 'Jesus Christ'/'Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν' are grammatically equal because they are nouns, and in Greek, their endings (-όν, -οῦν -όν) show they are both in the accusative case. Grammatically equal words or clauses linked with a coordinating conjunction can be contrasting and conceptually have opposite meanings or they can have meanings

which are similar or the same. Biblical examples of contrasting meanings linked by 'and' include the following: Hebrews 5:14 'good and evil/καλοῦ τε καὶ κακοῦ'; 1 Corinthians 7:34 'a wife and a virgin/ἡ γυνὴ καὶ ἡ παρθένος'; John 1:5 'And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not/καὶ τὸ φῶς ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ φαίνει, καὶ ἡ σκοτία αὐτὸ οὐ κατέλαβεν.'

Coordinating conjunctions can connect phrases, words, and clauses which convey similar or identical meanings. This is illustrated with the following examples: Matthew 7:14 'strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life' / στενὴ ἡ πύλη καὶ τεθλιμμένη ἡ ὁδὸς ἡ ἀπάγουσα εἰς τὴν ζωὴν; Luke 15:1 'the publicans (tax collectors) and sinners/οἱ τελῶναι καὶ οἱ ἁμαρτωλοὶ'; 1 Peter 1:19 'without blemish and without spot'/ ἁμώμου καὶ ἁσπίλου.² The question which needs to be asked with reference to John 17:3 is, 'Are "the only true God" and "Jesus Christ" contrasting and opposite or are they similar or of the exact same essence?'

In order to answer the question, scriptures using similar grammatical constructions with the coordinating conjunction 'and'/καί are examined and compared. One such scripture is Acts 5:29 which states, 'But Peter and the apostles answered, We must obey God rather than men/ἀποκριθεὶς δὲ Πέτρος καὶ οἱ ἀπόστολοι εἶπον· πειθαρχεῖν δεῖ Θεῷ μᾶλλον ἢ ἀνθρώποις.'

Imagine that we knew nothing about Peter and his background and we had just

² In Matt 7:14, 'strait' should not be confused with 'straight'. 'Strait' means 'narrow' which is an accurate translation of στενὴ. In Luke 15:1, tax collectors and sinners are juxtaposed together as different categories but all would agree that the tax collectors were included among the sinners. They were singled out because they collaborated with the Roman oppressors. They were considered even more sinful than other sinners.

¹ There are seven coordinating conjunctions: *and, for, or, nor, but, yet, and so*. In this paper only *and* is considered as that is the one used linking 'God' and 'Jesus Christ'.

read this for the first time, would we think that Peter was an apostle? If Peter was an apostle then we would expect the author, Luke, to have written, 'Peter and the other apostles...'/Πέτρος καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι... (cf. John 21:2 καὶ ἄλλοι ἐκ τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ δύο) or 'Peter and the rest of the apostles...'/Πέτρος καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ ἀπόστολοι (cf. 1 Cor 9:5 καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ ἀπόστολοι). Based on this scripture alone, we would assume, with justification, that Peter was not an apostle. However, there are numerous verses attesting to the fact that Peter was an apostle and indeed he was arguably the most prominent one.³ In fact, just a few paragraphs earlier Luke had written (Acts 2:37), 'Now when they heard *this*, they were pierced in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men *and* brethren, what shall we do?'/Ἀκούσαντες δὲ κατενύγησαν τῇ καρδίᾳ, εἰπόν τε πρὸς τὸν Πέτρον καὶ τοὺς λοιποὺς ἀποστόλους τί ποιήσομεν, ἄνδρες ἀδελφοί;

Here, there is no doubt that Peter is an apostle because Luke records, τὸν Πέτρον καὶ τοὺς λοιποὺς ἀποστόλους. The coordinating conjunction, καὶ, links τὸν Πέτρον with τοὺς λοιποὺς ἀποστόλους. This is not a case in which the juxtaposed nouns are contrasting and antithetical but rather they are similar or belong to the same category. Luke must have thought it unnecessary to add the word 'other'/ἄλλοι or 'rest'/λοιποὶ in Acts 5:29 because he knew that his readers were well aware that Peter was an apostle. However, a number of English translators do think it necessary to insert the word 'other' in order to make it clearer that Peter was an apostle even though there are no manuscripts which have the word.⁴ The KJV has

³ Matt 4:18-20; Matt 10:2; Luke 6: 13-14; 1 Cor 9:5; 1 Peter 1:1; 2 Peter 1:1

⁴ See Acts 5:29 in NIV, Good News Translation, Webster's, Weymouth, Berean Study Bible.

other in italics indicating that it is not found in the original Greek but is added in English for the sake of clarity. Acts 5:29, 'Then Peter and the *other* apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.'

Luke expected his readers to know what preceded Acts 5:29. They knew who Peter was, and therefore it was unnecessary for Luke to repeat the same information. Likewise, the Apostle John expected his readers to have read from the beginning of his Gospel and know something of who Jesus Christ was, where he came from and why the Father had sent him into the world. Of course, John expected his readers to read the whole of his Gospel i.e. what preceded John 17:3 and what comes after it in order to deepen their knowledge of Christ. The first sentence at the beginning of his Gospel (John 1:1) proclaims the pre-incarnate Logos was with God, his Father, before the creation, 'In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God ...' John shows that the Father and the Logos are different persons and they abide together. The Logos is of the same essence as the Father. The Father is God and the Son is God. John boldly states '... and the Word was God.' John dispels any doubts in the reader's mind regarding the deity of Christ by declaring him to be the Creator of everything that exists (v. 3), 'All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.'⁵ The Jews knew their scriptures declared that the Lord God of Israel is the one true God and he is the Creator of heaven and earth.⁶

⁵ There are many other verses in the gospel of John, in addition to the prologue, supporting, the deity of Christ eg 4:10-14; 5:17 - 23; 8:58 (cf Ex 3:14); 10:28; 14:9; 20:28 See: *Jesus Is God: Commentary on the Deity of Christ in John* by Greg Robards and *The Deity of Christ in John's Gospel* by Andreas J. Köstenberger

⁶ See: Deut 6:4; Isa 40:28; 43:15

In John 17:3 John records Christ praying to his Father saying that he is ‘the only true God.’ Christ, speaking in the third person about himself, juxtaposes ‘Jesus Christ’ with an ‘and’/καί alongside his Father. Christ states that the eternal life of people depends on knowing him and his Father. This, indeed, shows their equality in respect to granting eternal life to believers. This equality of Father and Son is emphasised in v. 5 with the petition, ‘And now, O Father, glorify

thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.’ These words prove Christ’s pre-existence before his incarnation on earth and they are evidence of his deity. The Lord God, Yahweh, of the Old Testament does not share his glory with another.⁷

⁷ Isaiah 42:8, I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.

TO BE CONCLUDED

EVEN THE FAITHFUL GO ASTRAY

‘I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant; for I do not forget thy commandments.’ Psalm 119:176

by EDWARD MALCOLM (Reading)

THE final verse of this psalm is a humble confession: David says he has gone astray like a lost sheep; calls on the Lord to seek him; and pleads his not forgetting the commandments. To forget is a truly human trait, and a mark of our being corrupted by the Fall. A woman may forget her sucking infant, Isaiah 49:15, and Israel may forget her God who saved her, Deuteronomy 8:14, but David does not forget the Lord’s commandments. This implies that his going astray is forced on him by circumstances, and is not the result of indifference or disobedience on his part. His wandering, then, is not from the Lord his Shepherd, but is his being forced from the green pasture, and from beside the still water, by foes of some sort. And yet, no circumstance can justify our wandering from the Lord’s side: given the expressions of hope in vv. 169–175, he knows, and we know, that

our right place is with our Saviour. Hence:

Doctrine: even the most faithful believer runs into many failings and errors of life.

1. That this is true of even the most faithful

David speaks like this elsewhere: ‘Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression’ (Psalm 19:12–13). Again, ‘Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me’ (Psalm 51:1–3). We know this to be true of us, for as the prophet Isaiah

declares, 'All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all' (Isaiah 53:6). The parable of the Prodigal Son shows that wandering the lot of even the most loved and blessed: it is true of all before conversion, and it is true of us after our conversion. Although the extent and causes may differ before and after we have been born again, yet the fact remains that we wander. David speaks here as regenerate, yet who wanders from God.

We are prone to certain faults. So Romans 7:15, 'For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.' Again v. 19, 'For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.' So also Galatians 5:17, 'For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.' A fountain of corruption in us has not been entirely stopped, and from time to time the foul waters break forth. It is as if a fire smoulders in our hearts, and we think we have it under control, but from time to time it flares up, and threatens to consume us. If we think this is too strong, just think how quickly an angry or hurtful word comes out of our mouth: we know immediately we have sinned, and we are pained by what we have done, but there it was within us, ready to show itself at the slightest opportunity. The faults of character and nature will vary from person to person, and it is a great mistake to think that, because we do not have one or other fault, we must have none. We see faults in others, but are generally poor at seeing them in us. Others see them, and we must confess that we are no better than others, and worse than some. The Apostle Peter, for all his brave words, had a certain fear of men, Luke 22:33 and 60; Acts 10:28, 34 and

Galatians 2:11ff. What he affirmed on the one hand he denied on the other—usually by his actions. Do we suppose we are better than him? Wisdom teaches us not to think too highly of ourselves, and to recognise that we are prone to certain faults, which lead to wandering.

We are defensive of certain faults, as the rich young ruler, Luke 18:18, who loved his wealth too much. He was proud of his law-keeping, from his youth up, but he was also enamoured of his great wealth. The implied rebuke in Christ's admonition to him was a word too far for him: he would rather miss out on eternal life than admit his inordinate love of riches. Zacchaeus, on the other hand, had lived for wealth but showed himself to be a new creature after his conversion. We have darling sins, from which we would not be parted, and we make all manner of excuses for them. 'This is my thorn in the side' says one about a sin he will not abandon. 'This is my cross to bear' says another of her sins. One way or another, we excuse our faults, as if they were merely part of our character. Yes, our Father in heaven knows our secret faults, even if others do not. There is another who knows them, for he studies us very carefully—our adversary the devil. 'Know your enemy' is a wise adage in warfare, and Satan is a master at spiritual warfare. Why is it that the drinker is always being tempted to drunkenness, the dishonest to lying and stealing, or the unruly-tempered to unkind or unwise words? But we say, when we are tempted by the thing that gets us every time, 'Oh, that's just my nature, my character: it's who I am, and it will not change in this life.' Why not? Is not Christ the Lord of the whole body? Did he save your feet but not your hands; your ears but not your eyes? Did he regenerate your will but not

your mind, or your heart but not your appetites? Christ reigns until he has put down all rule and all authority and power, and all enemies are under his feet. Christ is he that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, Jude 24. We act as if the Armistice is due to come into force, but we are to fight to the last second—not against the world, the flesh and the devil, but against the authority of Christ over every aspect of our being. Yes, we will surrender completely one day, but not just yet. We want a little time, a little opportunity, to indulge the flesh a little more. When we see the judgment of God approaching, we plead like Lot: ‘Behold now, this city is near to flee unto, and it is a little one: Oh, let me escape thither, (is it not a little one?) and my soul shall live’ (Genesis 19:20). That is, do not expect me to leave off all my comforts and desires, but allow me to lay them aside by stages. But that is like the diseased person asking the physician to heal him by degrees, as if he is loath to be made whole. No, Christ came to make us new creatures, and we may not defend our darling sins, by any means whatsoever.

2. Why this is true of even the most faithful

First, because we are not yet perfect. Adam, being perfect, fell in sin: we, being regenerate, are not yet perfect. The work of grace has begun in us, and the end of that work is well known. One day, we shall know as we are known, which now we cannot, for we know only in part. Thus our understanding is not yet perfect, nor our love for Christ and his word. Our obedience is not yet perfect, and we miss the path. We read God’s word, but we permit our own understanding to come between us and the truth. Our faith is weak, and we cannot hold on to the promises fully,

nor trust the one who promise they are. In his infinite wisdom and love, the Lord God brought his people Israel into the wilderness. They were not a nation, but they had seen the mighty power of God to save. He brought them into a place where they had to trust him, and where their very existence depended in his merciful care for them. Being utterly dependent on him, they ought to have learned that he is utterly trustworthy, and that he never leaves nor forsakes his people. Instead, they lost faith, rebelled, and were punished. And yet even this was not to destroy them, but to teach them that the Lord is to be trusted. If we were perfect we would have no need to be chastised, Hebrews 12:6. Our heavenly Father chastises us *because* he loves us, and he will have us to be partakers of his holiness, v. 10. We are in the flesh now, and the physical world attracts our carnal parts. We rely too much on pandering to those carnal parts, as Israel complained: ‘We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick: but now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes.’ (Numbers 11:5–6). Bodily comfort matters too much. Thus we are prone to sin.

Secondly, therefore, we fall before temptations: not always, perhaps, but often enough. If our brother can sin against us seventy times seven in a day, how often can we sin against our Father in heaven? We may from time to time resist one temptation or another, and feel we have done well. We may even have cast ourselves on the Lord in the time of trial, and afterwards given thanks for deliverance. But we are also capable of reasoning within ourselves that, because we have cast ourselves on the Lord (in word, at least) then we are absolved of blame for falling. We saw the trial coming, we cried to the Lord, and

still we were overcome. The fault is not ours, is it...? It is true that some trials are too ferocious for us, and it is as if a violent storm has broken over our heads. The disciples who were fishermen were no doubt used to storms on Galilee, but one arose that filled them with fear. We might cope with the everyday trials and temptations, and yet find we have absolutely no strength to overcome a more serious trial. Some, no doubt, are too subtle. We failed to see the outcome of a particular action. We had no intention of sinning, but a seemingly harmless situation turned out to be dangerous to our spiritual wellbeing. Israel defeated the great fortress city of Jericho, and some of the men thought that the little village of Ai would be no trouble whatsoever. How shocked they were when they retired in confusion, leaving their dead behind. Why had they failed? Because Achan had sinned, and brought the judgment of God on them. A seemingly harmless situation had turned dangerous, because the presence of sin had gone undetected. Some trials are too desirable, as Solomon warns of the lips of the strange woman, that drop as honeycomb, whose mouth is smoother than oil, but her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a twoedged sword (Proverbs 5:3–4). Our imperfection leaves us open to the devil's wiles, and we must learn to call our imperfections by their true name—sins. If we would grow in grace and understanding, we must be honest about our state. Failure here will see us fall many times, and dishonour Christ's name.

Thirdly, because our heavenly Father permits us to be tried. Israel had to face the wilderness with all its privations: lack of food and water, as well as various enemies. Such trials may seem wrong for God's children, yet they are his will for us. James counsels us to 'count it all joy when ye fall into diver

temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect, and entire, wanting nothing.' There is a high and glorious purpose in our being tried. Yes, our heavenly Father has power to keep us from all trials and temptations, but how much greater is the manifestation of his power when he preserves us *in* those same trials and temptations? How else shall the trial of our faith, being much more precious than gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ, 1 Peter 1:7? How else shall we learn the loving power of Christ?

Application

From this, let us learn—

1. *To be always on our guard.* See 1 Peter 5:8. The devil prowls about as a roaring lion seeking prey; dare we sleep? See Matthew 26:41. We are commanded to learn to watch and pray that we enter not into temptation. 'Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man' (Proverbs 6:10–11). If bodily needs are made worse by too much sleep, how much more our spiritual needs? Our corrupt nature within, stumbling blocks without, and the violence of the enemy, demand we be on guard. We do not know from which direction the next blow will come, and only our watching and praying will prepare us.

2. *To always look to Christ and his shed blood.* If we regard our sins we will despair, since we cannot cease from all sin. But 'the blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin', 1 John 1:7. 'If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous,' 1 John 2:1–2. Look to the Advocate,

our great High Priest. Remember the comforting words of the Apostle Paul, when he asked, 'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.' Will our heavenly Father cast off any who have been bought by the blood of his beloved Son? Shall Christ turn away from one for whom he died? 'Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.'

3. *To cast ourselves always on God's care.* Why appoint a shepherd if the sheep can care for themselves? But they cannot, so the shepherd is needed, with sling and club, as well as his staff and rod, to defend the flock. Wolves and bears prowl around the flock even when the shepherd is on hand: how much worse would the flock's lot be if there were no shepherd? Christ is the Good Shepherd: if we are of his flock, seek his care. He has given his life for the sheep, and is the door of the sheep. Our safety consists in our being of his flock: we are not without care, and the one who stands over us is not without power. He has already defeated the power of death, having risen from the dead. We are blessed

with many great and comforting promises, and these are ours because we Christ's flock. When we feel the enemy to be near, or when we know that our footsteps are in danger of straying, flee to the Shepherd, and cry for his help. He will give it, for he loves us with an everlasting love.

4. *To not despair when we fall into sin.* This is not the mark of our being unregenerate, but of our being sifted like wheat, and tried in the fire. We are brought to trials by grace, which may sound strange, but it is in the trials we learn the power of Christ, as the disciples did in the boat, and Daniel did among the lions. Sometimes the lessons we learn are new to us, and sometimes they are reminders of what we know already. But we are forgetful and weak in faith, as well as cool in love. When we fall, as we often do, let us open our hearts in humble confession, and learn our faults, as well as Christ's great love. 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' This is a great and glorious promise, as well as very full of comfort and love. It comes from the heart of our Saviour, and so we have assurance that, though we sin, we are not cast off. Let us learn that, being loved with so great a love, we should love Christ in return. This love is that which overcomes the world, in that our love for Christ will far exceed our love for the world, and cause us to walk in obedience step by step, until at last we stand before him in glory. And then shall we be made perfect. Oh blessed and happy day! ¶

There are no saving views of God but in Christ, and there are no gracious views God hath of men but in Christ. If we look on God out of Christ, we are dazzled with an overwhelming, confounding Majesty; if God look on us out of Christ, he seeth hateful and hated sinners. Ephesians 2:12-14.

Robert Traill

FORMER DAYS

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

250 years ago: July & August 1770

DEERING'S Lectures are dropped in the **July** issue, the Editor stating his intention to alternate extracts from 'The honey-comb of Free Justification' by the Rev. John Eaton. The first extract appears here. A short extract gives the flavour. 'If God, by the power of his imputation, so cloath us with his Son's righteousness, that it makes us in his sight perfectly holy and righteous, then all our sins must needs be abolished out of his sight; if it put away all iniquity like a mist, as the prophet Esay saith, 44:22, abolish all our sins like darkness out of God's sight; then it leaves us of necessity only and perfectly righteous in the sight of God...' Mr Eaton goes on to deal both with the effects of free justification, and with the efficient cause of the same. It is an excellent treatise on the subject.

The Biography of Julines Hering concludes from the previous month, showing the life and ministry of this godly man, both here and on the Continent.

Gospel Mysteries continues the discussion and explanation of the Pearl of Great Price, and is followed by an extract from John Flavel's 'Fountain of life opened' (*Works*, Vol 1, p.536ff), on 'Evangelical Excitements to practical Holiness.' The Miscellaneous section deals with 'A serious address to young students who are preparing for admission to the dignity of clergymen.' It is a timely call to young men to take seriously their oath to uphold the doctrine of the Thirty-nine Articles in their original sense. How much harm might the Church of England have been spared if every generation had insisted on this point.

The Experience of a True Christian continues from the previous issue, and shows why we love the Lord Jesus Christ. This is followed by the next part of 'A Christian paraphrase of the Lord's Prayer' and takes the second half of the Prayer, from 'Lead us not into temptation' to the end. The dialogue between Evangelist and a Christian over assurance of forgiveness of sins leads to two short pieces, and poetry concludes the issue.

In **August**, the Deering lectures on Hebrews continue, at 2:17-3:1. The Biography is of William Grimshaw, and the Pearl of Great Price is explained further. Casuistical Divinity takes up Matthew 12:27, and seeks to show 'the freeness and fulness of salvation by Jesus Christ as revealed in the gospel, to encourage poor doubting souls to faith in Christ Jesus, as the ground and foundation of all other graces.' Flavel's Practical holiness continues, and is followed by a letter from a deathbed, to a friend of the dying man. Self-recollection is followed by the continuation of the one of the brief items from the previous month. The Dialogue between Evangelist and a Christian proceeds with the subject, and a published sermon, critical of Methodism, is pulled apart by a reviewer. Poetry, including a meditation on the 23rd Psalm, concludes the month.

200 years ago: July & June 1820

The **July** issue opens with a paper on the real danger of hypocrisy, from the account in Acts of Ananias and Sapphira. This is followed by a discourse on the glory and preciousness of the Scriptures, in which the reader is strongly encouraged to see the

beauty and life-giving nature of God's holy word. The reader is then invited to consider a few thoughts tending to show that spiritual blessings were never designed for all mankind. The piece is thoughtfully argued. Article I of the Thirty-nine Articles provides the material for a study of God's attributes. This is continued from an earlier issue, and will be continued in a later one. Tomlinson's attempts to rescue Holy Scripture from ridicule likewise continues. Much of the argument at this point is very dated, as the author relies on continental drift theory to explain certain features of the natural world, including the similarity between inhabitants of distant islands: later studies have shown that travel was the cause of similarity. However, the author's aim, to uphold the authenticity and accuracy of the biblical record, is commendable, and there is value in reading his argument.

An earlier enquiry, concerning what the Bible teaches about the future conversion of the Jews, receives an answer. The author affirms his belief that such an event will take place, connected to the return of the Jews to their homeland.

Readers are encouraged to confidence in God, and unruly thoughts are quieted by divine consolations. Bunches of Violets, part v, considers the glory of Christ in his humiliation. Divine government, as it respects the Church and People of God, and is followed by the obituary of a woman who died, aged 29, full of faith in Jesus Christ.

The **August** issue opens with thoughts on the dignity of Christ, taking a number of titles and descriptions from the prophets. The piece on the conversion of the Jews continues, as do the thoughts tending to show that spiritual blessings are not for all mankind. The importance of scripture investigation, from John 5:39, is set forth, and

the apprehending of Christianity, from Phil 3:12, looks at what apprehended the apostle Paul. Myra's comments on the command to Abraham, 'Walk before me and be thou perfect' come in for censure, as does a review of a book against Thomas Paine, published long before. Myra seems to be on weak ground: the critic of the review joins him there, according to the Editor's reply.

Whether God is the author of evil is a question put by a young believer, who has heard this from the pulpit of his church—and that, from a man who professes to believe in predestination. The Editor offers some initial thoughts, asserting that it is an affront to the sovereignty of God to put anything outside his will. This is not to make God the author of sin, but to show that he appoints the wickedness of man for his ends. This leads in to the next part of the examination of the divine decrees, continued from the previous issue, where it was placed under the heading of Divine Government. Poems end the issue.

100 years ago: July & August 1920

The reader of the **July** issue is presented with a meditation on the fragrantcy of the divine name, from Song of Solomon 1:3. Christ's opinion of the book of Genesis is treated next, with an examination of Matthew 19:4f, on marriage. In the context of Higher Criticism, such an examination has much to commend it, and our Lord's opinion of many aspects of the Old Testament, denied by so-called scholars, ought to settle the matter for us. This is followed by a consideration of the divine author of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit. An exposition of Hebrews 10:31, and is followed by the summary of a sermon on Isaiah 21:11. Paul's heart cry in Romans 7:24 is considered, and some answers from the Bible are provided. The doctrine of election

is explained, and the pleas of David in his prayers, as set forth in the Psalms, provides material for meditation. 2 Kings 7:2 and Malachi 3:10 are compared. 'Any manner of lost thing' looks at our doubts in prayer, compared with the Lord's faithfulness in answering. The piece, 'thou didst call' is concluded from an earlier issue. A report is published of celebrations in New York, following the acceptance by Britain of the mandate from the 'Great powers' concerning Palestine and the Jewish homeland. The writings of the late James Ormiston, on the dangers of Spiritism, or Spiritualism, are reproduced.

Three obituaries are published. The first is of Mr John Wood, Trustee of *The Gospel Magazine*, and Honorary Secretary of the Evangelization Society. The second is of Mr Edward Darbyshire, Trustee of the *English Churchman*. The final one is of a Mr Fisher, who was a reader of this *Magazine*. Balfour's visit to the Pope draws forth much deserved criticism. The historic position of the Church of England regarding episcopacy—that it is of the well-being, but never the being, of the Church, is given as a way forward in discussions with Evangelical Non-conformists, regarding closer ties. A report on the work of the Aged Pilgrims' Friend Society concludes the issue.

The **August** issue opens with a statement of the *Magazine's* financial position, which gives cause for concern. Income was well below expenditure in 1919. The first article

proper takes up the prophet's confession in Isaiah 6:5. It is followed by an address on the double assurance contained in 1 Peter 3:12. Song of Solomon 6:11 is the text for the next piece, and 1 John 3:1–2 is the text of a sermon by the Rev. James Ormiston. The sermon on Isaiah 21:11 is concluded from the previous issue. The words, 'exceeding', 'abundantly' and 'above', from Ephesians 3:20–21, are weighed carefully. Song of Solomon is once again the portion of Scripture under consideration, at 8:6. A reader asks the Editor for his thoughts on the word 'world' in the context of amusements. Amidst much serious writing on the dangers of the world, one sentence stood out for this Editor: 'Cricket in itself is not wrong.' It is good to have signs of soundness in those we are drawn to admire.

An expression of sympathy from the Trustees to the family of the late John Wood is recorded, and is followed by teaching on efficacious redemption. A blessed experience of Jonathan Edwards is reproduced, and causes of coming to the Lord in prayer are treated briefly but helpfully. Criticism of the destruction of the Canaanites is brought to the touchstone of Scripture. A correspondent strongly supports the Editor in his stand against Higher Criticism. Brief pieces, and some further thoughts on episcopacy lead to reviews. The first title is Michael McCarthy's *The Mayflower and the Pilgrim Fathers*, published to mark the 300th anniversary. The second takes up the subject for children. Both are from the Protestant Truth Society

TO BE CONTINUED

A little grace is true grace. Fire in the spark is as well fire as the flame; the filings of gold are gold, as well as the whole wedge; a drop of water is water, as well as the whole ocean. Thus a little grace is true grace.

Christopher Love

BOOK REVIEWS

The Covenanters, a History of the Church in Scotland from 1540–1690

J. K. Hewison

Banner of Truth Trust, 2019 1136pp 2 vols cloth £40 ISBN 978-1848719279

Banner of Truth are to be thanked for making available this century-old contribution to the history of the Scottish church. While a number of other editions are currently available from print-on-demand and similar sources, these are unlikely to grace the purchaser's bookshelves as handsomely as these two volumes.

James King Hewison (1853–1941) was a minister of the Free Church of Scotland. His history, first published in 1908, differs from other well-known accounts such as *Men of the Covenant* by Alexander Smellie, in that it sets the Covenanters firmly in the context of the history of the Scottish Reformation from its origins in the 1540s, whereas Smellie begins his account with the National Covenant of 1638. Hewison shows that this landmark was preceded by many covenants and bonds, beginning with the Dun Covenant of 1556. In the words of John Knox (here modernised), those present at Dun 'constantly do remain in the same doctrine, which then they professed, to wit, that they refused all society with idolatry and band themselves, to the uttermost of their powers, to maintain the true preaching of the Evangel of Jesus Christ.' Here is stated in a nutshell the principle that lies behind all succeeding Covenants.

Volume 1 takes the story up to the end of the Civil War, while the second and longer covers the Commonwealth, Restoration and Glorious Revolution. Among the appendices are the texts of the National Covenant and the Solemn League and Covenant (1643) and there are also numerous illustrations, including portraits of participants in the story and photographs of churches and monuments associated with them.

For most of the period covered Scotland was ruled by the Stuarts and it is hard to think of a worse succession of rulers. Which of them was the worst? Certainly one would like to think that, having read Hewison's account of the reign of James I and VI, fewer people would be inclined to refer to the Authorised Version of the Bible as the King James Version; equally that fewer would wish to venerate his brave but foolish and scheming son as Charles, King and Martyr. We are left in little doubt of James II and VII's intentions of restoring popery. But it is Charles II who comes across as the worst of the dynasty, partly because of his personal characteristics as a habitual liar, as one who dissembled in regard to his adherence to the Roman church, not to mention his well-known debauchery. There is one telling scene where after his entry into London on his birthday in 1660, the restored monarch makes 'an oblation of thanks to God in the presence-chamber before seeking carnal repose in the arms of' his favoured mistress. 'He thus early inaugurated England's worst era of lust and falsehoods.'

As far as Scotland was concerned, however, he paid very few visits to the country of his ancestors but instead was content to leave that unhappy land to a procession of largely worthless noblemen and prelates, who attempted to eradicate Presbyterianism from the land and plant in its place erastianism and episcopacy. In their hands she ultimately degenerated into a state of lawlessness, known after 1680 as the 'killing times'. These villains of the plot include the renegade covenanter, Archbishop James Sharp of St Andrews, Bishop Paterson, more noted for the invention of the thumbscrew than for any of his Christian works, and the Earl (later Duke) of Lauderdale, long Scotland's leading minister and similarly a 'convert' from

Presbyterianism. Hewison reserves his strongest criticism, however, for the swashbuckling John Graham, Viscount Dundee, otherwise known as Claverhouse or 'Bonnie Dundee'. Regarded by some as a great hero, Claverhouse, for all his undoubted military prowess, is portrayed as a creature of uncommon cruelty. During the reign of terror that characterised the last five years of Charles II's rule in Scotland, the rule of law was frequently absent as those suspected of the escalating number of treasonable offences were frequently shot on sight. Of those who were given the benefit of a trial some were executed with their body parts put on public display while the more fortunate were sent as slave labour to the plantations of New England. Claverhouse emerged as a strong supporter of James VII and his popish intentions and appropriately perhaps died for his King in 1689 at the pyrrhic victory of Killiecrankie.

Among the secular rulers there is a good word here and there for the Duke of Monmouth, who was sent to deal with Scotland's problems before falling out of favour and ultimately leading a failed rebellion against his uncle. As for the churchmen, Archbishop Robert Leighton was undoubtedly well-meaning and did his best to make episcopacy palatable to the Scots but was a scholar more suited to the study. It must be said that, as an ardent presbyterian, the author does not recognise that there may be such a thing as a godly episcopacy and this may have prejudiced his judgement in places but overall even an Episcopalian has to accept that these men were prelates first and pastors of pastors a long way second!

If these are the villains of the story the heroes are clearly the leaders of the reformation in the first place and then the Covenanters themselves who followed in their footsteps. In the early pages of the book the achievements of John Knox and Andrew Melville are briefly chronicled. Among the later Covenanters especially worthy of record are James Guthrie, the first minister to be martyred after the restoration, James Renwick, the last in 1688, and Alexander Peden, whose body was exhumed after his natural death and reburied at the foot of the gibbet on which others had perished. Altogether during the reigns of Charles II and James VII around 1,600 covenanting Scots died in the cause of Christ and around 5,000 suffered imprisonment or transportation. However, the Covenanters were not entirely without blemish themselves and clearly the more extreme of them, the murderers of Archbishop Sharp who took upon themselves to exercise the Lord's vengeance and the followers of Richard Cameron who took part in open rebellion against the monarchy, did their cause no good.

The work before us is for the most part a straight reprint of the original with the exception that additional footnotes have been provided translating Latin phrases, a recognition no doubt that an education in the classics can no longer be assumed. However, Latin phraseology is not the only area where readers may find difficulty. English readers, in particular, may be unfamiliar with such largely obsolete Scottish legal terms as 'intercommune' meaning to have dealings with a rebel, 'resetting' (sheltering the same), 'compear' meaning to 'appear before a judge in court' and 'heritor' meaning landholder. They may also struggle with the lengthy quotations in the early chapters of the book in the 16th century Scots dialect known as 'Inglis'.

This monumental work is strongly recommended to readers who wish to know more about this unhappy episode in Scotland's history, as well as its origins in the establishment of Presbyterianism in the Scottish reformation.

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