

NOVEMBER–DECEMBER 2020

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The Gospel Magazine

Rooted and Grounded • 'Yea, he is altogether lovely' • 'The best pound I ever spent'

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1766–2020

*Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.
Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.
Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

These texts, which have been associated for so many years with *The Gospel Magazine*, give some indication of what this bi-monthly stands for. We seek to present the Lord Jesus as the only Saviour for a lost world: to edify the people of God; and to promote unity among believers, ‘the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace’.

The Gospel Magazine is believed to be the oldest religious periodical still being published. One distinguished former editor was the Rev. Augustus Toplady, whose famous hymn, ‘Rock of Ages cleft for me, Let me hide myself in Thee’, was first published in these pages.

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

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

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EDITORIAL

THE end of another year is upon us. The dawn of a new year approaches. How shall we measure the year that has past? What are our hopes for the year to come?

The year that is coming to a close has not been the easiest or happiest. Society has been greatly affected at every level by Covid-19. Churches were closed for many weeks, and restrictions remain in several places. Who knows what they will be in the coming year.

The scientists do not know. If the present health crisis has taught us anything, it is that science is not an exact science. Men and women may speculate about all manner of things, and propose all sorts of scenarios and solutions, but their opinions may very well prove to be false. This is not because they have set out to deceive, nor because they are incompetent. It is because their thinking is fatally flawed in one major respect: they have not the knowledge of God. It is not just that they do not have that saving knowledge of God, but that they discount the very existence of their Creator and Judge. Professor Stephen Hawking said, 'There is no God. No

one directs the universe.' Of course, it is far from true to say that no scientist believes in God, just that no scientist who does believe in God is ever given a fair opportunity to say so—until retired. One consequence of the confusion and increasing animosity over the Covid restrictions is, apparently, that people are losing confidence in scientists as a breed. Whereas they were once viewed as the great oracle through whom the secrets of the universe would be made known, they are now seen to be as hopelessly divided and confused as the rest of mankind. Science does not have all the answers. Nor, to be fair, did it ever claim to, but it made a fine job of allowing people to gain the impression that it did.

The politicians do not know. It is a while since any 'scientific evidence' has been advanced in favour of any of the seemingly arbitrary restrictions being placed on us. Of course, given what I have just written in the previous paragraph, that may not make much difference. However, we tend to look to our national leaders in times of crisis for a steadying hand and a reassuring tone. Neither

seem to be evident. We should remember that our Prime Minister came close to death as a consequence of catching the virus, and this may of course be colouring his approach to policy. But that assumes there is a policy, and not just a pile of second-hand envelopes on which he and various advisers scribble as the mood takes them. Our hope does not lie with politicians. 'Vain is the help of man.'

The leaders of the church do not know. Some years ago the then-archbishop of Canterbury described God as being as helpless in the face of suffering as the rest of us. He was speaking of a great disaster that had struck, and portrayed the almighty, sovereign Lord as having been as surprised as the rest of us when it happened. Since that time there has not been a marked improvement in the spirituality of the holder of that office, and we have heard next to nothing about a Christian view of the crisis—or anything else, for that matter. Instead, we have heard church leaders berate the government for its failings, some real and some perhaps not. We have heard justification for closing churches, and warnings against reopening them. The word of God has not been upheld, and Jesus Christ has not been honoured. The leaders of the church do not know.

There is one who does know. Our God knows the end from the beginning, Isaiah 46:10, so much so that he declares it, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.' These words come after a passage exposing the folly and shameful wickedness of consulting idols. The Lord says of such monstrosities, 'one shall cry unto him, yet can he not answer, nor save him out of his trouble.' How may we know that there is hope, indeed salvation, with our heavenly Father?

We know because he has told us. In the first hour of man's sin the Lord God told him of the woman's seed who should bruise the serpent's head. Hope was revealed, and man—if faithful—has lived on that hope ever since. The promise of the Christ as the seed of Abraham and the seed of David is a central theme in the Old Testament, and it is fulfilled in the New.

We know because he has given us tokens. In the sacrifices, priesthood and monarch, the Lord has given signs and pictures of the promised Saviour. He would bear our sins. He would intercede for us with the Father. He would reign in equity, protecting his people and judging them aright. The tokens, or types and shadows, take up much of the Old Testament, and are fulfilled in the New.

We know because he has given us the Lord Jesus Christ. In him, plainly and unmistakably, we are given the proof of salvation. Jesus Christ was so named because 'he shall save his people from their sins' (Matthew 1:21). Jesus Christ declared of himself, 'the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them' (Luke 9:56). The blessed Apostle Paul wrote, 'This is a true saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief' (1 Timothy 1:15). The same Apostle said of Jesus Christ that he 'was delivered for our offences, and was raised for our justification' (Romans 4:25). The Spirit seals this truth to us.

Whatever the new year holds, let us hold fast to Christ and his gospel. Here is constant, unchanging truth and comfort for all who are in Christ Jesus our Lord. May our evident faith stand as a testimony to the power and wonder of saving grace.

OF LAW AND PROMISE

A SERMON BY THE EDITOR

'Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.' Galatians 3:21-22

When people interfere in matters, whatever their motive, the mess they make can be hard to clear up. Paul had gone to Galatia, and had preached the gospel there. Later, false apostles had come and had taught that obedience to the law is necessary for Gentiles as well as Jews in order for them to be saved, Acts 15:1. The answer to this is the main argument of the Epistle, and it begins in earnest in Chapter 3. In the first chapter we have Paul's assertion that his gospel is authentic, and anything that purports to be the gospel, but that deviates from what Paul taught, cannot be trusted. In the second chapter we have his biographical sketch, showing that when he went to Jerusalem and told the apostles there what he was preaching, they accepted that he did not differ from them at all. How, then, can any come from Jerusalem, with another gospel, and claim apostolic authority to preach it? And yet some have, and so Paul answer their position for the sake of gospel truth. He deals with a number of objections. In v. 21 he deals with the fourth objection, that law and gospel are contradictory. His answer, briefly stated, is that they are not, for they serve different purposes. The law cannot justify or make righteous, and so cannot give life, v. 21: that is why the gospel is given, in which the promise of forgiveness of sins and of eternal life is made to all who believe.

We look, then, at the purpose of the law, and at the saving grace of the gospel.

1. The purpose of the law: 'the scripture hath concluded all under sin'

In speaking of 'the scripture', Paul means all that the Holy Spirit has inspired the authors of God's word to set down. He does not distinguish between law, prophets and writings, or between Old Testament and New. He declares the whole of the divine revelation to speak with one voice, on this matter at least: it concludes all under sin.

When Paul says the scripture as 'concluded all under sin' he means that it has pronounced sentence against all. Who are the all? In Romans 11:32 Paul says, 'For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.' That is, God has put both Jew and Gentile together into one condemnation, that he might have mercy on both Jew and Gentile alike.

How do we understand this word, conclude? It only appears one other time in the New Testament, in Romans 11:32, quoted above. It is also used twice to translate a Hebrew word in the Greek translation of the Old Testament. We find that it is used to mean the opposite of 'make free', in Psalm 31:8. '[Thou] hast not shut me up into the hand of the enemy: thou hast set my feet in a large room.' There, to shut up, or imprison, is contrasted with the large room, or space, into which the Psalmist has been placed. See also Psalm 78:50, 'He made a way to his anger; he spared not their soul from death, but

gave their life over to the pestilence.’ This is a poetic description of Israel’s situation in Egypt, and of the nation’s privilege during the time of the plagues. There, ‘gave... over’, means made a prey of. The Greek Old Testament makes this refer to their animals, which were not, as it were, brought into pens in preparation for slaughter. That is, there was no rounding up, gathering, or concluding of the herds (or people, depending on translation) for slaughter in the way the Egyptians were punished.

Paul’s argument, then, is that all are shut up, imprisoned, condemned under the law in Scripture: the sentence of God in his word is against all mankind, without exception, for this is the purpose of the law.

We may ask, how does it conclude or shut up all mankind? It does so in two ways: *legally*, and *evangelically*.

Legally, by stating the perfect standard all must reach if they are to be justified by God. The old covenant of works, under which Adam was to live in Eden, required perfect obedience to one law, of the forbidden fruit, if life was to continue there for him and his descendants. Perfect obedience would keep him in perfect union with God. Sin made that impossible, since the law is unable to forgive, or to make up what has fallen short. Many think they can satisfy God’s holy standard by keeping his law. Even the best of men cannot keep it perfectly, not even for one moment, and so the law stands against all mankind. All are shut up under the law, and those who earnestly seek to live by it soon find out that they cannot do so. All are condemned as sinners, ‘For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God,’ Romans 3:23.

Evangelically, awakening the conscience and heart to the truth of sin. We call this evangelical because it is part of gospel preaching, showing our need of Christ,

Romans 7:7–9, ‘What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.’ Paul had once considered himself to be a keeper of the law, perfect before God, and therefore truly righteous. But when the law said, ‘Thou shalt not covet’ he had to confess that he was not free from this sin. His outward actions may have been exemplary, but the inward sin of coveting showed him that his outward conformity was not matched by inner holiness. He was therefore forced to confess that he was a sinner, and that he could not keep the law as once he thought. By the grace of God, he was turned from his sinfulness to Christ.

It may be further objected that the concluding of all under sin is unfair, since it places everyone in the same condemnation without regard to their knowledge, situation or intentions. In answer we reply that, since it is Scripture that concludes all under sin, and Scripture is God’s word, it is he who passes sentence on his creation, which he, as Sovereign, has right to do. This much is declared in the following words. ‘Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God’ (Romans 3:19). The sin of Adam was imputed to all his progeny, Romans 5:12— ‘by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin: and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.’ The condemnation is therefore on all his progeny.

2. The saving grace of the gospel: 'that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe'

Note that this is addressed to those who know they are condemned as sinners, for Paul speaks of 'them that believe' in the end of the verse. This is why Peter preached the condemning aspect of the law to the crowd that gathered that first Pentecost. He showed them that they had killed the Lord of glory, and were therefore guilty of the most heinous sin. He preached in such terms, quoting much Scripture and showing the undeniable guilt of the people that 'they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?' (Acts 2:37). This is the true effect of preaching the law aright, that it does indeed awaken the hearer to his guilty state, and causes him to cry out for mercy.

To such comes the promise, the gospel of forgiveness of sins and eternal life, which is contained in the first word of hope, in Genesis 3:15. It is worth noting that this was not a word of hope preached to Adam, nor even to Eve, but was a word of condemnation pronounced against the serpent, the devil. In that God said, 'I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel', we see how he views the two parties concerned. On the one hand the serpent and its seed are under condemnation, becoming the constant enemies of the woman's seed, until the time appointed in which one seed will strike such a blow as to defeat the serpent. On the other hand, the woman and her seed will be oppressed by the seed of the serpent, until deliverance should come through the promised seed. From this we understand the division of mankind from then on into two sorts, the seed of the serpent and the seed of

the woman. Abel, Seth, Enoch, Lamech and Noah are of the woman's seed, but Cain and his progeny are of the serpent's seed. By the time of Babel it is impossible to discern the woman's seed from the serpent's seed. But the serpent is the devil, and the one seed is Jesus Christ, and God faithfully and graciously called whom he would to be the seed of the woman, in the hope of Jesus Christ, until the appointed time when he should make peace by the blood of the cross.

For this reason the promise was given to Abraham and his seed, in Genesis 12 onwards. When in Genesis 18 the promise was repeated after Abraham demonstrated his faith by being willing to offer Isaac as a sacrifice, it was repeated to him and to Isaac together. As to the true identity of the seed it is Christ, and all who are in Christ, as Paul declares in verse 16. This must be so, for only Christ has kept the law perfectly, and he has done so in the name of all who are in him.

The promise is by faith of Jesus Christ: that is, faith from Christ, and faith in Christ. It is faith from Christ because faith is itself a gift. None can believe the gospel without that work of grace, whereby faith is put in us. We are not rewarded for believing, as if Christ comes to all who can work up faith in themselves. Rather, when he purposes to save a person, he awakens them to their sins and puts faith in himself in them. We turn to Christ, which is why we speak also of faith in him. He is the object of faith, the one in whom we believe. Believing the gospel is not putting our trust in a system, or a set of rules, but in a person who is the Saviour of sinners. We put our trust in him when we come to see that we are sinners, for Christ came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance, Luke 5:32. This is the faith that saves, for 'to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith

is counted for righteousness' (Romans 4:5).

All to whom the gift is given are inheritors of the promise with Abraham. He was a sinner, an idolater, Joshua 24:2, who was brought to the saving knowledge of God, and to faith in Jesus Christ, in spite of his sins and not for any inherent righteousness he possessed. He was promised the land in which he walked, and the Articles of our church declare, 'They are not to be heard, which feign that the old Fathers did look only for transitory promises' (Article VII). Abraham was promised the land but was also told it would not be possessed until the fourth generation, Genesis 15:13. Either he died a disappointed man, or he knew that the promise of land was a type of the greater promise of heaven, as we see in Hebrews 4:8ff. The promise of forgiveness in Christ is inseparably tied to the promise of eternal life in the sinless new creation, heaven, which is the believer's hope. The law cannot give this, but only awaken us to our sinful state. The gospel alone sets before us the true hope, and in such a way as to bring into that hope all who are called by grace.

Application

First, this teaches us to have a right use of the law. Why do we read the Commandments in our Communion service? To arouse our consciences in the remembrance of our many sins. This is why we are taught to say, 'We do earnestly repent, and are heartily sorry for our misdoings; the remembrance of them is grievous unto us, the burden of them is intolerable.' Why? To bring us to despair? No! To cast us on Christ and his shed blood, the atonement made to redeem us from sin and death, and to reconcile the Father to us. This is why we continue, in the words of the confession, to say, 'Have mercy upon us, have mercy upon us, most merciful Father; for thy

Son our Lord Jesus Christ's sake, forgive us all that is past, and grant that we may ever hereafter serve and please thee in newness of life.' It is not that we must come afresh to have our sins forgiven, as if there is a limit either as to the time during which forgiveness lasts, or the number of sins that can be forgiven for any one prayer of confession. Rather, it is that our consciences, truly awakened to the presence and sinfulness of sin in our every thought, word and deed, turns us always to Christ. The promise of forgiveness is without limitation where true faith leads to true repentance. The earnest prayer for forgiveness is always answered. Let us search our consciences, and not try to silence them, when we come to confess our sins.

Secondly, this teaches us to observe the law as believers. We do not hope to be justified thereby, for the believer is already justified. But we do trust to walk in obedience to our Father in heaven, by adhering to that standard of holiness set forth in God's word. After all, what informs the conscience to show us that we are indeed sinners, if not God's law, or word? It is not so much that the conscience is an innate aspect of our being, already programmed with the full terms of the law and a right regard to divine holiness. The conscience is the voice of God speaking to us inwardly, to show us that our perfections are utterly imperfect, and that our holinesses are all as filthy rags. We are then brought to cast about for the right direction, and, like David, we find this only in God's word. 'Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path' (Psalm 119:105). To walk uprightly before the Lord is to be obedient to that expression of his will we find in his word. This is the law. It is not confined to Ten Commandments, although these provide a most necessary summary and guide to us. We need to obey the whole of God's word if

we would be those who display most clearly the power and effect of saving grace. This is to be like David, and all who walked uprightly: obedience is the mark of love to Christ. And remember, true holiness consists in concerning ourselves with our own sins far more seriously than with the sins of other.

Thirdly, this teaches us to rejoice always for the gospel of grace. It is only by grace we are saved, and that through the finished work and shed blood of Jesus Christ. The law without gospel would drive us to despair. The gospel without the law would be perverted by us to license to sin, the error of the rank Antinomian. There is law in the gospel, but the grace of God in Christ is the feature that is most prominent in the gospel, and the aspect that makes it most glorious and most comforting. The Sovereign's sceptre, used at the coronation, symbolises her rule: it is adorned with the Cullinan diamond, the largest in the world. God's law is in the gospel, but we are drawn to the glory of grace in Christ because it shines forth to us in our otherwise spiritually dark prison. The gospel preaches mercy, grace and hope to sinners like us, giving us cause to give thanks for God's grace daily. We who are sinners by nature deserve on God's justice, wrath and condemnation. Life and hope are ours

through Jesus Christ our Lord, who gave himself for us. Let us lift up our voices.

Fourthly, this teaches us to hold fast to the promise. The gospel is not for our conversion only, as the law is not to awaken our conscience only. Rather, the gospel is for our comfort and strength day by day, as we continue our pilgrimage through this sinful world in the knowledge that we are but sinners saved by grace. Let us live in Christ, and on the promise, being strengthened and upheld in all our trials by the wonderful truth, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Salvation is certain, for Christ has died and been buried, and has risen again to die no more. He is ascended into heaven, and sits even now at the right hand of the Father. Heaven is certain, for Christ has gone to prepare a place for us, that where he is we may be also. We are compassed about by so great a cloud of witnesses, who have all run the race before us. They rejoice in heaven now, casting down their crowns before the Lamb, who is worthy to receive all honour and glory, world without end! We who have the hope of heaven granted to us should contemplate the blessings to come, and learn to delight in what is our through grace. This will move us to pray and praise, and to the love the Saviour truly. Hallelujah! AMEN. ¶

A SERMON ON ISAIAH 1:2–3

REV. C. TUINMAN (1659–1728)

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

Part 11

Isaiah said about this: 'Let favour be shewed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal

unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the LORD. LORD, when thy hand is lifted, they will not see' (Isaiah 26:10f). They did

not understand God's dealings with them (Deuteronomy 39:4; Psalm 92:6, 7).

This became greater by the contrast of the ox and the ass. It is to be rebuked when men are compared to animals (Jeremiah 5:8; 2 Peter 2: 12, 22), but it is a greater shame when the beasts have to convince and him and put him to shame (Proverbs 6:6; Jeremiah 8:7). Therefor it is said here, Shall an ox not know his owner and the ass not his master's crib by his way, for the few benefactions which they enjoy there? Was it not Israel's, God's people, who were nourished and brought up as his own children, greater duty? They had received in a greater manner from God what an ox and ass enjoys (Isaiah 63:14; Hosea 11:4). Thus the Lord should be know and thanked for this (Psalm 76:1, 2 Peter 2:16).

Judge now yourselves, whether God did not have a righteous reason to call heaven and earth to hear this. Truly, this was an unpardonable and punishable matter. It is just that God threateneth the woe over this (v. 4) and the he already had brought many judgments over them.

Application

Thus we have explained this word of God. Beloved, let us apply this to ourselves at this time.

Surely, God may call heaven and earth as well against our nation to hear it, because he hath spoken so long to us and we have not heard. He spoke to us by his benefactions (Jeremiah 22:21), by his judgments (Jeremiah 5:3; Micah 6:9) and by his ambassadors (Micah 6:8; Jeremiah 7:25; 2 Corinthians 5:19, 20). But where are the true hearers? Are not most a foolish people

without understanding; which have eyes, and see not; which have ears, and hear not (Jeremiah 5:21)? It is righteous if God exeriseth his revenge over this (Proverb 1:24; Zechariah 7:11). And justly heaven and earth would testify against us, yea be treasuries of Divine revenge to bring forth instruments of his wrath against us, as in Deuteronomy 28:23. For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men (Romans 1:18).

God also counteth us worthy of the name children, and such in a more excellent covenant and disposition, after the Jews were rejected, through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles (Romans 11:11). According to what was said by Hosea: 'I will call them my people, which were not my people: and her beloved, which was not beloved. And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them: Ye are not my people, there shall they be called the children of the living God' (Romans 9:25-26). But sorrow, so few is the number of those who are truly God's children and how few are there, of whom one could say that they are for signs and wonders in Israel? (Isaiah 8:18). One also could say with our prophet: 'Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah' (Isaiah 1:9). The most common part are but children of disobedience (Ephesians 2:3; Colossians 3:6); children of this world (Luke 16:8; 20:38); children of the devil (John 8:44; Acts 8:10; 1 John 3:10). But therefor they are children of wrath (Ephesians 2:3); children of perdition (John 17:12); children of the curse (2 Peter 2:14); and children of hell (Matthew 23:15).

TO BE CONTINUED

ROOTED AND GROUNDED

by CARINE MACKENZIE

Our lives have changed over the past few months because of the restrictions placed on us during the Covid pandemic. But one benefit we have enjoyed is going for a fairly lengthy walk most days in many of the lovely places near our home. Many of these walks have been in woods and forests—very easy paths through large areas of coniferous trees.

Sometimes we have noticed a large tree completely uprooted. We saw these exposed roots were really very shallow. The tree had not put down deep roots, so a strong wind had easily blown the tree down.

We experienced a different type of tree root when we needed to remove a tree stump from the garden. Many hours work, with an axe and a lever and then eventually a mechanical digger, were needed to remove that root. It was so deeply embedded in the ground.

The Bible often compares the life of the Christian to a tree. Psalm 1 describes the godly man who loves God's word. 'He shall be like a tree planted by rivers of water.' The tree by the river has lots of fruit and green leaves. The life of the godly man will flourish and prosper because his life is deeply rooted in God's word.

When a tree is exposed to difficult conditions like drought or storms, that causes the roots to go deeper in the soil. Trouble and suffering in the life of a believer should result in being more deeply rooted in God's word. James even says that we should 'count it all joy' when we are tried and tested because this trying of our faith is for our good (James 1:2–4).

Paul prayed for the Ephesian church that they would be 'rooted and grounded in love' (Ephesians 3:17). With Christ dwelling in their hearts by faith, they would be enabled to know and understand the love of Christ which surpasses human knowledge.

Paul's advice to the Colossian church was to live their lives in Christ Jesus, 'rooted and built up in him and stabilised in the faith' (Colossians 2:7). Trusting in the Lord and living by faith in him, is like the tree with long deep roots. When the storms of trouble and suffering come, as they surely will, then we are enabled to stand fast in the Lord (Philippians 4:1). If we are not firmly rooted in Christ, we are in danger of being deceived by false doctrine. 'Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ' (Colossians 2:8).

How easily our thinking can be influenced by the world and its values. But if we are deeply rooted and grounded in Christ then we draw nourishment from him and his word. Nothing can dislodge these roots because the one who has established them is God (1 Corinthians 1:21).

We are warned not to move away from the hope of the Gospel which we read and hear (Colossians 1:23) but to remain grounded and settled in the faith. And we do that by looking to the God of all grace through trusting in Jesus Christ. He will stabilise, strengthen and settle us (1 Peter 5:10)—all for our good and his glory.

Jesus the Saviour was also compared to a root. Isaiah said that the coming Messiah would be like a root out of a dry ground (Isaiah 53:2) with no form or comeliness. He would be despised and rejected just as we might kick a bit of a root sticking out of the ground. But that despised

root would ‘rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust’ (Romans 15:12).

Jesus the Son of God was humiliated as he came to this world as a man, suffered and died for sinners—the just for the unjust. Now he is exalted again—risen from the dead and ascended up into heaven to sit at God’s right hand (Mark 16:19).

Bible Search

Find the missing words from the verses. The initial letters of the correct answers will spell out a word from one of the verse mentioned.

1. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that _____ out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green. (Jeremiah 17:8)
2. But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil. And we have confidence in the Lord _____ you, that ye both do and will do the things which we command you. (1 Thessalonians 3:3–4)
3. And now the _____ is laid to the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. (Mark 3:10)
4. Rooted and _____ up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. (Colossians 2:7)
5. For behold the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall _____ them neither root nor branch. (Malachi 4:1)
6. That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the _____ man. (Ephesians 3:16)
7. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of _____, and acquainted with grief. (Isaiah 53:3)
8. Be ye also patient; stablish you _____: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. (James 5:8)
9. And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for a _____ of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious. (Isaiah 11:10)

10. And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall yet again take root _____, and bear fruit upward. (2 Kings 19:30)

OF THE RIGHT KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST CRUCIFIED (PART 1)

by WILLIAM PERKINS (1558–1602)

The following article appears in Volume 9 of the Reformation Heritage Books edition of the Complete Works of William Perkins. The text below is taken from the 1637 edition.

Introduction

It is the common sin of men at this day, and that in the very places of learning, that Christ crucified is not known as he ought. The right knowledge of whom, is not to make often mention of his death and passion, and to call him our Saviour, or to handle the whole mystery of God incarnate soundly or learnedly; (though that be a worthy gift of God), but first of all by the consideration of the passion to be touched with an inward and a lively feeling of our sins, for which our Redeemer suffered the pangs of hell, and to grow to a through dislike of ourselves and our lives past for them, and from the ground of the heart to purpose a reformation and a conformity with Christ in all good duties that concern man: secondly, in the passion, as in a mirror, to behold, and in beholding to labour to comprehend the length, the breadth, the height, the depth, of the love of the Father, that he gave his own dear Son to death; and the goodness of the Son, that loved his enemies more than himself; that our hearts might be rooted and grounded in the same love, and be further inflamed to love God again.

To further this true manner of knowing Christ crucified, I have penned these few lines; read them at thy leisure, and have a care to put them in practice: otherwise thou art but an enemy of the cross of Christ, though thou profess his name never so much. Jan. 3. 1596.

IT IS the most excellent and worthy part of divine wisdom to know Christ crucified. The prophet Isaiah saith, ‘the knowledge of my righteous servant’—that is, Christ crucified—‘shall justify many’ (Isaiah 53:11). And Christ himself saith, This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent’ (John 17:3). And Paul saith, ‘I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified’ (1 Corinthians 2:2). Again, ‘God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ’ (Gal 6:14). Again, ‘I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ’ (Philippians 3:8).

In the right way of knowing *Christ crucified*, two points must be considered: one, how Man for his part is to know Christ: the other, how he is to be known of man.

Touching the first: Man must know Christ, not generally and confusedly, but by a lively, powerful, and operative *knowledge*: for otherwise the devils themselves know Christ.

In this *knowledge*, three things are required. The first is *notice* or *consideration*, whereby thou must conceive in mind, understand, and seriously bethink of Christ, as he is revealed in the history of the gospel, and as he is offered to thy particular person, in the ministry of the word and sacrament. And that this consideration may not be dead and idle in thee, two things must be done. First, thou must labour to feel thyself *to stand in need* of Christ crucified; yea, to stand in excessive need of the very least drop of his blood, for the washing away of sins. And unless thou thoroughly feelest thyself, *to want* [lack] all that goodness and grace that is in Christ; and that thou even stand in extreme need of his passion, thou shalt never learn to teach Christ in deed and truth. The second thing is, with the understanding of the doctrine of Christ, to join thirsting, whereby man in very soul and spirit, longs after the participation of Christ, and faith in this case as Samson said, Give me water, 'I die for thirst' (Judges 15:18).

The second part of knowledge, is *application*, whereby thou must know and believe, not only that Christ was crucified, but that he was crucified for thee: for *thee* I say in particular. Here two rules must be remembered and practiced. One, that Christ on the cross was thy pledge and surety in particular, that he stood in the very room and place, in which thou thyself in thine own person, shouldest have stood; that thy very personal and particular sins were imputed and

applied to him: that he stood guilty as a malefactor for them, and suffered the very pangs of hell, and that his sufferings are as much in acceptation with God, as if thou hadst borne the curse of the law in thine own person eternally. The holding and believing of this point, is the very foundation of religion, as also of the Church of God. Therefore in any wise be careful to apply Christ crucified to thyself: and as Elisha, when he would receive the child of the Shunammite, went up and lay upon him, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his hands upon his hands, and his eyes upon his eyes, and stretched himself upon him: even so, if thou wouldest be revived to everlasting life, thou must by faith as it were set thyself upon the cross of Christ, and apply thy hands to his hands, thy feet to his feet, and thy sinful heart to his believing heart: and content not thyself with Thomas, to put thy finger in his side, but even dive and plunge thyself wholly, both body and soul, into the wounds and blood of Christ. This will make thee to cry with Thomas, and say; 'My Lord and my God': and this is to be *crucified with Christ*. And yet do not content thyself with this, but by faith also descend with Christ from the cross to the grave, and bury thyself in the very burial of Christ: and then look as the dead soldier tumbled into the grave of Elisha, was made alive at the very touching of his body: so shalt thou by a spiritual touching of Christ dead and buried, be quickened to life everlasting. The second rule is, that Christ crucified is *thine*, being really given thee of God the Father, even as truly as houses and lands are given of earthly fathers to their children; thus must thou firmly hold and believe: and hence it is, that the benefits of Christ, are before God ours indeed for our justification and salvation.

The third point in lively knowledge is, that by all the *affections* of our hearts, we

must be carried to Christ, and as it were, transformed into him. Whereas he gave himself wholly for us, we can do no less when we bestow our hearts upon him. We must therefore labour above all, following the Martyr Ignatius, who said, that Christ his love was crucified. We must value him at so high a price, that he must be unto us better than ten thousand worlds; yea, all things which we enjoy, must be but as *dross*

and *dung* unto us in respect of him. Lastly, all our joy, rejoicing, comfort and confidence must be placed in him. And that thus much is requisite in knowledge, it appears by the common rule of expounding Scripture, that *works of knowledge imply affection*. And indeed it is but a knowledge swimming in the brain, which doth not alter and dispose that affection, and the whole man.

TO BE CONTINUED

THE GOSPEL OF SOVEREIGN FREE GRACE

by WILLIAM T. FOLEY

THE clear obligation of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ is to declare, preach, proclaim the gospel of sovereign free grace. This true gospel must be preached or heralded from all evangelical pulpits. It is the gospel of the grace, mercy and kindness and love of God for sinners, the ungodly. Grace is free of works and is God's grace alone! A key theme of the gospel is that God counts as righteous, not because of one's works, but only because of one's faith in Jesus Christ. *Sola fide, sola gratia*, by faith alone, by grace alone must be the clarion call of true Bible teachers and preachers. Ministers need to wake up to their duty in ministering the gospel of sovereign free grace, in this regard. The whole counsel of God is to be preached (Acts 20:27).

By grace alone, by faith alone, are Biblical doctrines which are being undermined and misunderstood by some modern pastors and Bible teachers. This has happened also down through the many centuries. Unfortunately,

pastors and teachers seem often to smuggle works into the gospel of grace. This is a modern tragedy and indeed a travesty of the gospel. The gospel is perceived in some churches to consist of musical entertainment and minimal use of the Word of God. Many churches have sadly gone the way of so-called gifts and the prosperity gospel, and psychological manipulation. If the Bible is not expounded properly and accurately, the Lord's table and baptism correctly observed, and Christ is not central to reverent worship, and the doctrines of free sovereign grace are not preached, then beware. I would say that such churches have departed from the 'old paths' and are in an apostate state.

Even in a small way some teachers and pastors seem to convey the idea that we play a role in the gospel. The Bible makes clear that there is no boasting of man to be added to the gospel, it doesn't make any provision for the contribution of man. Central to the

gospel is the Cross of Christ. It is not the wood of the Cross but the work of Christ on the Cross that is crucial. God forbid that I should boast, save in the Cross of Christ, Paul said. Let us quote Paul accurately: 'But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world' (Galatians 6:14). A Christian comes always to God by the way of the work of the Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, 'For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified' (1 Corinthians 2:2).

Paul spent eighteen months at Corinth (Acts 18:11). He wrote to the Corinthians, 'For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God' (1 Corinthians 1:18,23-24). Paul wrote, 'And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased' (Galatians 5:11). In the Bible we see that the Cross is central to Pauline theology. The world finds the doctrine of the Cross offensive to its wisdom and philosophy.

In teaching and preaching we need to point out to sinners that repentance and faith are fruits of salvation. These are granted by God alone. In terms of repentance 'God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life' (Acts 11:18). In terms of faith, we see the instrumentality of the Word of God being used, 'So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God' (Romans 10:17). Faith and the Holy Ghost exist together in a believer (Acts 6:5). God opened the door of faith to the Gentiles (Acts 14:27). Faith is a

gift of God. Paul says, 'For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast' (Ephesians 2:8-9). Like Paul, preachers and Bible teachers must declare, 'repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ' (Acts 20:21). We must not make faith or repentance into a work on our part.

But one would think otherwise when listening to some expositions of God's Word. They are not conditions 'for' salvation which is primarily put forward by some Bible teachers. They are the 'consequences' of salvation. Salvation is all of God's sovereign free grace, and the cooperation of the will, and religious works are not part of the pure gospel of saving grace. I repeat: faith and repentance are the 'evidence' of God's work of regeneration in the soul. The saints are 'God's workmanship' created unto good works (Ephesians 2:10). Abraham could not boast before God that he was justified by works. Indeed he was justified by faith alone before the law was even given to Moses on Mount Sinai. Paul supports the essential argument from Genesis 15:6. 'Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness' (Romans 4:3). Justification by faith alone is no new doctrine. It is in the Old Testament Scripture. We are justified by His grace (Titus 3:7). God justifies the ungodly (Romans 4:5), and Christ died for the ungodly (Romans 5:6). All boasting is excluded in the provision of salvation.

Grace is unmerited and is the opposite or the antithesis of works. Grace is the direct opposite of works, and it is rather difficult to understand why any Bible teacher or preacher should confuse the two, especially when they use terms like 'we can loose our salvation'. Works remove grace from salvation. Wages received are not a manifestation

of grace, for they are earned. That's Paul's position in Romans 4 when he is discussing Abraham and David in terms of justification by faith alone. Paul writes, 'Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness' (Romans 4:4-5).

Paul says, 'Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work' (Romans 11:5-6). So, our election, in Christ, is unconditional, and is of grace alone and it has nothing to do with us, or foreseen works in us, good or evil, we would do. We see this in the case of Rebekah and Isaac in the Old Testament. Rebekah gave birth to twin boys, Esau and Jacob. Jacob was elected to salvation but Esau was not: this was planned before they were born. Isaac favoured Esau, and Rebekah favoured Jacob. Jacob, like every believer, is chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4).

'For the children (Isaac and Jacob) being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth' (Romans 9:11). God decreed to show His grace in saving Jacob, not based on anything in him, because of His covenant of grace, or through the blood of the everlasting covenant (Hebrews 13:20). The purpose of God cannot be thwarted or frustrated by man. God saves sinners for His glory.

If we don't have 'the root' of the matter in us, then we will not be able to show 'the fruit' of true and practical religion. Let us be perfectly clear at this point: there is nothing good in us. All our righteousness is as

filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6). We are not righteous enough, nor can we ever be righteous, in and of ourselves, or measure up to God's standards. Paul says, 'For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23). Again, Paul says, 'Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned' (Romans 5:12).

We are filthy and polluted and there is none that does good, not even one (Psalm 14:3). That is why we need the righteousness of Christ imputed to us. So, when God looks at us he sees only Christ, and his meritorious righteousness and his blood atonement. Oh what a wonderful gift is everlasting righteousness to the saints! Let us rejoice and be glad that the Lord Jesus Christ is to all believers, 'THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS' (Jeremiah 23:6).

God causes the life of a believer to grow into a tree for God's glory with branches of fruits. Abiding in Christ is fundamental to godliness. Jesus said, 'Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing' (John 15:2-5). We are to bear much fruit as Christians, by abiding in Christ for God's glory. One cannot live the Christian life without abiding in Christ.

The Epistle of James is about showing 'the fruits' of our forensically, or judicially declared justification (Romans 1:17). For, it was Paul who said, 'It is God that justifieth' (Romans 8:33). Remember it is God's

righteousness that counts, not ours. It is an unmerited righteousness. Faith is not a work that is performed to earn righteousness. It is the instrumentality through which God imputes the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ to the sinner. One is thus accounted righteous, not made righteous. Accounted righteous is God's work of justification and made righteous is the process of sanctification in a believer's life. James is dealing with sanctification. In fact, James is dealing with the post-conversion works of believers. For Paul, justification is by faith alone, without the deeds of the law. (Romans 3:28; 4:5). For James, justification is by a faith that works!

James is writing to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad and says, 'But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also' (James 2:20–26). In this instance James is referring to a different aspect in terms of Abraham's life. Abraham offered up his son Isaac in Genesis 22:9 and in the process 'showed', or 'demonstrated' he had genuine faith already. Paul refers to an earlier occasion in Genesis 15:6 when the Scripture says that he trusted God and was therefore declared righteous by faith. Simply to put it another way: Paul deals with declaring righteous; whereas James is dealing with

the demonstration or showing by works that the person is righteous. Holiness of life is fundamental to the Christian believer. There is no contradiction between Paul and James. Both are in harmony with the overall tenor of Scripture.

James is referring to the manifestation or demonstration of our justification by God in our lives. To put it simply, James is dealing with sanctification in the true believer, whereas Paul is dealing with justification by faith alone. James frequently refers to his fellow-believers as brethren to be doers of the word and not hearers only. Saving faith, in Christ, will show itself in that there is true union and communion with Christ in the community of believers and before the world. Our lives are to be a testimony of God's sovereign free grace, in whatever vocation we find ourselves in. We are to be salt and light. For it is God working in us, both to will and do of his good pleasure, according to his eternal purpose which he decreed in Christ. First, we are 'declared right' with God, because of Christ's doing and dying; and then, secondly, we 'live right' before God by abiding in Christ, and for God's glory, by the enabling power of the Holy Spirit working in us. Our love for Christ shows itself in good works. Our whole life is to be one of showing and demonstrating our genuine saving faith in our deeds and actions. Faith that doesn't produce good works is dead. It is merely intellectual, and only knowledge in the head, and it doesn't give evidence of God in the person's entire life. Works of love follow faith. True faith confirms itself in works of love. John Calvin said, 'Faith alone saves, but a faith that saves is never alone' (King James Study Bible, p.1940). Professing faith may not mean the person has genuine saving faith. It is the difference between natural faith and spiritual faith, the former is of

the flesh, but the latter is divine in origin, and given as a gift to the regenerate by the Holy Spirit. Hebrews 11 shows a list of people who showed that they had genuine saving faith and that faith outworked itself in incredible acts and achievements. Clearly the fear of the Lord in the true believer will manifest itself in true wisdom and godly works that glorify God, but never can any of the works as a Christian merit justification or the righteousness of God. Justification is what God does 'for' us, but sanctification is God working 'in' us.

Make no mistake about it: salvation is the work of God alone. Salvation is of the Lord from beginning to end. We must not behave as if we are allergic to truth or grace. Acknowledge that salvation is all of sovereign free grace. There is no room for our contributions, or prayers to be added or good deeds or efforts, because our salvation is only and exclusively for the glory of God and our ultimate good. We can't help God to save us by being a good person, being a little righteous, or religious, or going on pilgrimages or by performing good deeds, or rituals, or ceremonials, or lighting candles for the dead, etc., for the Bible clearly shows that we are without spiritual strength or power to save ourselves. It is ridiculous to think we can save ourselves. We are sinners by nature and practice. God must save us or we are alienated without God, without Christ and hopelessly lost forever. Just who did Christ die for:

- Christ died for those without spiritual strength and the ungodly. 'For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly' (Romans 5:6).
- God justifies the ungodly. 'But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness' (Romans 4:5).
- Christ died for sinners. 'But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us' (Romans 5:8).
- Christ died for enemies. 'For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life' (Romans 5:10).

We are wretched, miserable, defiled, naked before a Holy God. We are dead in trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1). We are children of disobedience (Ephesians 2:2). We are by nature under God's wrath (Ephesians 2:3). Even when we were dead in sins God had great love for us (Ephesians 2:4,5). Everyone knows in their conscience that they are sinners; we all know the difference between right and wrong and moral choices, but some people avoid thinking about the consequences. They know they are guilty, but many choose to harden their heart. We justify our wicked and evil deeds, and try and deny responsibility and accountability. Some of the most heinous of sins are detailed in the Book of Romans, see chapter 1. The whole world is guilty before God (Romans 3:19). All sin is unacceptable in God's evaluation, and God will judge the world (Romans 3:6), and his vengeance will be shown to those who have no Saviour in his banishment of them to eternal Hell fire. From God's perspective, there has never been a human being who has not sinned against him, or not been under sin, nor has there ever been any righteous, nor any person understanding or naturally seeking God. Romans 3:9–20 shows a graphic picture of the frightening state of fallen humanity. The whole human race is under God's condemnation and his wrath. He that believes in Christ is not condemned (John 3:18,36). There is no escape from God's

scrutiny. The day of the Lord will come and he will show wrath and fierce anger to sinners (Isaiah 13:9,13). Sinners are condemned already, according to Jesus (John 3:18).

The saints of God only know too well their sin, and find that they need to confess it, and show contrition from backsliding. We are sinners from our conception in our mother's womb until we die. David, in his psalm of sorrow and repentance, said, 'Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me' (Psalm 51:5). By nature and practice we are sinners. With sin comes results, 'For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord' (Romans 6:23). The depravity of our heart is totally radical and it shows us, time and time again, that we are sinners. We have a natural inclination

or propensity to sin. It is ingrained in our will and ways. There is a darkness in our heart and an 'inability' to come to God. We are deaf to the voice of God in his word. The Bible says, 'The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?' (Jeremiah 17:9). Jesus said, 'But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies' (Matthew 15:18-19). In our lost estate we were without Christ, as Gentiles we were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel; we were strangers to the covenants of promise. We had no hope and we were without God. However, now and forever more the blood of Christ is our peace. (See Ephesians 2:12,14.)

TO BE CONCLUDED

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‘YEA, HE IS ALTOGETHER LOVELY’

A sermon on Song of Songs 5:16

by JOHN FLAVEL (1628–1691)

AT the ninth verse of this chapter you have a query propounded to the spouse, by the daughters of Jerusalem, ‘What is thy beloved more than another beloved?’ To this question the spouse returns her answers in the following verses, wherein she asserts his excellency in general. Ver. 10. ‘He is the chiefest among ten thousands;’ confirms that general assertion, by an enumeration of his particular excellencies, to v. 16. where she closes up her *character* and *encomium* of her beloved, with an elegant *epiphonema*, in the words that I have read: ‘Yea, he is altogether lovely.’

The words, you see, are an affirmative proposition, setting forth the transcendent loveliness of the Lord Jesus Christ; and naturally resolve themselves into three parts, viz.

1. The subject.
2. The predicate.
3. The manner of predication.

First, The subject, *He*, viz. the Lord Jesus Christ, after whom she had been seeking, for whom she was sick of love; concerning whom these daughters of Jerusalem had enquired: whom she had endeavoured so graphically to describe in his particular excellencies. This is the great and excellent subject of whom she here speaks.

Secondly, The predicate, or what she affirmeth or saith of him, viz. That he is *a lovely one*, *Machamaddim*, desires; according to the import of the original, ‘which signifies earnestly to desire, covet,’ or long after that

which is most pleasant, grateful, delectable, ‘and admirable.’ The original word is both in the abstract, and of the plural number, which speaks Christ to be the very essence of all delights and pleasures, the very soul and substance of them. As all the rivers are gathered into the ocean, which is the congregation or meeting-place of all the waters in the world, so Christ is that ocean in which all true delights and pleasures meet.

Thirdly, The manner of predication; *He is [altogether] lovely*, *Totus, totus desiderabilis*; lovely in all, and in every part; as if she had said, Look on him in what respect or particular you will cast your eye upon this lovely object, and view him any way; turn him in your serious thoughts which way you will; consider his person, his offices, his works, or any other thing belonging to him; you will find him altogether lovely, There is nothing ungrateful in him, there is nothing lovely without him. Hence note,

Doct. That Jesus Christ is the loveliest person souls can set their eyes upon, Psalm 45:2 ‘Thou art fairer than the children of men.’

That is said of Jesus Christ, which cannot be said of any creature; that he is ‘altogether lovely.’ In opening this lovely point I shall,

1. Weigh the importance of this phrase ‘altogether lovely.’
2. Shew you in what respect Christ is so.

First, Let us weigh this excellent expression, and particularly consider what is contained in it, and you shall find this expression 'altogether lovely.'

1. That it excludes all unloveliness and distastefulness from Jesus Christ. So Vatablus; 'There is nothing in him which is not amiable.' The excellencies of Jesus Christ are perfectly exclusives of all their opposites; there is nothing of a contrary nature or quality found in him to alloy or debase his excellency. And in this respect Christ infinitely transcends the most excellent and loveliest creatures. For whatsoever loveliness is found in them, it is not without a distasteful tang; the fairest pictures must have their shadows: The most orient and transplendent stones must have their foils to set off their beauty; the best creature is but a bitter sweet at best. If there be somewhat pleasing, there is also somewhat distasting; if there be gracious and natural excellencies in the same person to delight us, yet there is also some natural corruption intermixed with it to distaste us. But it is not so in our altogether lovely Christ; his excellencies are pure and unmixed; he is a sea of sweetness without one drop of gall.

2. 'Altogether lovely,' i.e. as there is nothing unlovely found in him, so all that is in him is wholly lovely; as every ray of God is precious, so every thing that is in Christ is precious. Who can weigh Christ in a pair of balances, and tell you what his worth is? 'His price is above rubies, and all that thou canst desire is not to be compared with him,' Proverbs 8:11.

3. 'Altogether lovely,' i.e. He is comprehensive of all things that are lovely: he seals up the sum of all loveliness: Things that shine as single stars with a particular glory, all meet in Christ as a glorious constellation. Colossians 1:19. 'It pleased the Father

that in him should all fulness dwell.' Cast your eyes among all created beings, survey the universe, observe strength in one, beauty in a second, faithfulness in a third, wisdom in a fourth; but you shall find none excelling in them all as Christ doth. Bread hath one quality, water another, raiment another, physic another; but none hath all in itself as Christ hath: He is bread to the hungry, water to the thirsty, a garment to the naked, healing to the wounded; and whatever a soul can desire is found in him, 1 Corinthians 1:30.

4. 'Altogether lovely,' i.e. Nothing is lovely in opposition to him, or in separation from him. If he be altogether lovely, then whatsoever is opposite to, or separate from him can have no loveliness in it; take away Christ, and where is the loveliness of any enjoyment? The best creature-comfort out of Christ, is but a broken cistern; it cannot hold one drop of true comfort, Psalm 73:26. It is with the creature, the sweetest and loveliest creature, as with a beautiful image in the glass: turn away the face and where is the image? Riches, honours, and comfortable relations are sweet when the face of Christ smiles upon us through them; but without him, what empty trifles are they all?

5. 'Altogether lovely,' i.e. Transcending all created excellencies in beauty and loveliness; so much it speaks. If you compare Christ and other things, be they never so lovely, never so excellent and desirable; Christ carries away all loveliness from them. 'He is (saith the apostle) before all things,' Colossians 1:17. Not only before all things in time, nature, and order; but before all things in dignity, glory, and true excellency. In all things he must have the pre-eminence. For let us but compare Christ's excellency with the creature's in a few particulars, and how evidently will the transcendent loveliness of Jesus Christ appear! For,

First, All other loveliness is derivative and secondary; but the loveliness of Christ original and primary. Angels and men, the world and all the desirables in it, receive what excellency they have from him; they are streams from the fountain. But as the waters in the fountain itself are more abundant, so more pure and pleasant than in the streams. And the farther any thing departs, and is removed from its fountain and original, the less excellency there is in it.

Secondly, The loveliness and excellency of all other things, is but relative and respective, consisting in its reference to Christ, and subserviency to his glory; but Christ is lovely, considered absolutely in himself. He is desirable for himself, other things are so for him.

Thirdly, The beauty and loveliness of all other things is fading and perishing; but the loveliness of Christ is fresh to all eternity the sweetness of the best creatures is a fading flower; if not before, yet certainly at death it must fade away. Job 4:21. 'Doth not their excellency, which is in them, go away?' Yes, yes, whether natural excellencies of the body, or acquired endowments of the mind, lovely features, amiable qualities, attracting excellencies; all these like pleasant flowers are withered, faded, and destroyed by death; 'but Christ is still the same, yesterday, to day, and for ever,' Hebrews 8:8.

Fourthly, The beauty and holiness of creatures are ensnaring and dangerous; a man may make an idol thereof, and dote beyond the bounds of moderation upon them, but there is no danger of excess in the love of Christ. The soul is then in the healthiest frame and temper when it is most sick of love to Christ, Canticles 5:8.

Fifthly, The loveliness of every creature is of a cloying and glutting nature; our estimation of it abates and sinks by our

nearer approach to it, or longer enjoyment of it: creatures, like pictures, are fairest at a due distance, but it is not so with Christ; the nearer the soul approacheth him, and the longer it lives in the enjoyment of him, still the more sweet and desirable is he.

Sixthly, and lastly, All other loveliness is unsatisfying and straitening to the soul of man; there is not room enough in any one, or in all the creatures for the soul of man to dilate and expatiate itself; but it still feels itself confined and narrowed within those strait limits. And this comes to pass from the inadequateness and unsuitableness of the creature, to the nobler and more excellent soul of man, which like a ship in a narrow river hath not room to turn; and besides, is ever and anon striking ground and foundering in those shallows. But Jesus Christ is every way adequate to the vast desires of the soul; in him it hath sea-room enough there it may spread all its sails, no fear of touching the bottom.¹ And thus you see what is the importance of this phrase, 'Altogether lovely.'

Secondly, Next I promised to shew you in what respects Jesus Christ is altogether lovely. And,

1. He is altogether lovely in his person: a Deity dwelling in flesh, John 1:14.

The wonderful union and perfection of the divine and human nature in Christ, render him an object of admiration and adoration to angels and men, 1 Timothy 3:16. God never presented to the world such a vision of glory before. And then consider how the human nature of our Lord Jesus Christ is replenished with all the graces of the Spirit, so as never any of all the saints was filled; O how lovely doth this render him! John 3:4. 'God

¹ Flavel ministered for many years in Dartmouth, where he probably observed the very thing described here.

giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.' This makes him fairer than the children of men, grace being poured into his lips, Psalm 45:2. If a small measure of grace in the saints make them such sweet and desirable companions, what must the riches and fulness of the Spirit of grace filling Jesus Christ without measure, make him in the eyes of believers? O what a glory and lustre must it stamp upon him!

2. He is altogether lovely in his offices: for let us but consider the suitableness, fulness, and comfortableness of them.

First, The suitableness of the offices of Christ to the miseries and wants of men; and we cannot but adore the infinite wisdom of God in his investiture with them; we are, by nature, blind and ignorant, at best but groping in the dim light of nature after God, Acts 17:27. Jesus Christ is a light to lighten the Gentiles, Isaiah 49:6. When this great prophet came into the world, then did the day-spring from on high visit us, Luke 1:78. The state of nature is a state of alienation from, and enmity against God; Christ comes into the world an atoning sacrifice, making peace by the blood of his cross, Colossians 1:20. All the world, by nature, are in bondage and captivity to Satan, a lamentable thralldom; Christ comes with kingly power, to rescue sinners, as a prey from the mouth of the terrible one.

Secondly, Let the fulness of his offices be also considered, by reason whereof he is able 'to save to the uttermost, all that come to God by him,' Hebrews 7:25. The three offices, comprising in them all that our souls do need, become an universal relief to all our wants; and therefore,

Thirdly, Unspeakably comfortable must the offices of Christ be to the souls of sinners. If light be pleasant to our eyes, how

pleasant is that light of life springing from the Sun of righteousness! Malachi 4:2. If a pardon be sweet to a condemned malefactor, how sweet must the sprinkling the blood of Jesus be to the trembling conscience of a law-condemned sinner? If a rescue from a cruel tyrant be sweet to a poor captive, how sweet must it be to the ears of enslaved sinners, to hear the voice of liberty and deliverance proclaimed by Jesus Christ? Out of the several offices of Christ, as out of so many fountains, all the promises of the new covenant flow, as so many soul-refreshing streams of peace and joy: all the promises of illumination, counsel and direction flow out of the prophetic office; all the promises of reconciliation, peace, pardon, and acceptance flow out of the priestly office, with the sweet streams of joy, and spiritual comforts depending thereupon; all the promises of converting, increasing, defending, directing, and supplying grace, flow out of the kingly office of Christ; indeed, all promises may be reduced to the three offices: so that Jesus Christ must needs be altogether lovely in his offices.

3. Jesus Christ is altogether lovely in his relations.

First, He is a lovely Redeemer, Isaiah 61:1. He came to open the prison-doors to them that are bound. Needs must this Redeemer be a lovely one, if we consider the depth of misery from which he redeemed us, even 'from the wrath to come,' 1 Thessalonians 1:10. How lovely was Titus,² in the eyes of the poor enthralled Greeks, whom he delivered from their bondage! This endeared him to them to that degree, that when their liberty was proclaimed, they even trod one another to death to see the herald that proclaimed

² Titus Quinctius Flaminius, c. 228–174 BC, who defeated Philip V of Macedon.

it; and all the night following, with instruments of music, danced about his tent, crying with united voices, 'a Saviour, a Saviour.' Or, whether we consider the numbers redeemed, and the means of their redemption. Revelation 5:9. And they sang a new song, saying, 'Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred and tongue, and people, and nation.' He redeemed us not with silver and gold, but with his own precious blood, by way of price, 1 Peter 1:18, 19, with his outstretched and glorious arm, by way of power, Colossians 1:13. he redeemed us freely, Ephesians 1:7, fully, Rom. 8:1, seasonably, Galatians 4:4, and out of special and peculiar love, John 17:9. In a word, he hath redeemed us for ever, never more to come into bondage, 1 Peter 1:5. John 10:28. O how lovely is Jesus Christ in the relation of a Redeemer to God's elect!

Secondly, He is a lovely bridegroom to all that he espouses to himself. How doth the church glory in him, in the words following my text; 'this is my Beloved, and this is my Friend, O ye daughters of Jerusalem!' That is, Heaven and earth cannot shew such another: which needs no fuller proof than the following particulars.

i. That he espouses to himself, in mercy and in loving-kindness, such deformed, defiled, and altogether unworthy souls as we are; who have no beauty, no excellency to make us desirable in his eyes; all the springs of his love to us are in his own breast, Deuteronomy 7:7. he chuseth us, not because we were, but that he might make us lovely, Ephesians 5:27. He passed by us when we lay in our blood, and said unto us, Live; and that was the time of love, Ezekiel 16: 5.

ii. He expects nothing with us, and yet bestows himself, and all that he hath, upon us.

Our poverty cannot enrich him, but he made himself poor to enrich us, 2 Corinthians 8:9. 1 Corinthians 3:22.

iii. No husband loves the wife of his bosom, as Christ loved his people, Ephesians 5:25. He loved the church and gave himself for it.

iv. None bears with weaknesses and provocations as Christ doth; the church is styled 'the Lamb's wife,' Revelation 19:9.

v. No husband is so immortal and everlasting a husband as Christ is; death separates all other relations, but the soul's union with Christ is not dissolved in the grave yea, the day of a believer's death, is his marriage day, the day of his fullest enjoyment of Christ. No husband can say to his wife, what Christ saith to the believer, 'I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,' Hebrews 13:5.

vi. No bridegroom advanceth his bride to such honours by marriage, as Christ doth; he relates them to God as their father, and from that day the mighty and glorious angels think it no dishonour to be their servants, Hebrews 1:14. They are brought in admiring the beauty and glory of the spouse of Christ, Revelation 21:9.

vii. Lastly, No marriage was ever consummated with such triumphal solemnity, as the marriage of Christ and believers shall be in heaven, Psalm 45:14, 15. 'She shall be brought to the king in raiment of needle-work, the virgins, her companions that follow her, shall be brought unto thee; with gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought; they shall enter into the king's palace.' Among the Jews the marriage-house was called Bethillula, the house of praise; there was joy upon all hands, but none like the joy that will be in heaven, when believers, the spouse of Christ, shall be brought thither: God the Father will rejoice, to behold the blessed accomplishment and

confirmation of those glorious designs of his love. Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom, will rejoice to see the travail of his soul, the blessed birth and issue of all his bitter pangs and agonies, Isaiah 53:11. The Holy Spirit will rejoice to see the completion and perfection of that sanctifying design which was committed to his hand, 2 Corinthians 5:5, to see those souls whom he once found as rough stones, now to shine as the bright, polished stones of the spiritual temple. Angels will rejoice: great was the joy when the foundation of this design was laid, in the incarnation of Christ, Luke 2:13. Great therefore must their joy be, when the

top-stone is set up with shouting, crying, Grace, grace, The saints themselves shall rejoice unspeakably, when they shall enter into the King's palace, and be for ever with the Lord, 1 Thessalonians 4:17. Indeed there will be joy on all hands, except among the devils and damned, who shall gnash their teeth with envy at the everlasting advancement and glory of believers.

Thus Christ is altogether lovely, in the relation of a Bridegroom.

This sermon is taken from the Works of John Flavel, Vol 2 (W. Baynes & Son, 1820 edn., reprinted by Banner of Truth, 1968).

TO BE CONCLUDED

'THE BEST POUND I EVER SPENT'

ALAN was at home one day he heard a knock on his front door. Opening it, he found two Jehovah's Witnesses standing there. Alan was willing to talk. During the course of the conversation he expressed an interest in obtaining a Bible. They would sell him one for one pound. He agreed, and they returned the next day with the book. It was, of course, their New World translation, which has been deliberately corrupted to try to remove the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ. After this he started to go to the kingdom hall for a few months. God was still working on Alan. After a few months Alan approached one of the elders and told him that he'd had a 'New Birth experience.' The elder's response was 'I don't think you have been born again: you haven't worked enough!' Alan then left Kingswinford and moved to Wolverhampton. One day Alan wandered into a local shop and meet Mr Summers,

who was an American missionary reaching out with the gospel to the Asian people of Wolverhampton. During their conversation Pastor Summers showed Alan from his KJV Bible that he was on the wrong path. Alan purchased a KJV Bible and one morning he read 'the just shall live by faith' (Romans 1:17). Walking along the canal towpath, that same morning, the Lord God, opened his mind and warmed his heart to the Saviour.

Needless to say he did not remain long with the JWs, and came to see that their version is not to be trusted. He has worshipped for a number of years in a reformed church. But he maintains to this day that the cost of that New World translation was 'the best pound I ever spent.' It was, by God's grace, part of the means of setting him on the path to faith in Jesus Christ. 'All things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are called according to his purpose.' ¶

APPOINTMENT OF EDITOR

The Trustees are seeking to appoint an Editor for the *English Churchman* newspaper. For more than fifteen and a half years the Rev. Peter J. Ratcliff has undertaken this exacting task in parallel with ministerial responsibilities. The Trustees have realised that it is only fair to the Editor and to the paper to make the post a full-time (or virtually full-time) appointment.

The Editor is required to accept *ex animo* the Articles of the Church of England and the doctrines of grace. The Editor will need to have an understanding of, and full sympathy with, the historic Reformation position of the Church of England; and to wish “to promote the Protestant principles and Evangelical doctrines of the Church of England as set forth in the Thirty-nine Articles and the Homilies thereof”. The Trustees will be pleased to consider candidates who have these sympathies but are not members of the Church of England.

The *English Churchman and St. James’s Chronicle* is a fortnightly newspaper. There is an increasing tendency in all church and Christian newspapers to have fewer news items and more articles: the Trustees are concerned that the *English Churchman* shall provide its readers with good coverage of ecclesiastical news of the United Kingdom (both of the national churches and of the free churches) and overseas, as well as some articles.

The *English Churchman* will also seek to provide judicious, informed, and often unobtrusive comment on the news from its own standpoint.

The Editor will need a high level of competence – breadth of knowledge and understanding, literary skill and an eye for detail, and flair. A prime task for the Editor will be the gathering of news and the editing of news material so that it is suitable in style and in proportion for publication.

The Trustees are offering a three-year contract in the first instance, and a salary of at least £30,000 per annum if the post is taken on full time. The post will be either full time or very close to full time. The Trustees are happy to discuss individual applicants’ circumstances.

Applicants should send a letter of application with a *curriculum vitae* to the Secretary of the Trustees, 15 Grange Court, Cambridge, CB3 9BD by December 11th. Further information can be obtained from, and any enquiries should be addressed to, the Secretary of the Trustees at that address or at reformationssociety@hotmail.co.uk.

FORMER DAYS

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

250 years ago: November & December 1770

The **November** issue continues Eaton's *Honeycomb*, and in dealing with faith and justification, Eaton writes, 'it is not faith that justifieth us actively of itself, as it is a virtue, but passively, as it lets in the imputation of Christ's righteousness into the soul.' This is written in the context of describing faith as the opening of the window, through which the bright light of Christ's righteousness enter the soul. Further on he says, 'the true believer is not barely counted, but truly made perfectly holy and righteous in the sight of God freely.' The sweetness of the honeycomb is most evident in this treatise.

The biography is of Richard Rothwell, who died in 1627. A great scholar and ordained clergyman, he was converted from urbane ungodliness through the preaching of a local minister, and thereafter became a defender of non-conformity.

Gospel Mysteries continues the dialogue between Christian and Truth on the Song of Solomon, now at 3:7. The words are taken to describe Christ in his glory.

The Miscellaneous section begins with an exposition of Ephesians 6:0–18, on the whole armour of God. The sections covered in this part concern the need for spiritual courage, and the source of our strength, who is God. This is followed by the next part of the serious admonition to parents regarding the care and education of their children. The view of human nature set out here could hardly be more at odds with present views, and yet is truly superior to all modern opinions.

A thoughtful piece on the praise of God notes that our attempts at telling God who

he is in praise of him fall very far short of anything worthy of his name. Yet he is graciously pleased to accept our weak efforts, because he loves us.

The testimony of a woman, JA, who died about a month after George Whitefield, and who had been greatly influenced by his early preaching, records her wonderful faith in Christ. The issue closes with 'Thoughts on seeing a worm' and poetry. The first of the poems is a Monody on hearing John Wesley preach at George Whitefield's funeral. It is very clear that the writer had a far higher opinion of the deceased than of the preacher.

In **December**, Deering's Lectures on Hebrews continue in chapter 3, concerning the heavenly calling. The writer is at pains to put his readers on Christ and Christ only, and off themselves and any other hope.

The biography of Richard Rothwell is concluded, and Gospel Mysteries considers the parable of the pearl of great price. This is again in the form of a dialogue, between Renatus (Born again) and Evangelist. The subject concerns the divine and human natures of Jesus Christ.

Miscellaneous writings begin with Seasonable Reflections on the Nativity, commonly called Christmas. Our hearts should be taken up with the wonder of the incarnation—that God became man to save us from our sins. Next comes the final part of the admonition to parents, then the second part of The Whole Armour of God. This section teachers Confidence in God.

A letter from George Whitefield to John Wesley shows, in a gracious and pastoral manner, the reason why sin remains in the

believer. This is in answer to the teaching of John Wesley on sinless perfection. Two pages of poems conclude the issue. The second of these is an 'Elegy on the much-lamented death of the Rev. Mr. George Whitefield. Composed in America by a Negro girl aged seventeen years...' There is something timely about this, given the present attention on historical slavery in general, and George Whitefield in particular.

200 years ago: November & December 1820

The **November** issue begins with a piece distinguishing legal repentance from evangelical. The author declares, 'regeneration is nothing short of the spirit of life from the Head of Zion, taking possession of the heart of an elect vessel of mercy; this change is instantaneous and irresistible, nothing goes before it which is in any way of qualification for its reception, nor can all the hardness, misery, and enmity of man, nor even Satan prevent this change taking place in the heart; it is not put within the power of man to prepare his soul for God, nor is it within his power to prevent his working.' The author aims to show that legal repentance is known by many, but that only the objects of divine mercy are also moved to evangelical repentance.

The controversy between Amicus and Myra rumbles on, and the Restoration of the Jews to Canaan is concluded. The author argues that the return of the Jews after the Babylonian exile did not fulfil the bulk of prophecy. He further argues that the Jews will only be converted in their own land, and is dismissive of attempts to preach to them in any other place.

Myra writes to the Editor, again taking issue with Amicus. In formal theology, he writes, all perfection is ascribed to Christ: in the practical outworking of theology in

preaching and in person, the same truth is frequently denied. People tend to look to their sincerity or uprightness for assurance rather than to Christ. The whole issue arose from a complaint, several issue ago, against Matthew Henry and his comments on Genesis 17:1. Another correspondent is offended by Myra's previous writings, and argues that his whole approach to the subject is flawed. He signs himself Omega, perhaps hoping to have the final word on the matter.

Two letters follow this, the first on The Perfections and Glories of the Divine Jesus. The second is the second letter to the Church in Essex, commending them for their faithfulness during a recent problem, and encouraging them to continue in the Lord.

The subject of God willing and decreeing evil is taken up, in a continuation of correspondence begun in a previous issue. The Editors write thoughtfully and helpfully on the subject. Then comes a letter from one who wishes to thank Dr Hawker publicly for his lectures on the Trinity. The conclusion of 'The importance of Scripture investigation' is followed by some further remarks, by Amicus, on Genesis 17:1. Here, the writer shows that 'be thou perfect' means 'love and worship only the Lord God.' It is a command not to go after other gods, and not a statement related to our being in Christ.

One poem and a very short notice of death conclude the issue.

The **December** issue opens with an article on The Witness of the Spirit. The author is keen to show that the true child of God does not require any human agency by which to know his spiritual standing, since the inner witness of the Spirit is the only certain testimony. A Worm—Jacob writes to express what doubtless many others felt about the exchange between Myra and Amicus. He accuses both of being ungracious and

self-defensive, rather than considering that their differences, at bottom, are very small. In order to remove himself from the charge of being either Antinomian or a head-only Christian, A Worm must first state his own doctrine on various matters in detail. That theological controversy comes to such a point is surely a rebuke to the church and body of Jesus Christ.

The Return of the Jews continues to take up the time and efforts of the author. He argues that the apparent impossibility (in his day) of the restoration of the Jewish homeland is no bar to the word and will of God. At the same time he maintains that all the Jews (no doubt meaning all Abraham's physical seed) will return, and that, when they do, God will do a great work among them. The writer advances many scripture verses to undergird his argument. If his exposition is correct, then what happened in 1947 was not the fulfilment of biblical prophecy. If 1947 was that fulfilment, then the writer's argument must have been flawed.

The season brings forth Reflections at the Ending of the Year, and calls for all to examine themselves, whether they be in the faith or not. Tomlinson's Attempt to Rescue Holy Scripture proceeds, and Mrs Hannah Moore is taken to task for promoting the notion of progressive sanctification. Sarah writes to support Myra against Omega, and Juvenis asks if it is possible to be born again and not know it: he thinks not, but many have affirmed the possibility to him. Myra then greets Omega and invites him to take part in a cordial discussion through the pages of the Magazine, on various points of apparent difference. Agnes asks for an explanation of John 6:45, where the work of drawing, usually associated with God the Holy Spirit, is there expressly said to be the work of God the Father. Myra then has a word for

Amicus, calling him, among other things, an 'imbecile.'

The Editors insert the second part of 'The importance of Scripture investigation,' which ought to have appeared in the previous issue instead of the final part. 'Of the Execution of God's Decrees' and Bunches of Violets on 'The divinity and compassion of Christ' conclude the issue.

100 years ago: November & December 1920

The **November** issue once again draws attention to the financial shortfall in producing the Magazine. Inflation was wreaking havoc with attempts at budgeting, it seems. 1 Corinthians 15:58 provides the text for the first main piece, and the Editor then adds a piece on 'Spiritual Astronomy.' A number of interesting facts about the stars are interspersed with teaching on various matters of interest to believers. An old letter for Dr Doudnay, and Wellsprings on 2 Samuel 16:12 lead into Sermon Notes, on Job 34:33, Elihu's question. Some Fundamental Truths takes the doctrine of Sanctification: 'most Christians have clearer views on the doctrine of Justification than on that of Sanctification.' Romans 12:5 provides a text for the next writer, and is followed by variety of short pieces. One concerns the assault made by Higher Criticism, and includes an anecdote recounting an incident at a conference in the USA. The speaker read out a number of attacks on the authority of Scripture, and asked his audience if these were a fair representation of Higher Criticism. He then revealed that he had been reading Tom Paine and *The Age of Reason*. Notices and reviews conclude the month.

The **December** issue reproduces the letter on finance, and 1 Thessalonians 4:16–17 provides the Editor's main text. The second main entry is on 'The revelation of Jesus Christ'

from 1 Peter 1:13. A roundup of deaths that year includes reference to a Mr Sutton of Reading. The Suttons were faithful members at Greyfriars church, and were widely known for their seeds. Sermon Notes, from Psalm 86:17, take up A Child's Plea. End of year thoughts turn the writer's attention to Psalm 118:20, 'The gate of the Lord.' Some Fundamental Truths takes Preservation. 'The term Preservation is, I think, preferable to Perseverance, inasmuch as the children of God realize that their perseverance is due to God's keeping, and that without that keeping they would fail to "endure to the end".' Comfort in Affliction points the reader to the word of God, from Psalms 119:114 and 50.

Various short pieces and reviews conclude the issue. Among these is a report, taken from the *Daily Telegraph*, that shows something of the means by which worldliness came into the churches. It is reported that

the assembly of the Congregational Union of England and Wales held at Southampton on September 29th was addressed by one Rev. T.S. Taylor. His subject was 'The attitude of the Church towards amusements' and he pleaded for an abandonment of old Puritan prejudices against dancing and the theatre. He argued that a well organised church social, involving dancing, was likely to see better behaviour than the sorts of games children play. As for the theatre, there was, he thought, some commendable and worthy material: stick to that, and it will encourage theatres to put on more of the same. The report ends by observing that the attitude of the assembly was that 'the Churches must disabuse themselves of narrow prejudices.' The only way in which Christians will influence the world is by standing apart from it and being salt and light. Everything else is compromise and disobedience.

TO BE CONTINUED

BOOK REVIEWS

Grace for Troubled Times

John Hooper

386 pp, hdk, 2020, £13 post free from the author, 14 Home Park Road, Saltash, Cornwall, PL12 6BH

When the corona virus took hold in the UK one of the consequences of the lock-down was that all places of public worship were closed, thus preventing Christian people from joining together in Christian fellowship and public worship. But the Word of God is not bound, and other means of worship were found by use of modern technology, viz services via Zoom and Youtube &c. One means of fellowship was undertaken by Mr John Hooper who is known to the readers of *The Gospel Magazine* as an occasional contributor to these pages.

The book as published carries the meditations for each day from 24th April to 5th July, after which the author considered that as public worship could commence from the 12th July there was no further need for his issuing these readings (although he has agreed to issue two readings per week to those who desired to receive them, and which continue at the time of writing). Many of the recipients of those devotional readings asked the writer to publish them

in a more permanent format, hence the publication of this volume. The original readings have been slightly edited; the reading for 25th March has been written with 'new material' (page x). When he first sent out his devotional readings they contained long quotations from Christians of former generations, but by the end of April, the daily readings had settled down to meditations from Mr Hooper's pen.

The book follows and prints the dates on which the meditations were circulated. This may cause some readers to think that there was no need to publish them as the actual dates and historical context has passed. However these meditations were 'prompted by the 2020 Covid-19 lockdown' and thus they are not to be restricted to that particular period of time, but that Christian people may consider the principles of which Mr Hooper writes for there is much in this volume which deals with the care of the Lord over his people in all providential circumstances, and can be read with much spiritual profit.

These meditations were written and distributed during the first wave of the pandemic. At the time of writing this review the United Kingdom is beginning to experience a second wave of the pandemic, and is also not eradicated in other parts of the world. The messages are as relevant today as they were when first written and circulated.

JEN

Meeting Jesus: the 'I Am' sayings of Christ

R.C. Sproul

Banner of Truth Trust: 2019 88pp pbk £16.95 ISBN 978-1-84871-928-6

R.C. Sproul's *Meeting Jesus: The 'I Am' Sayings of Christ* is a short and digestible breakdown of the claims and statements of our Lord. It is divided into chapters centring around each saying, and explores them using linguistics and historical and Biblical context. Although a believer may feel they already know and understand these sayings, Sproul's analysis offers plenty for readers varying from nonbelievers to experienced Christians.

Where many theological texts can be dense and intimidating, Sproul gets straight to the point in language that is clear and accessible. In many places he introduces the original Greek and shows how it influences meaning. As someone unfamiliar with Greek, I was able to follow these points easily, and found them enlightening in how I think about 'I Am' statements. Dealing with the original languages of the Bible is tricky for those of us who have not studied them, but writers like Sproul can open up a wealth of meaning without confusing or detracting from their writing.

Although simple and straightforward, this book does not shy away from complex theological discussion. Sproul introduces evidence for Predestination, free will and slavery to sin, the resurrection, the Trinity, etc. Sproul deals deftly with these discussions, and breaks them down to their simplest forms whilst pointing the reader to Christ. Throughout each chapter, he keeps a key thread: the way to the Father through the Son.

This is a book I would recommend to anyone, whether they are simply curious to learn more about Jesus Christ and who he claims to be, or whether they have been a Christian their years. A more seasoned theologian might find it very entry-level, but for the average person, this book offers a meaningful and accessible breakdown of these 'I Am' statements which are so central to our faith.

DOM

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We wish all our readers a blessed and peaceful New Year

‘My times are in thy hand’

Psalms 31:15

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