

SEPTEMBER–OCTOBER 2020

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The Gospel Magazine

The Messiah revealed • God's blessing on Obededom • The unfaithful officer

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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'.

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Editor

The Rt Rev Edward J Malcolm
**1 Downshire Square,
Reading, Berkshire RG1 6NJ**
Telephone: 0118 9595131
edward.malcolm@btinternet.com
*Only matters to do with
articles and book reviews
should be sent to the Editor*

The Secretary

Mr Philip Lievesley
1 Chaplins, Kirby Cross
Frinton-on-Sea, CO13 0RU
philip.lievesley@sky.com
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EDITORIAL

WE have much to complain about just now. Our church services are heavily restricted, and for reasons that are very hard to fathom. Some congregations can only have people come on a booked, ‘first come, first served’ basis. We are not supposed to sing. The service of the Lord’s Supper, if it follows the guidelines, looks more like something dreamed up in Rome. Funeral services only increase the sense of loss, as so few are allowed to attend and comfort those who mourn. Weddings may actually be improved by current restrictions: the fact that they cannot be the large social gatherings we see so often means that they are instead focussed on the marriage of the bride and groom, which is far better. That said, so few people can attend that even some close family members are not able to be present, which is understandably painful all round. And do not get me started on the law that now requires people to cover their faces in church. A more foolish law would be hard to invent.

Yes, we have much to complain about. Given the average age of our congregation

members, it is likely that some will not live to see the lifting of restrictions. And it will not be the coronavirus that carries them off. Young children, who are currently exempt from wearing face coverings, will go through a new rite of passage—not baptism or confirmation, but the donning of the mask. See the effect this will have on children, and on their ability to concentrate in a service. We certainly have much to complain about.

To whom shall we bring our complaint? These laws come from the Government. Shall we complain to the Prime Minister, our MP, or some other elected official? We may certainly feel moved to register our objection to the infringement of our ancient and hard-won Christian liberties, and it would be no bad thing if Christians did so. The Government needs to be reminded that the Church of England does not speak for all believers in this nation, and that other opinions are available. We have Scripture to obey, and we know we ought to obey God rather than men. Some may respond that, in this matter, the Government only has our best

interests in view, and we ought to accept the restrictions. Others will reply that the only reason for the restrictions is the practices of religions such as Islam, where the form of meeting increases rather than decreases the risk of infection. In other words, we are all being made to dance to the tune of false religion in this matter.

Ultimately, however, there is but one to whom we should bring our complaint. When David was hiding in the cave he knew the oppression that rulers can bring on their subjects. In Psalm 142:1–2 he wrote, ‘I cried unto the Lord with my voice; with my voice unto the Lord did I make my supplication. I poured out my complaint before him; I shewed before him my trouble.’ We do well to learn from David’s example—after all, the testimony from the lives and experiences of those we meet in Scripture is intended to instruct us in all our ways.

David cried to the Lord with his voice. That is, he opened his mouth in prayer. Complaints made to each other are pointless,

no matter how much we like to get things off our chest. Prayer is our best way of making our complaint.

David made his supplication to the Lord. That is, he asked the Lord for the desire of his heart. Prayer is not our way of getting what we wish for. When we pray for those things the Lord has promised and set in his word and given as a reason to cry for, then we pray according to his will.

David poured out his complaint. Children will tell an endless tale of their woes to a parent who will listen. We are not good, usually, at opening our hearts to the Lord. If we truly have a complaint, lay it out before the Lord. Tell him everything. Hold nothing back.

David showed the Lord his trouble. Not that the Lord did not know, or could not see. Rather, in so doing, David showed his understanding of his situation. It may not have been entirely correct, but only in prayer would it be corrected. And only in prayer would his complaint be answered. Learn from David.

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THE MESSIAH REVEALED

by THE EDITOR

‘And the LORD said unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? fill thine horn with oil, and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Beth-lehemite: for I have provided me a king among his sons’ (1 Samuel 16:1)

SAUL revealed himself to be one whose heart was far from the Lord. When faced with a straight command to destroy Agag and the Amalekites, Saul set his face on the worldly value and outward attraction of the forbidden things, and against the Lord whose power had placed him in the role of king. In this he was like Eve. She was under grace to eat freely of every tree of the garden, but was forbidden the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And yet, of all the trees by which she passed when walking through the garden, and of all the fruit hanging from the branches in that blessed and beautiful place, her attention was caught by the one she was not to have. She saw ‘the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise’ (Gen 3:6). And so she took and ate the forbidden fruit, and gave to her husband also, and they both fell in sin. So likewise Saul, holding back the best of the livestock but destroying all that was vile and refuse, 1 Sa 15:9, revealed himself to be more concerned about earthly things than heavenly.

It is no wonder, then, that the Lord rejected him from being king. We could mention a number of other reasons, such as the fact that he was of Benjamin and not of Judah, and thus could not be king prophesied by Jacob in Genesis 49. We could discuss the reason why the Lord God chose a man to be king whom he would then reject. But our attention must be on this, that the Lord sent

his servant Samuel to anoint a new king in place of the old. And, that we might know that this new king was not going to go the way of the old, we have God’s testimony to Samuel, in sending him to Bethlehem to the house of Jesse, that ‘I have provided me a king among his son.’

Doctrine: the Lord makes known the man of his choosing.

This he does in three things—

I. He reveals the one who is to be anointed king over Israel. See how he revealed him:

First, he told Samuel he had sought him a man after his own heart, 1 Samuel 13:14. That is, the Lord, knowing the true state of Saul’s heart, made known to Samuel his intention to replace the king with a man of a very different heart. It is not as though the Lord had come to regret appointing Saul, in spite of what is said in 1 Samuel 15:11, concerning the Lord’s repentance. I will not go into this matter here, but simply say that we are not to understand by this that our heavenly Father changes his mind, for him is not variableness, neither shadow of turning. His will is sovereign, and it is the one unfixed point in this changing and decaying world. Rather, we understand that the Lord, having set before Israel one whom the nation delighted in—a man tall and broad, well regarded and universally approved, 1 Samuel 10:23—now reveals that he will set before them one in whom he delights; whose spiritual stature

will be manifested as greater than any of his day; whom the Lord will so regard that his sins will be forgiven and not counted against him. Thus, in a word, he reveals his choosing of one who is in the covenant of grace. But note, first, that the Lord has revealed the *character* of the man, and nothing more. His *identity* is secondary to this.

He then revealed him to be a son of Jesse of Bethlehem. This is what Samuel is told here, to go to Bethlehem, and to the house of one citizen, Jesse. Thus far, then, Samuel knows only the identity of the *family* from which the new king will be taken. There is a parallel here with the choosing of Saul. In 1 Samuel 10:20–21 we see how the casting of lots reduced the choice from twelve tribes to one, from all the families to one, from all the households to one, and from all the members of that household to one. Thus the Lord showed that the choosing of a king is not merely a matter of democracy or human choice, but that it must be as the Lord directs. That the first king was not the one who would deliver his people, nor be the head of the line from which the Messiah would come, shows even more clearly that the Lord accomplishes many ends in one action. Of course, if we know our Old Testament history—and we should—we will recognise Jesse as being descended from Ruth the Moabitess and Boaz, her godly and righteous husband and kinsman redeemer. How much truth hangs on that fact! This, then, is a family that only exists because of the Lord's gracious dealings in the covenant of grace, showing by his sovereign actions and rule in the affairs of men that he is working his purposes out as year succeeds to year.

Finally, he will reveal him to be David, vv. 6–13. Jesse had eight sons, seven of whom were at home when Samuel came. But none of them was the Lord's man, whose heart

was faithful before the Lord. Not Eliab, nor Abinadab, nor Shammah, or any other. Subsequent history will teach something about some of these men, but it will not show them to be as their youngest brother David. Furthermore, we see that there is nothing immediately obvious to set David apart from his brothers—except, perhaps, their opinion of him. He was the youngest, and 'he keepeth the sheep.' There is no one in the household lower than David, who must endure the burden of shepherding. It may well be that Jesse's older sons had all taken their turn at keeping the sheep, and had gladly passed on the task to the next brother as soon as he was old enough to bear the responsibility. David was now at the tail end, as far as even his own family was concerned. And yet, in the Lord's will and providence, David was the head. He was the man after God's heart, a man of faith and godliness, who walked before the Lord his God in that perfection to which Abraham was called, Gen 17:1. And so the *identity* of the king is revealed, after the *line* of the king is revealed—and that, after the *character* of the king is revealed.

And is this not the way in Scripture? Do not the early chapters and indeed books of the Bible reveal to us the character of God's people? We see righteous Abel, and Enoch; Noah, and Abraham; Moses and Joshua. But we see also the rebellion of Cain and Lamech, and of so many others down to the generation that, coming up out of Egypt, perished in the wilderness for rebellion and unbelief. And so we are prepared for the character of the promised Saviour, the seed of the woman, long before the *line* of the Saviour, the seed of Abraham, is declared. And once we see that the promised seed will be of the line of David, then are we given the clearest indication of the *character* of the Messiah. It is only then, in the Gospels, that we see the

identity of the Messiah, being Jesus the son of Mary, and Jesus the Son of God.

II. Secondly, as to the manner in which he reveals him to those over whom he reigns

The Spirit of the Lord came upon David, v. 13, filling him with grace and truth. Now, it will be argued that Saul also was among the prophets, and that the Spirit of the Lord was upon him to such an extent that he prophesied. But there is a difference. There is such a thing as a temporary state of blessing, in which the deluded and false professor and enjoys the apparent gifts of grace. And yet, the heart of such a one being far from the Lord, the Spirit will depart in time and their true state will be revealed. The generation that came out of Egypt was witness to and beneficiary of the saving power of God. They saw the waters close over the heads of the Egyptian pursuers at the Red Sea, and they had sheltered in the pillar of cloud, and were led and lit by the pillar of lights. They drank the bitter waters of Marah made sweet, and heard the voice of the Lord on Sinai. And yet, having been told that they were to worship the Lord aright, in the words of the Ten Commandments, they showed the true state of their hearts by falling down before the golden calf. Their sin was grievous, and they, breaking God's covenant even as it was being confirmed to them, showed themselves to be outside the covenant of grace. But David, when he was filled with the Spirit, manifested the true state of his heart. His Psalms are the most eloquent evidence we have that he was indeed filled with the Spirit.

This became evident when he was known as one who could soothe Saul, v. 18. The fact of his being filled with the Spirit could not be hidden. Just as at Pentecost, when the house was filled with the sound of a mighty rushing wind, all around were attracted to the

spectacle, so here: word went out that David was different, gifted and able. When the Holy Spirit is in us, the fact cannot be hidden. This is a testimony to our being called of the Lord. How much more, then, when the Spirit descended on our Lord Jesus Christ at his baptism, in the form of a dove, and the voice from heaven testified to his being accepted of the Father. Thus the Lord set an evident difference between Saul and David in this matter of the Holy Spirit. David was shown to be the man whose heart was after God's own heart. This was a testimony to the nation that David was truly the anointed one.

But this was most evident in his withstanding Goliath in faith. So 1 Samuel 17:26, 37, 45, to pick out the specific verses in which David declared his faith. The king, Saul, ought to have gone out against Goliath, but he was afraid. Jesus Christ, being filled with the Spirit, was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, and there he fasted forty days and nights. Afterwards, the devil came and tested him. Our Lord Jesus, unlike the generation in the wilderness, did not succumb to the devil's temptations but withstood them. Unlike the first Adam, the second Adam did not disobey the word of the Lord God, but remained faithful in the face of temptation. David did not falter when the giant began to speak, but went on in faith. He was neither foolhardy nor naive. He had the plain word of the Lord, that he was king of the nation. There was another king, Saul, who lived. David could not perish at the hand of Goliath and the Lord maintain his word. Therefore he had to win, for the Lord had spoken. In simple faith in God's promise, David went and defeated his enemy. And thus he saved his people—not from their sins, but from those who would otherwise have enslaved them. Read the chapter, and

see the offer Goliath made. David delivered his people, and in so doing, was revealed to be their king. No wonder the women sang as they did, and no wonder Saul feared and hated David as he did.

III. Thirdly, in his blessing David in all he did, showing him to be the Lord's anointed

For it was David who brought peace to the nation, in many wars and battles. Read on in the life of David to see all that he did as king for his nation. See how many kings bent to knee to him, not in defeat, but in acknowledgment that he was a righteous ruler, and that all who were under his protection were blessed indeed. So the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ goes out into all the world, and draws in from all nations as many as the Lord will save.

And it was David who brought the ark of the covenant into Jerusalem, the great city he had taken. Here, again, is the great evidence of his kingship. He established true religion in the land. Yes, the tabernacle was in the land, and the priesthood too. But it was once David had made a place for them, as the Lord led him, that true religion was established in the place where God had chosen to set his name. So with Jesus Christ. He came to claim his Bride. Here, in the true Church, the invisible body of the redeemed, is God worshipped in spirit and in truth. Here is the faithful and true doctrine taught and believed, loved and upheld. Here is Christ honoured and worshipped by the kingdom of priests.

And it was David whose line the Lord decreed would bring forth the Messiah. David was not perfect, and his sin with Bathsheba was a terrible and dark day in the nation. Its consequences were many and bad, and yet, for all that, the Lord restored David and made a gracious covenant with him. His seed would sit on his throne for ever. This is the

line of the Messiah, that blind Bartimaeus could know to cry, 'Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me.' He knew Christ to be David's son, because only the son of David would be revealed as the Messiah. Much more could be said, but time prevents any more words.

Application

Note, in the first place, that the man of God's choosing is not the one whom man would choose. Samuel saw Eliab and said, 'Surely the Lord's anointed is before me' (v. 6). But he was looking outwardly, as Israel had looked on Saul, 10:23, and seen one who was pleasing to them. But the Lord desires obedience and not sacrifice: faith and love within, and not conformity to outward things only. To many, Jesus Christ is not a desirable Saviour, for they have already decided who must save them, and Christ does not conform to their expectations. Therefore they reject the true Saviour, looking instead for one who cannot be found. Let us be led of the Lord, to receive whom he has chosen as Saviour.

Note, secondly, that the one whom the Lord chooses also acts as he is called. David did not retire for ever once anointed king, but went out in the Lord's grace to defeat lion and bear, and then giant and all other foes, until he won peace for the nation. So our Lord Jesus Christ, coming to the time of his public ministry after his anointing in Jordan, faced the devil and all other foes, and overcame them in the name of those for whom he is Saviour and King.

Note, thirdly, that Jesus Christ has shown himself to be the Lord's anointed. As David was revealed to be king by his actions, so Jesus Christ. He was born of a virgin, his birth heralded by angels, and testified by shepherds and wise men. He showed himself to be fitted for the Lord's service from a

young age, and when he began his ministry he performed many mighty miracles. His teaching was with authority, and not as the scribes. His wisdom far exceeded that of any with whom he conversed. His love, grace and mercy were evident. He did all things well. And then, having shown himself to be the Messiah, he did the work of Messiah, humbling himself to the death of the cross to bear our sins, before rising again the third day and showing himself alive. He ascended into heaven, and there he sits at the right hand of the Father, our eternal High Priest, until the day of consummation, when the judgment will reveal all whom Christ has saved.

Leading us to—

Note, fourthly, that the Lord's chosen is never alone. David had his mighty men, as 2 Sa 23:15, who brought him water from the well at Bethlehem when he desired it. David had also wives and children: but more, he had an heir, Solomon, who was the first of a line that would reign for ever, 2 Sa 7:14f. So Jesus Christ, having won the victory over sin and death, and having sealed the covenant in his blood, has redeemed us unto God by his blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation. Thus is Christ the Head of the Church, whose Bride we are, being won by him and thus eternally secure in him. ¶

A SERMON ON ISAIAH 1:2–3

REV. C. TUINMAN (1659–1728)

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

Part 10

My people

Furthermore God calleth them My people. We find Israel more often put together in this way (Psalms 50:7 and 81:13). God counted them worthy of this name because of the covenant that he made with their fathers (Genesis 17:8; Deuteronomy 26:17f). This was a great joy (Psalm 33:12; 2 Samuel 7:23). So the heathen were no people (Deut. 32:21). But that name is only truly for the reborn and believers among them (Psalm 106:4f). Others was Lo-ammi, that is Ye are not my people (Hosea 1:9). Yet all Israelites were by circumcision partakers of the outward communion of the covenant. How should they have behaved themselves as befits God's people according to the demands of the covenant, to be unto the glory of their Father,

King and God (Ezekiel 34:20). They had special and beastly ignorance, because God said about it:

Doth not know and doth not consider

Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. Understanding and wisdom belong to reason and thereby man is above the cattle, which God hath deprived of wisdom (Job 39:17). Compare Psalm 32:9; 2 Peter 2:12; Job 35:11. Yet by nature man is very ignorant on spiritual matters (Job 11:12). The heathen lived then in the times of ignorance (Acts 17:30). But Israel should have been a wise and understanding nation, because they lived in the light and thus enjoyed the glorious means of grace (Deut. 4:6; Psalm 76:1; Micah 4:8). Especially the instruction

of Isaiah should be added. But no, Israel had no knowledge (Jeremiah 3:12; Hosea 4:1, 6 and 7:11). That nation did not understand (Jer. 4:22; Isaiah 28:8f and 42:25). One may take this having knowledge and understanding broadly, implying everything that comes from this, like Jeremiah 9:23; Psalm 91:14.

But of what did Israel not have knowledge? Did they not understand God's covenant? Was it that that God just had said,

that he had nourished and brought them up as children. Compare Psalm 107:43. All highness comes from God (1 Samuel 2:7; 1 Chronicles 29:12; Psalm 75:6f). Especially to Israel (Psalms 89:17f; 147:14). But they did not know or acknowledge it (Zephaniah 1:12; Hosea 2:7; 11:3). But contrary, they ascribed this to the idols and their own wisdom and capacities etc. (See Jeremiah 44:17; Hosea 2:6; Deuteronomy 8:10).

TO BE CONTINUED

WHATEVER THE WEATHER

by CARINE MACKENZIE

'What is the weather forecast today?' Wet, cloudy and windy. Not unusual in Scotland. We won't be able to go for a long walk today.

Or perhaps. Bright sunny and settled. Let's get the garden tidied and then have a cup of tea outside.

We need both the sun and the rain. The farmer and the gardener are very well aware of that. Rain causes the grass and vegetation to grow. Sun ripens the fruit and crops. Drought causes the plant and trees to send their roots down deeper in search of moisture.

Life is like the weather—sometimes cloudy, even stormy—at other times bright and sunny. God is in control at all times. 'All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose' (Romans 8:28). Every experience is for our good, whether we like it or not. The hard providences are put our way so that we would learn to trust the Lord more and to be 'conformed to the image of his Son' (Romans 8:29). God warns us not to be conformed to this world and its values but to be transformed by the renewing of our mind according to the will of God.

When Jesus taught his disciples to pray, one of the petitions was 'Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.' What a good prayer for us in every situation—and to remember that whatever happens today, it is for my good and God's glory.

We sometimes wrongly think that when have trouble in our life—a broken arm, a failed exam, or a serious illness—that God is against us. But that is not the case. It is equally wrong to assume that when everything in our life is rosy that therefore God is very pleased with us. We should judge whether God is for us by what he says in his word. 'If God is for us who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?' (Romans 8:31, 32). God is so much for us that he gave

his own Son to die for us on the cross at Calvary.

James in his epistle (1:2) tells us to 'Count it all joy' when trials and troubles come our way. The testing of our faith produces patience and is ultimately for our good.

J.C. Ryle explained it this way. 'God allows pain, sickness and disease, not because he loves to trouble us, but because he desires to benefit our heart, mind, conscience and soul to all eternity.' What a comforting and encouraging thought when we are going through anxious and troubling times.

Are we able to give thanks to God for the trouble and trial he sends to us. 'In everything give thanks' (1 Thessalonians 5:18). is the command that God gives us. It is not easy to give thanks instead of complaining.

The story is told about Matthew Henry, the famous minister and Bible commentator born in the seventeenth century. One day he was robbed and his wallet was stolen. How could he be thankful in that situation? He gave a list of reasons for thankfulness.

1. I am thankful that I have never been robbed before.
2. I am thankful that although he took my wallet, he did not take my life.
3. I am thankful that although he took all I had, it was not much.
4. I am thankful that it was I who was robbed, and not I who did the robbery.

What a wonderful example of thankfulness in adverse circumstances.

Going through suffering gives us a fellow feeling with others who are suffering. 'Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ' (Galatians 6:2). But the great burden bearer is the Lord Jesus Christ who knows all about suffering. He suffered the pain and agony of the cross in our place. He suffered being forsaken by his Father, so that we would never be forsaken. He did it all willingly. What a glorious Saviour.

So instead of complaining about the weather when it is not to our liking, let's remember that our loving God is in control and knows what is best. And let's remember that he knows what is best for our lives too and even the hard providences will prove to be a blessing at last.

Bible Search

Find the missing words from the verses. The initials of the correct answers will spell out two words of advice.

1. Enter into his _____ with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name. (Psalm 100:4)
2. Let my prayers set forth before thee as _____; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice. (Psalm 141:2)
3. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the _____ through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 15:57)
4. But thanks be to God, which put the same _____ care into the

heart of Titus for you. (2 Corinthians 8:16)

5. That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and _____ of all thy wondrous works. (Psalms 26:7)
6. And let the peace of God rule in your _____, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. (Colossians 3:15)
7. Now thanks be unto God, which _____ causes us to triumph in Christ, and make the manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. (2 Corinthians 2:14)
8. Give thanks unto the Lord, call upon his _____, make known his deeds among the people. (1 Chronicles 16:8)
9. Daniel went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber towards Jerusalem, he _____ upon his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God. (Daniel 6:10)
10. By him therefore let us offer the _____ of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name. (Hebrews 13:15)

— — — — —

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)

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, Obededom 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 Obededom known that forsaking of God himself.

It may well have been that Obededom 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 Obededom, 'The LORD hath blessed the house of Obededom, 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 stocks and stones. 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 in exile, away 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 panic 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 greet,
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. ¶

DOES JOHN 17:3 DISPROVE THE TRINITY? PART 2

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)

Returning to the question posed earlier, ‘Are “the only true God” and “Jesus Christ” contrasting and opposite or are they similar and of the same essence?’ the answer is, ‘Jesus Christ is of the same essence as his Father.’ Christ can also be referred to as ‘the only true God.’ In John 1:1, the Logos can be with God and can also be God. In the same way, in John 17:3, the Father is the only true God, and Christ is also the only true God. Using the correct hermeneutic of the Trinity, there is no contradiction in either case. Trying to understand the Triune God in terms of simple arithmetic will naturally lead to error. The answer to question 6 of the Westminster Shorter Catechism succinctly sums up the doctrine as: ‘There are three persons in the Godhead; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory.’ The hermeneutic of human rationalism, will, of course, see a contradiction. Unitarianism will either reject the scriptures claiming the deity of Christ or seek to reinterpret them to make out that Christ is a lesser god. Such a lesser god is not the true Christ of the Bible. A small god is not the true God but merely an idol. Unitarians will also over-emphasise and focus on the scriptures declaring the humanity of Christ while ignoring or playing down the ones regarding his deity. Trinitarians reconcile the apparently contradicting sets of

scriptures by using the hermeneutic of Christ being one person with two natures: one fully divine and one fully human.¹

The word ‘only’ (μόνον) in John 17:3 is in reference to the ‘true God’. Trinitarians have no problem with this as they accept that there is only one true God. The text does not apply ‘only’ to the Father i.e. the person addressed as ‘thee’/σε. Christ is not saying that only the Father is the true God. Neither does the text explicitly say that Christ is not God. If it did then it would contradict John 1:1; 17:5 and the many other verses in John. In 1 Corinthians 8:6 and Ephesians 4:5 ‘one Lord’/εἷς Κύριος is applied to Jesus Christ. The words are applied to the God of Israel in the Greek Septuagint version of the Shema prayer in Deuteronomy 6:4, ‘Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD’/ἄκουε Ἰσραὴλ Κύριος ὁ Θεὸς ἡμῶν Κύριος εἷς ἐστιν.

In Jude v. 4, the word ‘only’ is used in reference to the Jesus Christ as being ‘our only Master and Lord’/τὸν μόνον δεσπότην καὶ Κύριον ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν.² Κύριος is used often of Yahweh in the LXX

¹ Concerning the errors of the kenotic theory see: <https://www.academia.edu/36852877/>: ‘An investigation of the kenotic Christology of the Free Evangelical Church of Greece: its origins and effects in the denomination and beyond’

² There are textual variants regarding Jude 4. The Textus Receptus and Byzantine Text have τὸν μόνον δεσπότην Θεόν, καὶ Κύριον ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν ἀρνούμενοι.

translation of the Old Testament and of Christ in the original Greek of the New Testament. A less common word associated with God in the LXX is δεσπότης.³ It is used of God the Father by Simeon in Luke 2:29; by the disciples in Acts 4:24; John in Revelation 6:10, and it is ascribed to Christ by Peter in 2 Peter 2:1 and Jude in v.4 where both δεσπότης and κύριος are applied to Christ. Of course, these titles are used of people in the sense that they own houses and land, and have authority over members of the family or servants working for them. When used of the Father and Son, δεσπότης and κύριος depict sovereignty over all creation. Just as the 'only Master and Lord' in reference to the Son does not exclude the Father, the 'only true God' does not exclude the Son. In John's mind truth and God are intricately intertwined. He further clarifies who the true God is.

When John wrote his first epistle, he developed and rehearsed many of the themes that were in his Gospel. His Gospel was a historical narrative whereas his epistle is a sermon. Both these works of John speak of origins, love, joy, truth, light and darkness, eternal life, belief in God and belief in the Son. The following parallels and comparisons can be seen: John 1:1, 14; 16:24 with 1 John 1:1, 4; John 3:20, 21 with 1 John 1:6-7; John 13:34; 15:13 with 1 John 2:7; 3:11, 16; John 3:36 with 1 John 5:12 etc. As John concludes his first epistle, he writes (1 John 5:20),

a) And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding,

b) that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, *even* in his Son Jesus Christ.

c) This is the true God, and eternal life.

3 See Gen 15:2, 8; Joshua 5:14 (referring to captain of the host of the LORD); Job 5:8; Isa 1:24; Jer 1:6; Jonah 4:3.

οἶδαμεν δὲ ὅτι ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ ἦκει καὶ
δέδωκεν ἡμῖν διάνοιαν
ἵνα γινώσκωμεν τὸν ἀληθινόν· καὶ
ἔσμεν ἐν τῷ ἀληθινῷ, ἐν τῷ υἱῷ αὐτοῦ
Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ. οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ἀληθινὸς
Θεὸς καὶ ζωὴ αἰώνιος.

In this verse, John has in mind the words of Christ which he recorded in 17:3 of his gospel. He refers to the Father and Son in line *a*; there is an ambiguity in line *b* as to whether the one who is true is the Son or the Father but 'in his Son' is clearly Jesus Christ; and line *c* is where the most heated debates are found between the unitarians and trinitarians.

Trinitarians declare that the 'This' obviously refers to the named person just mentioned previously i.e. Jesus Christ. Therefore, Jesus Christ is the true God, and eternal life. The unitarians argue that the 'true God and eternal life' must refer to God the Father despite the fact that the nearest antecedent of the demonstrative pronoun 'this'/οὗτός (meaning 'this one' or 'he') is 'Jesus Christ'. In most cases the pronoun stands for the nearest antecedent. However, unitarians maintain that this is a case which is an exception to the general rule. The antecedent of οὗτός is the 'him that is true' which they identify as the Father. In addition, they cite scriptures such as 2 Chron 15:3; Jer 10:10; John 17:3 and 1 Thess 1:9 in which they claim 'true God' refers to the Father and not the Son. Especially relevant is John 17:3, which is Jesus' prayer to God. In that prayer, Jesus calls God 'the only true God.' Is John asserting that Jesus Christ is the true God or the Father is the true God?

There are a number of arguments supporting the claim that in the context of 1 John, Jesus is God. John juxtaposes 'the true God' with an 'and'/καί alongside 'eternal life'.

In John's gospel and Revelation, truth is closely linked with Christ and even identified as Christ himself. E.g. he is called ὁ ἀληθινός, the true one (Rev 3:7, 14; 19:11).⁴ The 'eternal life' ζωὴ αἰώνιος is granted to believers in Jesus Christ. The words "life" and 'eternal' are often associated with Christ and are ways of describing him (1 John 1:1-2; 5:11-13).⁵ John uses a literary device known as an *inclusio* in which he begins and ends his letter with the same declaration.

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that **eternal life**, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son **Jesus Christ** (1 John 1:1-3).

The 'eternal life' i.e. Jesus Christ was with the Father and 'our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.' At the end of his letter, John affirms, 'This [i.e. Jesus Christ] is the true God, and **eternal life**.' John uses a similar type of *inclusio* in his gospel where he boldly states in his first sentence, 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.' At the end of the gospel, Thomas confesses faith in his Saviour by declaring, 'My Lord and my God (John 20:28)'.⁶ The climax of the gospel

is the realization that the Lord Jesus Christ is God. The disciple changes from unbelieving/ἄπιστος to believing/πιστός (John 20:27). Christ accepts his confession and worship. The climax of the epistle is being given 'understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, *even* in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.'

The final sentence of the epistle is a warning and a command, 'Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen (1 John 5:21).' This exhortation seems to be, at first sight, so out of place and unrelated to the subject matter of the whole letter. John does not seemingly discuss idols and the word itself only appears in this final sentence. On deeper examination, the command to guard oneself from idols is very relevant to the tone of the letter. John warns the believers a number of times to not be deceived by false teachers (1 John 2:19, 22, 26; 4:1, 6). Especially under attack would be the person and work of Jesus Christ. John writes,

Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also (1 John 2:22-23). ... and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the *spirit* of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world (1 John 4:3).

History has proved that John was right to be concerned about erroneous doctrine. One of the main reasons of the letter was to combat against a form of protognosticism, Greek dualism and docetism.

Throughout the history of the church, there have been those who attacked the reinstatement of Peter.

⁴ See also: John 1:9, 14, 17; 6:32; 14:6; 15:1.

⁵ John closely links eternal life with Christ in his gospel. See John 3:15-16, 36; 4:14; 6:27, 40, 51, 54, 58, 68; 10:28; 11:25; 14:6; 17:2, 3

⁶ John 21 is really a postscript concerning the

doctrine of the incarnation. Those who believe that the material world is inherently evil could not accept the full humanity of Christ. The opposite extreme was to deny the full deity of Christ. John in his writings boldly claims the deity of Christ and puts the Son on the same level as the Father. Just a few examples are: John 1:1, 18; 5:21, 23, 26; 14:7, 9; 13; 15:24; 17:1; 1 John 1:3; 2:22-24; 2 John 3, 9; Revelation 5:12, 13; 7:10, 17; 14:4; 15:3; 21:22, 23; 22:1, 3. Unitarians claim that trinitarians worship a 'Christ' who is not the only true God and this is idolatry. This accusation would be true if the Lord Jesus Christ is not God. Trinitarians, on the other hand, affirm they worship the only God who is Triune, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, three persons but one God. It is unitarians who are committing idolatry by worshiping a created 'Christ' who is a lesser god or just a human, albeit an exalted one. For example, praying to God in the name of Alexander the Great or singing praises to the angel Gabriel would constitute idolatry. It is understandable why John would end his letter with a warning against idolatry.

Conclusion

A comparison of John 17:3 with other scriptures (e.g. Acts 2:37; 5:29) shows that Jesus Christ is not excluded from 'the only true God.' In his prayer, he did not address the Father and say, 'Father, only thou art the true God.' The Apostle John throughout his writings declares Christ is God, and he places the Son on the same level as the Father. Indeed, access to the Father is achieved only through the Son. 'No man cometh unto the Father, but by me (John 14:6)' and 'Eternal life for people comes by knowing the Father and the Son. 'And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent (17:3).' Another key verse in aiding understanding of John 17:3 is 1 John

5:20. The unitarians try to make the case that the pronoun 'this'/οὗτός in 'This is the true God, and eternal life'/οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ἀληθινὸς Θεὸς καὶ ζωὴ αἰώνιος refers to the Father even though the natural reading would be the nearest antecedent i.e. Jesus Christ of the preceding sentence. John could have made it even clearer had he repeated himself and written, 'that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, *even* in his Son Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the true God, and eternal life.' ἵνα γινώσκωμεν τὸν ἀληθινόν· καὶ ἐσμεν ἐν τῷ ἀληθινῷ, ἐν τῷ νύϋ αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ. ὁ Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς ἐστιν ὁ ἀληθινὸς Θεὸς καὶ ζωὴ αἰώνιος. John did not write it in this way and therefore a slight ambiguity remains. We must accept that even ambiguities in the scriptures are divinely inspired. It is deliberately written that way showing that both Father and Son are the true God and knowing both Father and Son leads to eternal life. It is not a case of 'either/or' but 'and'. John is simply repeating 17:3 of his gospel using slightly different wording. John 17:3 does not disprove the Trinity. Trinitarians need not avoid this scripture.

Finally, it needs to be stated that our understanding is not gained by human wisdom or persuasion but through revelation by the Holy Spirit.

But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me (John 15:26).

Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth (John 16:13).

it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth (1 John 5:6).

Truth is an attribute of the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Trinity. ¶

A SUMMARY PLATFORM OF THE HEADS OF A BODY OF PRACTICAL DIVINITY

by JOHN DURIE (1596–1680)

John Durie intended to write a Body of Practical Divinity, with the co-operation of, among others, John Downname and James Ussher. Circumstances (mainly the English Civil War) interposed, and the project was never completed. A few of Durie's other works are freely available, as a search of the Protestant Reformed Digital Library will show. My attention was drawn to the following work through reading the latest book from Dr George Ella, which is reviewed in this issue. Durie's desire was to see the Covenant of Grace taught as the central and unifying theme in education. In this aim he had the support of leading Protestants in this country and on the Continent. It was an aim that remained, and remains, unrealised: Enlightenment principles have instead infected education throughout the Western world, and beyond. Durie was not impressed with Systematical Theology, which, he said, was the dissecting of the bird into feathers, beak, sinews and bones rather than a contemplation of the whole Bird of Paradise, which would reveal its full beauty and wonder. For Durie, the Covenant of Grace is the unifying theme of Scripture, and the central matter for study by all students. If our Theological Colleges and Seminaries put the Covenant (rightly understood) in its proper place, how much better would their standard of teaching be, and how much better prepared would men be for the ministry of the gospel in the church of Jesus Christ. Ed.

BY the body of practical divinity is meant a full and orderly collection of all divine truths relating to the practice of piety, to be digested into a system or some other kind of book. The scope then of this book should be to hold forth the whole doctrine of the life of godliness in an exact description of all the precognitions [presuppositions], principles and parts thereof, with a resolution of the material doubts which may be incident thereunto. This doctrine may be delivered two ways:

One way positively, by holding forth the undoubted truths as they are demonstrable from their proper grounds;

Another way doubtfully, by resolving all the cases of conscience which are raised thereupon.

The positive doctrine will be complete if

it deliver three things:

First, the precognitions which are to be presupposed that it may be acknowledged that there is a life of godliness;

Secondly, the principles which are to be received and believed that the life of godliness may have a being and be entertained in the soul;

Thirdly, the parts which are to be wrought out in the whole man that the life of godliness may be powerfully effectual in all his faculties and ways.

Of the Precognitions

The precognitions are certain truths which presuppose a man only to be rational and are to be made out unto him as such. Therefore they must not be deduced and offered unto him as Scriptural oracles, but as conclusions

evinced [derived] from the grounds of sound reason, and may be referred to six heads:

1. That there is a Supreme Power over all things visible and invisible, which amongst all men is called God.

2. That this Supreme Power is to be feared, worshipped, and glorified by man.

3. That this Supreme Power is a rewarder of those that seek after him with fear, to worship and glorify him.

4. That the writings of the prophets, evangelists and apostles in the Old and New Testament are the Word of God.

5. That these writings were given to teach men the true way to seek after God by fearing, worshipping and glorifying him.

6. That there shall be a time wherein God will judge men according to the works wherein they have or have not feared, worshipped and glorified him.

Of the Principles

The principles are certain truths which presuppose a man to believe that the Scriptures are God's Word, and upon this supposal this fundamental position is to be made out, which is the root of all the principles of godliness, that is, that in the Scriptures God does hold forth a Covenant to be entertained between himself and men, which being believed, two things are afterward to be delivered from the Scriptures:

I. First, how the Covenant is revealed therein;

II. Secondly, how it is made and confirmed with men.

I. Concerning the revealing of the Covenant in the Scriptures, the doctrine of the canonical books (which are the only true instrument of the Covenant), as they are distinguishable from the apocryphal, is to be delivered; where two things are to be made out:

First, what the true characters of canonical Scripture are, and that the apocryphal books have them not.

Secondly, that in the canonical books, the truth and Covenant of God is held forth by divine authority infallibly, perfectly and evidently.

II. Concerning the making of the Covenant, two things are to be held forth from the Scriptures:

1. First, what the tenor of the Covenant is which God does make with men.

2. Secondly, what the motives are which oblige men in conscience to entertain it.

1. Concerning the tenor of the Covenant three things are to be opened:

(1) First, who the persons are concerned in the Covenant;

(2) Secondly, what the form of the contract and the terms of the agreement are between these persons;

(3) Thirdly, what the performance and accomplishment is of that which is contracted and agreed upon.

(1) The persons concerned in the Covenant are God, mankind and Jesus Christ.

God is considered here as he is the author of the Covenant and, as such, only revealed and to be known by us.

Mankind is considered as he is bound to depend upon God by a Covenant.

Jesus Christ is considered as he is the alone mediator between God and man by a Covenant, in respect:

Of his twofold nature, as being both God and Man in one person and consequently a true medium and centre of all God and man's properties.

Of his threefold offices, as being the great Prophet, the High Priest and the only King

of all saints in heaven and in earth.

Of his twofold state of life: the first of humiliation on earth; the second of exaltation in heaven and the works of his mediation between God and man in both estates.

(2) The form of the contract and the terms of the agreement are to be opened in showing two things:

1. That the manner of God's contracting is with none directly and properly, but with his only begotten Son, and with mankind only in, by and through him.

2. That the things promised by God and the terms upon which they are promised are distinguishable:

First, as the promises are made to Christ;

Secondly, as they are made to the believers in him; Lastly, as they are made to the professors of his name.

(3) The performance and accomplishment of that which is promised and agreed upon to be done on all sides is to be opened in two things:

1. How Christ by his obedience and sufferings, having performed all that he did undertake towards God for mankind, did by his death make over all the promises of the Covenant by way of testament unto such as believe and profess in his name, that from him by faith they might become heirs directly and properly.

2. How the Father, by his power and glory, made good unto Christ all his promises, by raising him from the dead, by setting him at his right hand and by giving him all power in heaven and earth to administer his own testament by sending forth the Holy Ghost. For through, in, and by the preaching of the Gospel, and in this administration of the testament of Christ by the Spirit in the Gospel, there is to be opened:

1. A general call given, and an offer of grace made by Christ on God's part,

unto all that hear the gospel;

2. A particular application of grace dispensed according to

- God's own will, whereby the terms of the Covenant are made good:
- To all believers, by their effectual calling and conversion unto God, and by their constant perseverance in grace unto the end;
- To all professors, by their gathering of themselves together into one body and by their mutual edification and growth through the unity of the Spirit and the communion of holy duties.

2. The tenor of the Covenant being thus opened, the motives which are powerful to oblige men's consciences to entertain the offer and keep the tenor thereof, are to be delivered; and may be reduced to three heads:

(1) To the happiness which in this life befalls to those who are in Covenant with God. See Ps. 25:10.

(2) To the obligation which lies upon the consciences of men to obey God's Commandments and his calls.

(3) To the condition wherein men shall be at the Day of Judgement.

When these heads are handled which concern the making of the Covenant, then the truth concerning the confirmation of the Covenant is to be opened, to which head does belong the doctrine of the signs annexed unto the administration thereof amongst the professors; where two things are chiefly to be insisted upon:

I. How they are instituted and appointed by God to be outward means to assure us of his meaning and to seal up the reality of his working and effecting the tenor of the Covenant in the inward man.

II. How they are to be used by us, that we may be confirmed in grace thereby and receive the effect of that for which God has appointed them.

Hitherto the doctrines have been mentioned which relate unto the principle of the life of godliness, which is the Covenant of Grace. Now follow the heads of doctrine which contain the parts of this life, which are two:

I. The one containing the substantial; the other

II. The circumstantial life of godliness.

I. The substantial life is the power and practice of all the truth whereby God is enjoyed in the Covenant. The doctrine thereof may contain two parts:

1. The first should hold forth the material parts of the life of godliness distinctly.

2. The second, the formal union of these parts in the whole man conjointly.

1. The material parts of the substantial life of godliness make up the inward and the outward man of God.

(1) The inward man of God is the new creature, whereof the doctrine to be delivered should contain these heads:

i. What the regenerate state of the soul is, and how it is wrought by the Spirit of God.

ii. How it is discerned and differenced from the unregenerate state of the soul.

iii. What the acts and motions of the spiritual life are wherein the regenerate soul has secret fellowship with God.

iv. What the deceits are of natural imaginations, of superstitious practices, and of Satanical delusions mixing himself therewith, whereby

he does transform himself into an angel of light and whereby the soul is bewitched and possessed with an unclean spirit, instead of being renewed by the Holy Ghost.

(2) The outward man of God is the state of life wherein all our ways are through the inward principle made conformable unto the heavenly calling. Here the doctrines are to be delivered:

i. Of self-denial, in respect of ungodliness and worldly lusts which, cleaving to our nature, are fomented from without in our flesh.

ii. Of self-resignation, or of offering up our ways to walk after the Spirit; by:

- The life of sobriety in respect of ourselves;
- The life of righteousness in respect of our neighbours.
- The life of religiousness in respect of God.

2. The formal union of these parts stands in the life of universal obedience, whereby the whole man in all his acts is inwardly and outwardly subordinate unto the will of God according to the tenor of his Law; where the doctrine of the Ten Commandments should be delivered in three things.

(1) In the rules of interpreting the commandments;

(2) In the abstract of duties, showing how all virtues commanded and vices forbidden are to be referred to the Ten Words of the Law given upon Mount Sinai;

(3) In the spiritual watch to be kept over one's self and over others, where the means and helps to duties and the signs and causes of sins are to be laid open.

II. The circumstantial life of godliness is the state of the life wherein we walk circumspectly before God in respect of our several relations and callings, where the duties relating to the circumstances of our 1. Natural, and of our 2. Spiritual states and callings severally, and to both jointly, are to be opened.

1. Our natural states and callings are differences by (1) the properties of sexes, (2) by the several kinds of human societies and the relations arising between the members thereof.

(1) The sexes being male and female. The works proper to each of them are to be described, and the limits of their power and authority in their employments set forth, from the pre-eminency of the properties which are in the one above the other.

(2) The natural societies of men arise either from the unity of blood or of outward interests.

i. From the unity of blood there is:

ii. From the unity of outward interests there is:

- The society of man and wife to propagate mankind;
- The society of parents and children;
- The society of brethren and sisters, of kindred and allies.
- The society of master and servant; The society of magistrate and subject;
- The society of proprietor and tenant.

2. The spiritual societies arise in the Church from the several conditions and joint relations:

(1) Of members to each other, and to their officers.

(2) Of officers to each other, and to their members.

Of all these states and relations the duties should be laid open as they are prescribed in the Word distinctly.

Then the state and calling which has a respect to all sorts of societies jointly (as being the seed-plot and seminary of all the virtues to be exercised therein) is the state of schools; where ought to be delivered:

1. What kinds of schools ought to be constituted suitable to the principles and life of Christianity;

2. To whom the care of erecting and reforming of schools does belong, and what necessity there is of this work;

3. What the peculiar duties are of school masters and mistresses, and of scholars of both sexes.

Hitherto the first and positive part of the body of practical divinity has been delineated. The other part, which should contain the cases of conscience, may be divided into two parts; whereof the first should be a general direction how all cases ought to be resolved; the second should be a special collection of the most considerable cases, which ought to be resolved distinctly by themselves. In the general direction, two things should be taught:

1. How all believers should endeavour to resolve their own doubts according to the analogy of faith, hope and charity, by the general principles of the Covenant and the fundamental rules of duties pertaining to godliness.

2. How teachers or experienced Christians should endeavour to help the weak and doubting professors to resolve their cases, by reflecting upon the nature of the subject whereunto the doubt does belong and by considering the capacity of the person who makes the scruple and the occasion upon which it is raised.

In the special collection of particular cases, the chief thing advisable is concerning the ordering of them, that they should be ranked in the method whereby they relate unto the parts of the positive doctrine and as they may from thence arise in the mind of a weak Christian, so that whether the cases

be collected and put into one distinct part of the body by themselves or divided severally and dispersed into the whole body under the heads of the matter whereunto they belong, the method may still be the same: to find them out upon all occasions when a resolution is to be sought after. *The End.* ¶

FORMER DAYS

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

250 years ago: September & October 1770

EATON'S 'Honeycomb' provides the subject for the opening piece in the **September** issue. Here, the passage takes the formal cause of our justification, the active and passive righteousness of Christ in his humanity. That is, the perfect holiness and righteousness of the Man Christ Jesus. It 'giveth unto us not only the name, but also the true being of righteous men in the sight of God: and that it is this obedience of Christ alone, that is the only form that makes us perfectly righteous in the sight of God.' There follow many quotations from Scripture to show that this is the plain teaching of God's word. Eaton teaches that the elect are the subjects of justification when they are effectually called, so that they are in darkness, and live in sin, until effectually called. The effect of justification is to cause the justified sinner to be perfect as Christ is perfect. There will be more of this to follow.

The Biography is of Thomas Jacomb (1622–87), who preached in London with great grace and effect. This is all the more wonderful when one considers that he suffered with a cancerous growth in his mouth. The cancer spread, and he died, but not

before giving clear evidence of the way in which he was himself taken up with the very grace he preached.

The Dialogue between Christian and Truth considers Song of Solomon 3:6. Indwelling sin is one of the matters discussed. Casuistical Divinity continues the Dialogue between a Believer and an Inquirer, and deals with the latter as he has come to see that he is a lost, hell-deserving sinner. He is urged to cast himself on God's word, that, is, the gracious promise of mercy in Jesus Christ. The Miscellaneous section begins with the continuation of Evangelical Excitements to Practical Holiness, and is followed by remarks on Law and Gospel, in the matter of faith, repentance and good works. A prayerful piece expresses the believer's state when feeling our absence from God, and Discourse IV on Divine Meditation continues from an earlier issue. Carnal mirth is shown to be folly (Ecclesiastes 2:2), and Divine Allegories speaks of Jesus Christ as the husbandman who digs tends his vineyard. Poems conclude the month.

In **October**, Eaton's Honeycomb is continued. How the elect are justified and made perfectly holy in God's sight, it is thus,

That God by the power of his imputation, conveying his Son's righteousness, to be in us, and upon us, doth in his own sight so cloath us, body and foul, both within and without, with the wedding-garment of his Son's perfect righteousness, that we have our sins hereby not only utterly abolished out of God's sight; but also are evangelically and freely formed; that is, are in truth arid in very deed made, although not inherently and actively (as the Papists would have it) yet objectively and passively, perfectly holy and righteous in the sight of God freely.

This truth is demonstrated from Scripture. It needs to be preached more widely and earnestly today than it usually is.

The Biography provides an account of the ministerial character and life of Thomas Manton. The Banner of Truth Trust is just about to publish a reprint of the 22-volume set of Manton's Works. 'As the matter of his sermons was designed for the good of souls, so his way of expression was proper to that end. Words are the vehicle of the heavenly light.' Like Jacomb, whose Life was described last month, Manton was a moderate who worked to unite Protestants, but who saw divisions deepen and shatter the unity.

Gospel Mysteries examines the parable of the Pearl of Great Price, Matthew 13:45–46, and Casuistical Divinity continues the Dialogue between Believer and Inquirer. Reasons why a person might consider themselves to be beyond hope of salvation are opened and dealt with. A writer submits a Serious Admonition to parents regarding the care and education of their children, that they be taught truth and not error. The situation has not improved since then.

The exact fulfilment of Scripture in God's works of providence provides

encouragement for all believers, showing that the Lord has set his seal to his word. The piece that follows 'Former Days' (p.155), and Poetry, conclude the issue.

200 years ago: September & October 1820

The **September** issue opens with a comparing and contrasting of Free Grace with Free Will. The criticisms of the Arminian view are clear, and show the adverse consequences of holding to the notion of free will in fallen creatures. Myra reflects on The Apprehension of Christianity, from Philippians 3:12. He speaks to the love of God. A Cornish reader answers criticism made of his earlier piece on Regeneration.

The privilege and blessing of prayer is the theme of a short piece, and is followed by the conclusion of a piece on the dispersion of the Jews. The writer shows that what is promised in Deuteronomy 30:1–6 had not been fulfilled in his day, for he denies that the return from Babylon adequately describes the promise. We would maintain that the prophecy remains unfulfilled, in that the modern-State of Israel does not display that national repentance also prophesied by Moses.

Myra speaks to the two sorts of persecutor, the world and the 'inherent professor'. He accuses Amicus (a correspondent and contributor) of being among the latter. An objection to something printed in the previous issue, by way of comment on a reply made by the Bishop of Llandaff to a writing from Thomas Paine, gives the Editors an opportunity to answer. In controversies, there is a great difference between reasoning with a serious enquirer or opponent who seeks the truth even if himself in error, and reasoning with an infidel who denies the very truth for which we contend. Paine denied the divine original of Holy Scripture. To seek to reason with him on that ground is pointless,

they argue. Had Paine accepted the divine authority of God's word, there would have been some common ground.

A correspondent bewails the failure of most adherents to high Calvinism to separate themselves from ministries that do not uphold the doctrines of grace. Another correspondent expresses his love and admiration for Dr Robert Hawker, and for the stand he took for the truth. Yet another correspondent declares his support for Myra in his answers to Amicus, showing that Myra has Scripture on his side. This is in particular regard to the piece, mentioned some time ago, on Genesis 17:1, 'Walk before me, and be thou perfect.' Myra had sought to show that the command is obeyed by all who are in Christ Jesus as they are viewed in him.

The article on the decrees of God is continued, and the writer argues that they cannot be conditional. God made no decree based on something in the creature. At one point the question is asked, 'Is predestination an act of mercy or justice?—...neither... but of mere sovereignty'.

Another contributor weighs the word 'duty' and finds it to be the best word to describe the obedience of the child of God, on Scriptural grounds. Bunches of Violets meditates on several short themes, and poems conclude the month.

The **October** issue begins with thoughts on the wrath of man, from Psalm 76:10. The parable of the talents provides fruitful material for a discussion of the differences between the natural man and the regenerate.

After some brief correspondence, including a letter quoting the definition of 'Antinomian' as applied to one who denies he is under the Moral Law as a rule of life, the piece on the Decrees of God is continued. The issue at hand is double predestination, or election and reprobation. The writer

denies that the elect were chosen out of the mass of fallen mankind, and he denies that God is the author of sin regarding the reprobate. Christ is not the cause but the effect of the decree of election.

Myra begins a detailed reply to the objections of Amicus regarding Myra's answer to his interpretation of Genesis 17:1. Dr Hawker is quoted, from one of his tracts, on what the election has obtained, Romans 11:7—'more than all the world; yea, more than all heaven, and all the things of heaven—more than eternity itself.'

A correspondent pens a tribute to the late Samuel Rowles, of Colnbrook, and a letter of the late Mr Rowles is published. The Editor adds his own tribute. Tomlinson's attempt to rescue Scripture from ridicule is continued, and many common objections to the statements made by believers are shown to be entirely biblical.

Amicus begins to defend himself from the charges brought by Myra, particularly in the latter's letter to the Editor, published in the previous month.

100 years ago: September & October 1920

The **September** issue begins with a frank statement concerning the financial situation of *The Gospel Magazine*, where expenditure had greatly exceeded income in 1919. Subscribers were asked to donate to the cost of production. Although the *Magazine* is still sold below cost (as it was a century ago) the Trustees are deeply thankful to the Lord that the income from investments keeps pace with our needs.

The tercentenary of the Pilgrim Fathers provides the Editor with his theme, as he considers the spiritual pilgrimage of all believers, from Hebrews 11:13.

Thoughts on the goodness of God, in connection with a recent visit to Tunbridge

Wells, may appear to be an odd choice. However, the writer makes associations that are worthy of our consideration. A sermon on A door of Hope, from Hosea 2:15, and Philip's hearty obedience, encourage believer and seeker alike. God as anticipative ('not the "for the moment" provider, but, far, far beyond the vista of mortal sight and understanding, he provides continually, eternally') is an encouraging consideration of the way in which all our ways were ordained of old.

The turning of things to the contrary is the subject of a short piece on Esther 9:1, and Peter's rehearsing many things, Acts 11:4, leads the writer to show that our faith is confirmed by the frequent repetition of the same lessons in Scripture.

The subject of effectual calling, from Article XVII, is dealt with. This follows the exposition of the earlier part of the Article in the previous month. The necessity of effectual calling, and its divinely sovereign origin, are shown. The 'after' of 1 Peter 5:10 is taken as wonderful proof that suffering is only temporary, else there could be no 'after'!

The Pilgrim Fathers are remembered in the year of their third centenary. Most of the material is taken from Marsden's *History of the Early Puritans*. A poem, celebrating their desire to worship the Lord free from constraints, provides a fitting summary.

Proverbs 19:19 teaches that man is prone to repeating his errors, and must be helped time and time again. We grow weary in well doing, but our Lord and Saviour never grows weary.

The escape of the Countess of Huntingdon from an attempted assassination is recalled. Various notices conclude the issue.

The **October** issue begins with an apologetic re-issuing of the appeal for funds. A rise in printing costs meant that an even greater shortfall was now forecast.

Human and divine responsibility are considered, in answer to a letter received from a reader. The age-old question of the extent of human responsibility in individual salvation is set against the divine responsibility claimed by Jesus Christ in John 10:16. 'Although... there is a responsibility attaching to fallen men, we are nowhere taught that man is responsible for his own salvation.' The truth is well summed up by Mr Houghton, when he quotes the following:

The late esteemed Editor of this *Magazine* (Mr. Ormiston) has written a beautiful tract on the last words of a workhouse saint. That saint said to Mr. Ormiston, 'Oh, sir! I do love him so, I do! He has paid all my debts—He has not left me a farthing to pay. And JESUS loves me. He will take me to his FATHER'S feet, and will say, "FATHER, HERE HE IS! I HAVEN'T LOST HIM!" Oh! sir, he is all my hope—all my hope!' Mr. Ormiston commenting on these touching words says, 'What a realization of the precious truth that Christ is responsible to the Father for the salvation of those he has given him! ... Rarely, indeed, are professing Christians of our day thus grounded in the fundamental truth of Christ's Covenant responsibility; for alas, few pulpits in our land now proclaim the essential verity of the Suretyship of Jesus, whilst too many perplex God's little ones with unscriptural theories about the responsibility of man.'

The attitude of Higher Criticism to the historicity of the early books of the Bible is exposed for the folly it is. Taking the destruction of the cities of the plain, Genesis 19:24f, the writer shows that three New Testament writers accepted the historical nature of the

event. He then shows why the event took place, and under five headings shows that the denial of God's word is the shutting up of hope in this world.

The testimony of the famous monument to Ruth Pierce, in the market place at Devizes, provides a fitting afterword to the previous piece on the reality of divine judgment.

1 Kings 8:12–13 is used to show the trustworthiness of God's word. This is followed by a comforting sermon on the Lord's presence, from Isaiah 43:2. The question posed in Psalm 89:6, concerning the one to whom the Lord may be compared, is answered from Scripture—there is none to whom our God may be compared!

The translation of Isaiah 41:13 in an American version, which reads, 'For I the Lord Jehovah will hold thy right hand and keep saying unto thee, Fear not, I will help thee', leads the writer to dwell on the way in

which the Lord *keeps* saying. We have been unable to identify the particular translation.

Samson's not telling his mother or father, Judges 14, is taken to show that the true child of God does all in and to the Lord. The subject of justification is treated once again. The Lord restoring what he had not removed, from Psalm 69:4 leads a writer to show how blessed we are in Christ. It was not he who brought us to sin, but it is he who has delivered us. The same correspondent begs to correct an error in a previous piece, where he came to see that he had misinterpreted a sentence in Scripture.

The issue winds up with various reports and short pieces, including a report, taken from the *English Churchman*, of the recent Lambeth Conference. The onward march of incipient Romanism in the Established Church is noted and criticised. The blame is laid at the door of careless (complicit?) bishops.

TO BE CONTINUED

THE UNFAITHFUL OFFICER

From *THE GOSPEL MAGAZINE*, October 1770

AN officer going to search the ale-houses sent word to one of them that he was coming upon that duty, being unwilling to take his friends, and so gave them time to conceal their guests.

1. Just so do the lovers of sin. It is a rare thing that ever such an one searches his own heart; but if he does, he goes without a light, being unwilling to see his friends. He does not search his heart, nor examine his life with design and desire to reform and amend.

2. A sincere soul not only searches his

own heart thoroughly, but desires also that God himself would search it, Ps. 26:24. 'Search me, O God, and try my heart and my reins. See if there is any evil way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting' Ps. 119:23–24.

3. It is better to have the wound searched to the bottom though it costs some pain and trouble, than to have it mortify, and not be discovered till it is too late to save life.

4. Unwillingness to have the heart searched is a certain sign that the heart is naught, and is not upright with God. ¶

THE ENDURING POWER OF THE GOSPEL

A sermon on Matthew 24:14

by EDWARD MALCOLM (Reading)

WE have here a statement of the Lord Jesus Christ's concerning the enduring power and place of the gospel. The disciples showed the Lord Jesus the temple which Herod was then building to enlarge and beautify the second temple, built by those who returned from Babylon, and he told them that this grand edifice would be destroyed, v. 2. The temple was destroyed in AD 70, and a later attempt at reconstruction, under Julian the Apostate, ended with the Galilee earthquake of AD 363. Whether one takes either or both of these events as being the fulfilment of our Lord's words, the fact remains that the temple was destroyed, and remains so today.

Two questions are asked by the disciples: 'Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?' The answer to the first question is given in vv. 4–14. The answer to the second is given from v. 15. For the former, we are warned that false Christs will arise, deceiving many, as Mohammed and the popes; wars and rumours of wars will trouble the unbelievers; famines, diseases, and earthquakes will shake the world; persecution will be rampant; betrayal and deception will sift the church, and love will grow cold. We need to ask, were all these things fulfilled by AD 70, or 363, or do they continue to this day? Since the evidence of our ears and eyes, and the testimony of history, shows them to be ongoing, we have to conclude that the gospel must continue to be preached.

Certain things must come to pass before the end. They are listed, as we have seen. We see the contrast here between the many and the few—the all and the one. Many shall be offended, implying that few will not be. Many false prophets shall arise and deceive many, implying that few true prophets shall arise, with few who believe them. Many will backslide, implying that few will remain faithful. Many sins shall abound, and the love of many shall grow cold, implying little restraint, and few who love. The blessing of being among the few is stated, v. 13, that he that endures to the end shall be saved.

If we ask, by what method and standard shall we judge these things, note v. 14, concerning the gospel of the kingdom. It will continue to be preached for a witness to all, and only then shall the end come. Note this with care: the end does not come about by wars, famine, pestilence or any natural disaster; it does not come through climate change; it does not come through persecution. The end cannot come until the preaching of the gospel has run its course. From this we learn—

1. That the gospel is with this world until Christ returns

First, because the human condition remains unchanged. Medicine may provide new remedies for old illnesses, as advances in science and knowledge reveal more about those diseases, and about the way in which they can be

treated. Consequently, old remedies are rejected as being primitive, superstitious, and pointless. But only the gospel answers the age-old disease of sin. The gospel is effective, and requires—indeed, demands—no change to itself to remain so. Modernist scholars and theologians, and those who follow them, may believe that the gospel needs to be recast from time to time to take account of the changes in society. Tastes and fashions may indeed change, but as the problem does not change, so the remedy shall not.

Secondly, this means human behaviour will not change. Foolish people criticise the past, as if they would have done better in the same circumstances. They presume that simple people, blinded by religion, said and did things in ignorance, malice and racial prejudice. But all are rebels from God, and each generation will proudly condemn the sins of former generations in an attempt to salve its own conscience. It will fail.

Thirdly, this also means God has not changed his mind concerning us. He revealed the gospel in order that sinners might hear and know the way of life through the mercies of God in Christ. The fact that the same gospel stands for all time means the saving, merciful purposes of God stand for all time also. Mankind shall never cease to be the object of saving grace, and as long as there are elect souls to be awakened and brought to faith and repentance, the gospel will continue. Our heavenly Father does not change.

Therefore, the only proper response to gospel preaching is that which the apostles met—conviction of sin, faith in Christ Jesus, sorrow and repentance for rebellion, and thankfulness for the Lord's mercies. And so we see that the need to preach the gospel has not changed. The great commission requires it to be preached among all nations, and that need is as great today as it ever was.

2. That the gospel provides the constant and the reference point for all world affairs

If we would understand human behaviour at its best and its worst, we must refer to the gospel. The Scripture alone portrays human behaviour in its true state. Science, philosophy, psychology, sociology, politics and economics all fail here. The only true explanation is this, that all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.

World affairs can be very troubling. Nations do rise against nations. Wars and rumours of wars abound. Famine, pestilence and earthquakes afflict one part of the world or another constantly. Politicians and pan-governmental bodies attempt to resolve these matters, and to produce and follow policies and plans that will prevent a repetition of such events in the future. King Canute was wiser than all these. He knew the extent of his power, and taught his fawning advisors a valuable lesson when the sea he commanded to go back did not. If only the men and women of power and influence in our day would learn the same lesson. There is a God in heaven, whose will cannot be changed. If they would understand the world, and deal with its many problems, let them begin with this, that 'The gospel of this kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations: and then shall the end come.'

For those who endure, this is a comfort, for it demonstrates to us the truth of God's word, and the love of the Lord in warning us beforehand. We are not put off by such things. We may suffer in famine, pestilence, earthquake and war, but we know that such things are not the end. A day has been set, in the which the elements shall melt with a fervent heat. Until then, the gospel of the kingdom endures: and while it endures, the world also endures.

3. The gospel is given that we might recognise false prophets, and guard ourselves

False prophets have always existed, almost from the beginning. Indeed, in a key respect, the serpent in Eden was a false prophet. 'Yea, hath God said?' Listen to me, he said, and not to the Lord. I will show you a better way. Pharaoh's wise men sought to divert him from humbling himself before the Lord by replicating the miracles, thereby presenting themselves as equal rivals to Moses. Time and again in the Old Testament we meet those who pretended to speak in the name of the Lord, but who only said what men wanted to hear. They received their earthly reward, in the form of praise and honour. Their eternal reward will be a very different matter indeed.

We are warned about wolves in sheep's clothing, and Scripture gives us many examples of such beasts. All over the world different cultures and religions languish under false prophets. They are all blind leaders of the blind. Those about whom our Lord Jesus speaks here are the worst: they claim to know the Lord and his gospel, and yet their doctrine is that of devils. They pretend to be helping, when in fact they are confirming sinners in their errors and sins. They are like

a doctor who prescribes cures that cannot cure, and insists that his patients are in the best of hands.

Who could bear to live in a world where false prophets exist, where great care must be taken to judge the trustworthiness of ministers and preachers? We dare, because our Lord Jesus warned us beforehand of such things. More, he has given to us the authentic gospel, and has preserved it in his word. If we are in doubt, turn to that word, and compare the true gospel with what we are hearing. The gospel endures, and so does its power. It is the power of God unto salvation, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile. It may be foolishness to many, but it is the glorious sound, the glad tidings, that rejoice the hearts of all Christ's people.

False prophets are not the problem, and they have no power to thwart the will of our Father in heaven. Wars and events cannot divert that will. The hatred of sinners may oppose and hurt us, but cannot separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. All the things of which our Lord speaks in these verses shall come to pass. Be not unduly troubled by them: they have been foretold. 'Lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh.' ¶

BOOK REVIEWS

Pastoral Gleanings, A Record of the Ministry of William Fay

Published by John Crowter, 'Haystacks,' Green Lane, Potter Heigham, Norfolk, NR29 5LP 308pp hdbk £16.95 + £3.10 p&p

John Crowter undertakes a precious service to the church of God by producing hand-produced copies of exceedingly rare volumes, and also in the production of other manuscripts as case-bound books. Such is this production. It is a memorial of a minister of a previous generation.

William Fay was the minister of Zoar Strict Baptist Church, Norwich from 1936 to 1965. A short biography was published by his widow in 1969, comprising mainly of his own

autobiographical account. Mr Crowter tells us that he was given file of typescripts by Mr Fay's daughter, Ruth Fay, which comprised, in the main, of notes of sermons preached by Mr Fay and taken down by his daughter, subsequently typed out and hand-bound together by her. She died 1st January, 2004. When she handed the typescript to him she told him that she wanted him to have the manuscript because, 'I believe you will value it.' In addition to the sermon notes, some of which are quite brief, there are letters, addresses at the Lord's Table, etc. Mr Crowter tells us that he had long held the ambition that the contents of the file should be published, and finally undertook the production of the book by himself, this book being the result.

In recommending this book, I think the best thing to do is to let Mr Fay speak for himself. The following meditation (notes of a sermon) on Matthew 11:28, 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest', is taken from page 11:

This is a gospel invitation, and a very attractive one to some people. We are living in a world of unrest. 'Labour' and 'heavy-laden' are two distinct experiences. They show us at once that this is not a universal invitation, but for particular characters. The original Greek word for 'labour' is 'weary'. There are many people who do not know what it is to be weary through labour. But those who are continually seeking to know their state before God are labouring, and will go on labouring until God gives them rest. Another labour is to make your calling and election sure. ... Heavy-laden is to carry a burden. There are burdens which are light, but to be heavy-laden is to bear the burden of guilt on the conscience. This will press you down. Jesus is the burden bearer, takes our guilt and sins, but this has to be known and experienced before we get rest. 'Come unto me,' says Jesus, and when he says this it takes in not only soul matters and trials, but providential burdens as well. See Psalm 37. These will be met, and there will be rest in the conscience in the atonement, in adoption as children, in his love and power and mercy. There is and can be no rest in the arm of flesh.

These meditations and notes of sermons are precious and, being quite short, could be useful as daily readings. The letters bring us to the heart of this man who pastored his flock as a faithful shepherd.

Being privately published and printed, these productions by Mr Crowter are not available from bookshops, and we do not consider them to be overpriced.

JEN

The Covenant of Grace and the People of God

George M. Ella

Go Publications, 2020 456pp hdbk £24.99 + p&p ISBN 978-1-908475-15-2

I heard about this book from the author, and obtained a copy from bookdepository.com. The price quoted above is from the Christian Bookshop, Ossett, and I understand the postal charge to be £3. Other internet retailers sell the book, at varying prices, including go-newfocus.co.uk.

The publication of this work is timely, given the growing spread of New Covenant Theology errors which are creeping—and indeed flooding—into seminaries and congregations.

Not only is this publication timely, it is also necessary. Over the course of seventeen chapters and three appendices the author sets out a full theology of the Covenant of Grace. Here is a complete answer to the error of New Covenant Theology. In the course of the chapters

Dr Ella shows that all the claims of NCT have been met and answered at the Reformation or just after. He further shows that the muddled thinking that underlies NCT is a mark of the dumbed-down education and theology of our day. The weakness of NCT is demonstrated by a review of the ‘translation’ and ‘exegesis’ of certain key passages as carried out by its leading proponents. Ella shows that they treat Scripture with the same deference that Jeremiah’s scroll was shown by the king in the winter house. For this reason he spends some time considering the major contribution of John Durie. Few today have ever heard of Durie, yet in his day he was fêted by Protestants in Britain and on the Continent. Had Durie’s vision been realised, education across Protestant Europe would have majored on the Covenant of Grace—and not the version taught after the Presbyterian ascendancy, but the old version of the first generation of Protestant Reformers.

Another figure who receives careful attention is Dr John Gill, often dismissed as a Hyper-Calvinist today but only by those who have failed to understand his theology. Henry Bullinger is another Reformer whose major contribution to theology is assessed. Any member of the Church of England ought to know Bullinger. With Martin Bucer, these two men exerted more influence on the doctrine and practice of the Established Church than anyone else, humanly speaking—and yet they are hardly known today. Read Bucer on *Concerning the true care of souls* and any well-taught Prayer Book Anglican will recognise his Church being described, albeit by a Strasbourg setting!

The book contains an amount of personal material—personal, that is, to the author and to his critics, of whom there are many. He has been in correspondence with the leading figures of NCT for many years, and has sought to interact with them. Here he seeks to set the record straight concerning what he actually believes versus what some claim he believes. This is also true for a number of Banner of Truth men, some whom are named. Dr Ella gives praise where praise is due, a trait that appears to have often been absent in the reverse among those with whom he has interacted.

Probably the most controversial aspect of this book will be the author’s views on the modern State of Israel, and on the future expectations for the Jewish people. Again, he shows that he is in good company on this point, and those who disagree with him will have to acknowledge that these are not fringe views when placed in the overall context of the history of Reformation biblical interpretation.

One benefit of reading this book is to catch a glimpse of the vast hall that is historical theology, compared with the small corner many of us occupy, content not to have to stray from our cosy seat, nor confront concepts that challenge an often shallow approach to learning.

It is a pity that the book was not better proof-read. There are a number of errors which ought to have been corrected, and in places the syntax is difficult owing to the lack of punctuation within long sentences. There is a Scripture index and a subject index, both of which are helpful. The book includes a bibliography, and the reader will see something of the breadth and extent of the author’s study, and be helped in following up points of interest arising from the contents of the book.

I highly recommend this book, and give thanks to our heavenly Father for the grace given to its author to address knotty and thorny issues with a combination of deep scholarship and childlike confidence in the word of God as the complete and sufficient testament to redemption in Christ.

MINISTRY

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

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

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

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

WOLVERHAMPTON *St Silas Church of England (Continuing)*, 49 Long St, WV1 1HU. Lord's Day, MP 11 am EP 6.30 pm Holy Communion as notified. AV and BCP, *Christian* and *Anglican Hymns* used. Contact Paul Hooper (m) 07477 704921.

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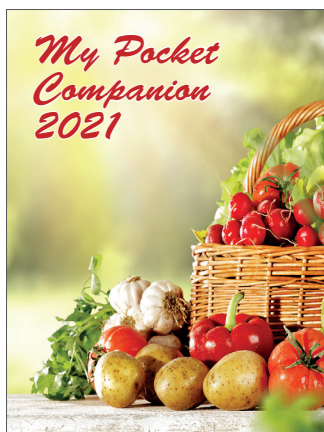
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