

MARCH–APRIL 2021

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The Gospel Magazine

The background of the cover is a composite image. The upper portion shows a dark, starry night sky with a large, bright full moon on the right side. The lower portion features a thick layer of golden, billowing clouds that appear to be illuminated from below, creating a warm, glowing effect.

Jehoiachin, pt. 2 • Covenant communion with God • If the Lord will

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1766–2021

*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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MARCH—APRIL 2021

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FELLOWSHIP

‘The whole family in heaven and earth’ (Ephesians 3:15)

I’M not shaking your hand: I’m giving you the right hand of fellowship.’ With these words the elderly gentleman would hold out his hand at the end of the service, and we would shake. And this in the time of Covid, when handshakes are banned, social interaction is very limited, and where grandparents—and even parents—cannot hug their children and grandchildren. For some, the effect on their mental health has been devastating. When the Lord God said, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone’ (Genesis 2:18), he was declaring that we are social beings who need the mutual care, love, support and fellowship that comes from associating with others. That this is so is demonstrated by the rest of that chapter: the Lord God made the woman, and brought her to the man in marriage. His cleaving to his wife is the seal on this mutual relationship.

It is not just husbands, wives and children who enjoy family life. The church is the household of God, and there is no such

thing as a household without a family. The Christian church is the biggest extended family in the world. It embraces individuals from every nation under heaven, regardless of nationality, colour, language or culture. It has its origin in Eden, and its inheritance is heaven. The head of this family is Jesus Christ, who loved it and gave himself for it as his bride.

This family is not a natural but an adopted one. God the Father, in his gracious love, has chosen us in Christ, and saved us with an everlasting salvation. We have been adopted and made the sons of God and are therefore his children. ‘And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together’ (Romans 8:17).

Being one family we share the family likeness and character. Since we are an adopted family, this is not natural: how can an adopted child look and behave like its adopting parents? But when we, by adoption

and grace, are made heirs with Christ, we are regenerate. That new birth involves the putting to death of the old nature and all its passions, and the making of new life in us after the image of God. Given time, a young adopted child will take on the mannerisms and traits of its adopting parents, for good or ill. As children of God, we do not take on the family likeness by imitation but by new creation: any who only imitate are hypocrites.

A family worthy of the name is a loving, caring and disciplining environment in which to raise and nurture children. Our expressions of love are not limited to what we say, but to the way we look at each other, think about each other, and comfort each other with a touch. We can sit together and say nothing, yet enjoy one another's company. We can have cause to be separated for a while, yet never lose that family bond. We can speak honestly with each other, expressing our unhappiness or sorrow at behaviours and attitudes that we find hurtful or consider to be wrong. The bonds of family love are more than strong enough to cope with such honesty, not least because it is itself an expression of the love we bear one another.

One terrible effect of the Covid restrictions has been the practical ban on Christian fellowship. We are meant to arrive at our services just in time to begin. The service is meant to be as brief as possible. At the end we are meant to exit the building, not pausing to speak to anyone outside our bubble. This is not family life. Any family that behaves like this would be considered dysfunctional. The telephone may be a useful means of keeping in touch, but there is no physical contact down a phone line. Online meetings, where we can be on video, may allow us to see one another, but such meetings are not called 'virtual' for nothing. Christian fellowship includes that warmth we have one for

another as we are together. Conversations using such means are not the same as conversations face to face. That sense of togetherness that we experience in person cannot be replicated by any other means. We need to be together, at least from time to time.

Enforced separation, even for a good reason, can lead to homesickness. We feel the sense of loneliness, and we want that old familiarity, and the loving embrace, of parents and siblings. A sign of maturity is that a child can grow up and leave home without that sense of homesickness. In Christians it is a sign that something is wrong, if we can do likewise. Do we miss the place, and the time, and the fact of worship? Do we long for a return to former days, when we simply took for granted our ability to meet, in public and in person, to share with our family the joy of our Lord? Let us not take this for granted any more, but give thanks to our Redeemer for this privilege and mercy.

The old gentleman died of Covid-19 just before the turn of the year. He was 90 years old. 'The Lord knoweth them that are his.' I trust in the Lord's grace to see him one day, in that place where all tears will be wiped away, and where neither sorrow nor crying, nor any more pain will be known. Whether we will be bothered to extend to each other the right hand of fellowship I cannot say: we will be taken up with the worship of him who sits upon the throne, who is worthy to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. But we will be a family, with all who are redeemed by the atoning death of the Lord Jesus Christ, all who share the traits of the adopted, regenerate, children of our heavenly Father. Let us pray for the whole family of our Father in heaven, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and let us have fellowship one with another in Christ. ¶

ON THE BURIAL OF CHRIST

by THE EDITOR

Please read Matthew 27:57–66

HERE we are given proofs of certain things, which, understood aright, will strengthen our faith. These are, 1. the fact of Christ's death; 2. the evident love of his disciples; 3. the fear and worry of the Pharisees.

1. The fact of Christ's death

This is attested by the various parties concerned, of whom there are five:

Joseph of Arimathæa, who begged the *body* of Jesus, v. 58, meaning he knew Christ was dead already. To suggest otherwise is to both disbelieve the Gospel record, and to account a man whom Scripture calls good and just (Luke 23:50) to be a liar and a deceiver.

Pontius Pilate, who commanded the *body* to be delivered, meaning Christ was dead already. Pilate had declared, 'I am innocent of the blood of this just person', v. 24, meaning he knew Christ to be innocent of the charges brought against him. And yet he knew also that to release the body of one who had been condemned to death before that one was dead, would be to invite trouble. If Pilate was content to hand over the body of Jesus, it was because he was certain he was dead.

The servants who delivered the *body*, meaning they handled it and knew the truth. Had they knowingly handed over one who, though thought to be dead, was in fact alive, their own lives would have been forfeit. In that they took down the body from the cross, they were confirming the state of the body, that Christ was truly dead. Indeed, Mark tells us, 15:44–45, that Pilate marvelled that Jesus was dead already, 'and calling unto

him the centurion, he asked him whether he had been dead a while. And when he knew it of the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph.'

The two Marys, who sat outside the tomb after the burial of the *body*. It may not be obvious to us, but in a time and culture where families took care of their dead rather than employing an undertaker, death would have been an accepted aspect of life. Had either Mary any cause to think that Jesus Christ was not dead, they would not have sat idly outside the tomb, but would have sought assistance to remove the stone. Their sitting over against the sepulchre, then, is of the order of watchers, and not of those who believe some great error has been made.

The chief priests and Pharisees, whose words, v. 63, only make sense if they knew Christ to be *dead*. In saying, 'while he was yet alive' they show that they believed him now to be dead. Indeed, a large part of the crowd that came to watch the crucifixion was made up to those who reviled Jesus, v. 39, including the chief priests, scribes and elders, v. 41. Given their passion to see Christ dead (read what is recorded in John 11:47–52), can we think for a moment that they were mistaken in believing Christ to be dead? That he was dead mattered to them more than anything. They had perjured themselves at his trial, and had acted unjustly: the good and just counsellor, Joseph of Arimathæa, did not consent to their counsel and deed (Luke 23:51), showing that only those who were neither good nor just did agree. Therefore the Pharisees stand as witnesses for the defence,

in the case of those who seek to argue that Jesus Christ did not really die on the cross. Alongside them stand Joseph, Pilate and the two Marys. We are indeed compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses.

This fact is attested by the actions of those concerned

Joseph came prepared to bury a *body*, which he did, wrapping it in a shroud. Just suppose, for one moment, that the corpse he was given turned out to be less dead than any had thought. Are we to believe that he would have continued with his plan, and wrapped the badly injured man in a linen shroud, and laid him in a tomb? To do so would have been to ensure that the desired end—the death of Christ—came to pass. Without serious medical attention, he could not have lived. Not only had Christ been deprived of sleep, beaten, scourged, and crucified, but a spear had been pushed into his side deep enough for blood and water to flow out. These are not injuries from which a person could recover. Joseph, wrapping the body in a linen shroud, placed it in a tomb.

Pilate handed over a *body*, and not a living criminal. We have mentioned already the motivation he had to ensure that no living criminal was saved from death, and so we cannot think for a moment that Pilate was a witting party to such a deed. No, the Roman governor of Judea knew perfectly well that it was a dead body he placed into the care and charge of noble Joseph. Bear in mind that, humanly speaking, there was no higher judicial power in the whole province than Pilate, and so his words and deeds must be taken as the final word of human authority.

The servants took down a *body* from the cross, not a living, even a swooning, person. Consider what is required in removing a crucified corpse from a cross, in the

lowering of the cross tree, and in the removal of the nails. It beggars belief to think that, in their handling of the corpse, they would not have detected the signs of life. They knew they were in the presence of death.

The Pharisees put sentries to guard the abode of a *body*, not of a living person. Had Christ been alive, or had they considered for a moment the possibility of his being alive, they would have shouted the fact from the housetops. They would have gone round to Pilate in force, and would have accused him of gross incompetence, or even of being Caesar's enemy. To allow this man to live was tantamount to treason, seeing he made himself higher than any earthly ruler. The Pharisees would not have kept quiet, had Christ still been alive. And if they had thought for a moment that he might have survived the execution and the tomb, and have indeed come out of the sepulchre alive on the third day rather than being raised from the dead, how is that we read in Acts 6:7 that a great company of the priests believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, bearing in mind that the priests were made up of Sadducees who denied the resurrection, and of Pharisees who denied that Jesus had risen from the dead? If they had thought that he had simply revived in the tomb, how could any Pharisees believe in the resurrection? Thus their actions confirm their belief, that Jesus Christ was truly dead on the cross.

This fact is attested by the stone

Joseph caused a stone to be placed over the tomb's entrance, sealing it off. Note that it was a new tomb, in which none had ever been placed before, v. 60 (Luke 24:53). This means that the stone did not seal a tomb in which were more than one corpse, so that it could be argued that another than Christ had risen from the dead: the stone sealed in the one

body, that of our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. But if we ask why Joseph was careful to place a large stone across the entrance to his Saviour's tomb, we need only look at the malice and hatred of the Jewish leaders, a malice and hatred known only too well to Joseph who had witnessed it first hand. Being one of the counsellors he had seen his fellow elders baying for Christ's blood. Would his death be sufficient to protect his corpse from their hatred? Might they not do as Josiah had done? In 1 Kings 13:1ff a prophet came to Bethel to curse the altar of Baal, warning that Josiah would come and destroy it. We read in 2 Kings 23:15f that Josiah came and did that very thing, and opened the sepulchres of the false prophets, and caused their bones to be scattered. The Pharisees believed Jesus to be a false prophet, and might they not show their hatred of him by doing the same? Therefore Joseph sealed the tomb to prevent such desecration. The stone, then, showed Joseph to believe he had buried the dead body of his Saviour, and not that he had secreted a survivor of a barbaric but botched execution.

The Pharisees sealed the stone, in the same way that King Nebuchadnezzar sealed the stone laid over the lions' den, Daniel 6:17, to prevent tampering. The Pharisees believed they acted with authority to prevent the wicked disciples from stealing away the body and pretending that Jesus had risen from the dead. Nebuchadnezzar sealed the den so that none would dare rescue one whom the king evidently loved. The act of sealing was the final evidence that the body within was to remain dead and buried, so that no error could be perpetrated by any who might wish to claim that the person buried there was alive when they were still dead.

We may reasonably conclude that Jesus Christ was really and truly dead.

2. The evident love of the disciples

Joseph was no insignificant person. Although this is the first, and the last, we hear of him, it is evident that he was a man of stature in society. He was rich, v. 57, and was called an honourable counsellor, Mark 15:42, who waited for the kingdom of God, v. 43. He was good and just, Luke 23:50, and a disciple, John 19:58. In this hour of shame he speaks out as one who loves Christ. In the very moment when Christ's enemies have won their greatest triumph over him, and when the rest of the disciples have fled for fear, comes one whose boldness stands as a witness and testimony to us all. Of all the disciples, only Joseph and Nicodemus could have done this. We know of no other who could have caused Pilate to pay attention to them at that time. Had a group of Galilean fishermen presented themselves at the palace gate, or a former tax collector, or a zealot like Simon, would they have gained entry? No, they would have been sent away as being of no repute. But Joseph, an honourable counsellor, used his privilege to do what no other disciple could have done. He therefore had to go alone, and to identify himself as a disciple without any support from any other. And yet he was willing to do so, and to announce his faith and love, in that darkest moment.

The two Marys also showed their love. They set themselves as watchers at the tomb of Christ, a condemned criminal. No doubt many mothers lamented the executions of their criminal sons, but it seems that in most cases the corpse was simply cast into a ditch or onto a rubbish heap. That the Marys should sit by the tomb showed that they had no sense of shame concerning Jesus Christ, whose death was as a criminal, yet was one whom they so love that they are willing to be identified with him in his shame.

The conclusion we draw is that the time to show our love for Christ, and faith in him, is when the price for so doing is high, not when we can easily do so without cost.

3. The fear and worry of the chief priests and Pharisees

Christ's death did not dispel their fear of him. 'Sir, we remember...' v. 63, shows that they had spent the intervening time discussing and no doubt justifying their wicked deed. Initial relief had given way to concern. Their first flush of joy at being rid of their enemy soon passed. As they pondered all they had heard from him, they began to see that the threat he posed was not yet removed. He had foretold his death, and his resurrection. The death had come to pass. Resurrection, which our enlightened age denies as being scientifically impossible, was accepted in those days because it was reported sufficiently frequently. Not only did the prophets speak of raising the dead, as the son of the Shunamite and others, but Jesus himself was known to have raised the dead—and before many witnesses, as in the case of Lazarus of Bethany. If any man might rise from the dead, it would be Jesus of Nazareth. His words, therefore, once remembered, gave them cause to fear. How odd, then, that the disciples who had heard these words, believed them less than the Pharisees.

In so doing, *they called to mind his words concerning his resurrection the third day.* They had used these words to condemn him, Matthew 26:60: now, they were content to use them to justify guarding him. Thus they knew his teaching, but not savingly. They knew what he had claimed, but they did not believe it to their souls' health. They had a certain knowledge of God, but they were ignorant of the truth, and so remained outside grace and the kingdom of heaven.

They understood Jesus to have meant that he would rise again when he spoke of destroying the temple and rebuilding it in three days. Thus the accusation they brought against him at his trial was knowingly false. Their rejection of him was flat unbelief, rejecting truth and twisting his words to suit themselves. It was as if there was nothing Christ could say that could move them from implacable unbelief into humble faith. This serves to show us the deadness and hardness of the human heart in its natural condition. Without grace we are utterly helpless spiritually. How we need the saving grace of God in our Lord Jesus Christ!

Instead, thinking all men are like them, *they feared a fraud on the part of the disciples,* and so would have the tomb guarded until the time had passed. Once the third day was over, and the opportunity to perpetrate the fraud was gone, the danger would be gone as well. And so the guard was placed to prevent the disciples from stealing away the body. Of course, the fact that Christ was placed in a tomb cut out of the rock meant that there could be no sneaking the body out while the watch was distracted. No, a great stone was rolled across the entrance, and it was sealed by some means to prevent its being opened without due authority. Thus the Pharisees, in their fear, confirmed the truth—that the dead and buried Jesus Christ rose again from the tomb the third day.

The conclusion we draw is that the effect of unbelief is to hound the unbeliever in his conscience, to give him no peace, all the while he resists the claims of truth in Christ.

Application

This brief consideration of the passage shows us how richly the Evangelists write, to teach us the details and facts by which we know the truth of what they write. But it might be

objected that, if that were true, none could read the Gospels and not come to faith. If so, know this: faith in Christ is a fruit of his saving work, and it is given to none but those who are the beneficiaries of that saving work. In other words, the plain truth serves to condemn all who reject it, but believing it is an evidence of grace. The Pharisees, by their words and deeds, show both their familiarity with the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ, and their acceptance of the basic truth of what he said. Such acceptance and familiarity, by themselves, can do no good. They do not engender saving faith.

For us, the issue is a little different. We

do believe these things to be true, and we trust in the one who spoke and did them, and look to him for our salvation. But are we willing to do as Joseph, and stand publicly for gospel truth? Are we willing to do as the two Marys, and identify ourselves with our Saviour, even when to do so is to be accused of shameful things? It is this willingness, to be known as disciples of the Lord Jesus when human wisdom would tell us to be quiet, that is the mark of one who has cast off the shackles of fear, and who so loves the Saviour that no price is too high to pay. Have we counted the cost of serving Jesus Christ? ¶

A SERMON ON ISAIAH 1:2–3

REV. C. TUINMAN (1659–1728)

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

Part 13

Thus one should sigh and cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst of us. (Ezekiel 9:4). But how few do this? Yet this last shows that we live in bad and careless times. (Matthew 24:11, 37, 39; 2 Timothy 3:1–5). I cannot stop to count every sin separately, because there are too many. I am leaving this to your own consciousness. We should make Ezra's words ours: O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens. behold, we are before thee in our trespasses: for we cannot stand before thee because of this (Ezra 9:6, 13).

Would we all apply the name Israel to ourselves, according to Galatians 6:16? But yet a few have the right to do so, for they are not all Israel, which are of Israel, neither because of the seed of Abraham, are they all children. (Romans 9:6, 7). But many deserve the rebuke of the old Israel: Are they not children of the Ethiopians unto me, O children of Israel, saith the LORD (Amos 9:7). To such is applicable: They shall not be in the assembly of my people, neither shall they be written in the writing of the house of Israel, neither shall they enter into the land of Israel, and ye shall know that I am the LORD GOD (Ezekiel 13:9).

TO BE CONTINUED

A CHANGE FOR THE BETTER

by CARINE MACKENZIE

Our way of life has changed dramatically over the last few months—restrictions on travel, church, school, visiting, hospitality and much more. There is a good reason for all these changes but we long for the day when our lives will change back to normal.

Life is always full of changes—some for the better and some for the worse. How often have you heard a relative who has not seen you for a while say ‘My, how you have stretched!’ or ‘Haven’t you grown up!’ As we grow up we notice all sorts of changes in how we look, what we like doing or what we are able to do. Indeed it would be very strange if we did not change.

There is one change which is vital—that is a change which God works in us. We are all born sinners by nature, full of original sin. We have disobeyed God’s word in so many ways. We have been proud and selfish. We have done, said and thought many things that are displeasing to our loving God. Our sin needs to be dealt with to make us fit for heaven at last.

When God works savingly in the heart of a sinner, big changes occur in his life. Saul was a well educated Hebrew who hated the teaching and preaching of those who loved and followed Jesus. He hated it so much that he wanted followers of Christ to be put into prison or put to death. But on his way to Damascus to pursue these awful deeds, Saul was stopped in his tracks by the Lord Jesus whom he was persecuting. His life was dramatically changed. His heart was made new. He became a preacher of the gospel, travelling on many dangerous journeys to difficult places to tell sinners about the salvation procured by the Lord Jesus as he died on the cross. He established many churches and encouraged believers in their faith instead of trying to destroy them. What a wonderful change!

Not every change of heart or conversion to Jesus Christ is as dramatic as Saul’s. Lydia was a Gentile woman living in Philippi. She was a business woman from Thyatira selling rich purple cloth. The Bible tells us she was a worshipper of God and used to go to a prayer meeting with other women by the riverside. Paul, (who used to be called Saul), came to preach the gospel to this group. Lydia was converted, but not in a dramatic way. The Lord opened her heart to attend to Paul’s message. She came to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for her salvation. Saul and Lydia were both changed by the same power of God who never changes.

Another great change lies ahead of us. This will happen ‘in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed’ (1 Corinthians 15:22). The resurrection of the body on the last day is a sure thing. Those who believe in Jesus will be raised up with glorified bodies—a glorious change—to be forever with the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:17). They will be acquitted on the Day of Judgment because Jesus bore the wrath of God’s just anger against their sins when he died on the cross.

God will wipe all tears from their eyes. There will be no more pain, or death, or sorrow. ‘The former things are passed away’ (Revelation 21:4): what an amazing change to look forward to.

We may face many changes in our lifetime—some that may make us anxious and unhappy, but our unchanging God knows the end from the beginning and does all things well.

Bible Search

Look for the missing words in your Bible. The initial letters of the correct answers will spell out a word from the article.

1. For this _____ must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. (1 Corinthians 15:53)
2. Turn thou us unto thee, O Lord, and we shall be turned; renew our days as of _____. (Lamentations 5:21)
3. At the _____ of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth. (Philippians 2:10)
4. They shall perish but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a _____ shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed. (Psalm 102:26)
5. Can the _____ change his skin, or the leopard his spots? The maybe also do good, that are accustomed to do evil. (Jeremiah 13:23)
6. Surely after that I was turned, I _____ and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh. (Jeremiah 31:19)
7. Turn us O God of our _____, and cause thine anger toward us to cease. (Psalm 85:4)
8. But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same _____ from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. (2 Corinthians 3:18)
9. Then _____ he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures. (Luke 24:45)
10. Like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in _____ of life. (Romans 6:4)

JEHOIACHIN (PART 2)

by J.E. NORTH (LANDFORD WOOD)

'And it came to pass in the seven and thirtieth year of the captivity of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the twelfth month, in the five and twentieth day of the month, that Evilmerodach king of Babylon in the first year of his reign lifted up the head of Jehoiachin king of Judah, and brought him forth out of prison, And spake kindly unto him, and set his throne above the throne of the kings that were with him in Babylon, And changed his prison garments: and he did continually eat bread before him all the days of his life. And for his diet, there was a continual diet given him of the king of Babylon, every day a portion until the day of his death, all the days of his life' (Jeremiah 52:31–34)

But we are told in the Prophecy of Jeremiah there are further wonders in the release of Jehoiachin. So we turn in the third place to consider,

3. Jehoiachin was set on high

'And set his throne above the throne of the kings that were with him in Babylon' Jer. 52:32. Notice, first of all, he was set on a throne. He had been in the dungeon, the dark, dank, filthy place of punishment but now he had been taken out of the prison; kind words were spoken to him and he was raised to a throne which was higher than the other thrones save that of the king. The lower thrones would indicate a vassalage of the 'inferior' kings, but Jehoiachin was set higher than a vassal.

What a mercy it is to be brought into a 'large place' (Pss. 18:19; 118:5). There are further examples of others being brought out of prison. We can think of Joseph who was brought into prison under a false charge and he was there in prison. 'Whose feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid in iron: until the time that his word came: the word of the Lord tried him. The king sent and loosed him; even the ruler of the people, and let him go free' (Ps. 105:18–20). It was by the word of the king he was released, as was Jehoiachin. For 'Where the word of a king is, there is

power: and who may say unto him, What doest thou?' (Eccles. 8:4).

To be set on high is the privilege of every blood bought sinner. He is brought into the presence of the King of kings and there he enjoys sweet fellowship with his Lord and Saviour. He is 'raised ... up together' (with Christ and the whole of the redeemed Church of God) 'and made (to) sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus' (Eph. 2:6).

Think O my soul if 'tis so sweet
On earth to sit at Jesus feet
What will it be to wear a crown
And sit with Jesus on his throne?

What is it, then, to be set on high for the child of God?

(a) It is to be brought out of the pit and the miry clay and to be set upon a rock (Ps. 40:1–3).

(b) It is to be given a golden chain; the golden chain spoken of in Romans 8:35–39).

(c) It is to have a hope which maketh not ashamed, and which is the anchor of the soul (Rom. 5:5; Heb. 6:19).

(d) it is to have the assurance of the certainty of these things within the heart (Col. 2:2; Heb. 6:11; 10:22).

What a mercy it is to be brought by the Spirit of God into the experience of being

set on high, and these blessings are eternal and can never be finally taken away from the child of God.

Did Jesus in thy heart once shine?
Then Jesus is forever thine.

4. Jehoiachin was clothed by the king

‘And changed his prison garments’ Jer. 52:33
The next thing we see in this verse is that Jehoiachin was clothed by the king. What a mercy it is to be clothed by the King of kings! And what a robe it is. Not made with human hands but it is a robe of fine linen (Rev. 19:8) wrought by the blood and the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. Well do the hymn-writers write about the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. Zindendorf writes in his great hymn on the righteousness of Christ Jesus:

Jesus thy blood and righteousness,
My beauty are, my glorious dress,
Midst flaming worlds in these arrayed,
With joy will I lift up my head

Isaac Watts writes concerning the Robe of Righteousness:

And, lest the shadow of a spot
Should on my soul be found,
He took the robe the Saviour wrought,
And cast it all around.

There are examples in Scripture of the saints of God being clothed with the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ (both figuratively and actually). We will consider a number of them, beginning with Joseph. Joseph was in prison (as we noticed above) and he was brought out by the word of the king (cf. Gen. 40, 41). He came out of prison, shaved and changed his raiment. Is this not a beautiful picture of the deliverance of the child of God from the prison of sin? Being called out and being clothed in Christ’s righteousness.

In the Prophecy of Zechariah, the prophet sees Joshua clothed in filthy garments (Zech. 3:3, 4). Different commentators have interpreted this passage as applying to the literal Jewish High Priest of that time, others take it as applying to the nation of Israel, others have even taken this picture as being of the Lord Jesus Christ. I take it, however as applying to the Church of Christ. It is the church of Christ in its pre-redemption state: clothed in filthy garments which are taken away, and the Lord says to his people, ‘And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment’ (Zech. 3:4).

Again, there is a similar picture in Ezekiel 16:1–14, in which Israel is pictured as being in a horrid condition but she is cared for by the Lord and he covers her with his garments. Which speaks not only of wayward Israel, but also of the Church redeemed by Christ.

One final picture is that of the Prodigal Son as recorded in chapter 15 of Luke’s Gospel. We read how he took his inheritance and spent all in riotous living and when he had nothing left he joined himself to a farmer who sent him to keep the swine. We are told he ‘would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him’ (Lk. 15:16). When he came to himself he returned to his father, not worthy of being a servant in his father’s house. But when he came home his father welcomed him and clothed him in a new garment.

All these pictures from the Scriptures of Truth tell us the same thing, namely, that there is a garment that covers all our sin and unrighteousness. That which happened to Jehoiachin in his being taken from the prison house and clothed by the king is a picture of the beautiful action of God our Father in clothing us in the righteousness of the Lord

Jesus Christ. It is imputed to each of his children and when they are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb, they will, each one have the Wedding Garment

5. Jehoiachin was provided for by the king

‘And he did continually eat bread before him all the days of his life. And for his diet, there was a continual diet given him of the king of Babylon, every day a portion until the day of his death, all the days of his life’ Jer. 52:33, 34.

‘But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus’ (Phil. 4:19).

Jehoiachin was provided for the remainder of his life upon earth. And the source of that provision was the king’s bounty. The king had all the resources of the Babylonian Empire at his disposal. He was an absolute monarch. And out of that bounty he fed Jehoiachin. Day by day there was no want for Jehoiachin. Every need was met.

How much more the provision that is to be found in the Lord Jesus Christ for his people. There is nothing wanting in their experience. Has not the Psalmist written: ‘O fear the LORD, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him’ (Psalm 34:9)? There is an abundance in Christ for every child of God:

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

Whate’er be our wants, we need not to fear;
Our numerous complaints his mercy will hear;
His fulness shall yield us abundant supplies;
His power shall shield us when dangers arise.

The fountain o’erflows, our woes to redress,
Still more he bestows, and grace upon grace.
His gifts in abundance we daily receive;
He has a redundance for all that believe.

What is it the child of God needs? See that provision of which Paul speaks. ‘But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption’ (1 Cor. 1:30). See the fulness in the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is the wisdom of God, that is, he is the fruit of the Godhead acting in unison, that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, but as he is the revelation of the Word of God so we see in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ the outworking of the wisdom of the Almighty Triune Godhead. He is also our righteousness. We have seen this above. He is our Sanctification, that is, the One who was set apart for us being ‘holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens’ (Heb. 7:26). And because he was ‘separated from his brethren’ (Gen. 49:26), the children of God being ‘in Christ’ they are separated unto him. And finally, he is our redemption, that is, he has paid the full price of the redemption of a multitude that no man can number.

Having seen the fulness in Christ, we can also see the extent of that provision. Jehoiachin was given a provision for the remainder of his life. When he died, the provision ceased, quite naturally: ‘Every day a portion until the day of his death, all the days of his life.’ And we have to say it is the same provision for the children of God. We quoted above the text Philippians 4:19 which speaks of the provision made by God for his people: All our needs. Nothing lacking! We quoted above the hymn by Fawcett, ‘A fulness resides in Jesus our head.’ In the concluding verse of the hymn he writes:

When troubles attend, or danger, or strife,
His love will defend and guard us through life;
And when we are fainting and ready to die,
Whatever is wanting, his grace will supply.

And that provision continues into eternity where the child of God lives for ever worshipping and praising the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. What a bounty! What a fulness! What a provision! Blessed be his holy Name. Now, we said at the beginning of this article that the life and experience of Jehoiachin is a pale reflection or picture of the experience

of the Child of God. Every one of us is found in the prison of sin. Are we still there or has there been a bringing forth of the prisoner into liberty? Have we been brought into the light and liberty of the gospel? And are we among those 'whom the Son sets free is free indeed'? What a mercy it is to be brought by the Spirit of God into that happy position. ¶

ASSURANCE FOREVER FOR UNSTABLE SONS

by WYLIE W. FULTON (USA)

'I am the LORD; I change not, therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed' Malachi 3:6

WHENEVER we think of the unsure, faltering steps of our own feet, how wonderful is the sure promise that the One we trust is immutable! He says, 'I change not—I, JEHOVAH, the Immutable Rock—I, the GOD of the Covenant—I, the RULER over all time, all places, all circumstances and all persons, I the LORD GOD, will never change!'

Every good gift which we enjoy and every hope in which we rest 'is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning' (James 1:17). In his flawless character as God there is not the slightest hint of change, of duplicity, of uncertainty, or unfaithfulness. Our Eternal Lord God abides faithful forever. God is not a man (Num. 23:19) or else he would lie and change and deceive and go back on his word. He reminds his people of their relationship to Jacob the conniver, the thief, the sinner—'You sons of Jacob are even as your father! But I am not! I am God Supreme and Absolute and

Immutable! Rest in my Word!' Is that not true?

Since the Scriptures cannot be broken (John 10:35), we can stake all our hope on his sure Word. Even the inspired Apostle Peter would not trust exclusively to his memory of a great experience with the Lord Jesus himself, but he fell back upon the 'more sure word' (2 Peter 1:19) of Scripture. Peter says that we do well if we 'take heed' to these writings, the divinely inspired Word, the one sure and immutable light that shines in a world of total darkness—and it will shine without failure until our Lord comes and dispels all darkness in the brightness of his appearing.

Then the Word is not open for debate or the deviations and perversions of the critics! IT stands, as God himself stands, immutable for all time. Attack the Word of Jehovah at any point whatsoever and you immediately violate the First Commandment, 'Have no other gods before me' (Exodus 20:3). That is, God says, 'I am the ONE and ONLY Object of all your worship.' If God's Word is not

worthy of absolute trust then neither is its Author, and in the failure of his Word mankind would have ‘another god before him.’ Any attacks or perversions of that Word also fly in the face of this sure text: ‘I am the LORD; I change not.’

Here is the tendency of our modern liberal interpretations—they make *man* to be wise above what is written, elevating human wisdom to the place of Scripture’s absolute authority. But where God’s Bible speaks, all quibbling must end. The liberals feign to make much of God and even of his Son Jesus, but when you abridge and alter and correct and rearrange and dispute and question his infallible Word, you undermine his character. For example, if I promise to meet you at a certain time and at a designated place but then make other plans to the total neglect of our scheduled meeting, my word is fickle and I am not an honourable man but a liar. (Of course, we allow that *circumstances* can get in the way, as I am a weak creature subject to change, but in those rare cases my honour would be impoverished if I didn’t inform you.) On the other hand, if a single word or jot or tittle of my Lord’s Word fails, then God himself is subject to the charge of duplicity and deceit. And when we remember that God has magnified his Word even above his very name (Psalm 138:2), how true is the assertion that an attack on the Word becomes a violation of the First Commandment, a dishonouring of his position as the ONE God we must worship and serve!

‘Therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.’ If the Lord God changed, he would withdraw the blood covering and wrath would fall on the redeemed sinner. But it is the ‘blood of the everlasting covenant’ and such is impossible (Hebrews 13:20). While God remains, the Blood will never lose its power! We are all as ‘Jacobs,’ prone to failure

and deceit even in the midst of a desire to believe and follow God—we can never say of ourselves, ‘I am Jacob; I change not,’ for faltering is our character while in this flesh.

But God’s people may rightly say, ‘We are even as our failing and slipping father Jacob, or as our disobedient first parent Adam, prone to fall. Thank God, *he* is not like us!’ Then we can see further that ‘God is not a man that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? Or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? Behold, I have received commandment to bless: and he hath blessed: and I cannot reverse it’ (the old prophet Balaam is forced to admit God’s unchangeable blessing on his own people). ‘He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel. The Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them. God brought them out of Egypt’ (Numbers 23:19–22).

Of Jehovah our unchanging God alone can it be said in the words of Solomon, ‘Blessed be the LORD, that hath given rest unto his people Israel, according to all that he promised: there hath not failed one word of all his good promise, which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant. The LORD our God be with us, as he was with our fathers: let him not leave us, nor forsake us’ (1 Kings 8:56f). Amen! ‘For he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee’ (Hebrews 13:5).

I would remind you that the promises of God are exclusively for his covenant people and not for everybody in the world—for ‘the sons of Jacob’ and not the sons of Pharaoh—for ‘the children of Israel’ and not the wild natives of Canaan—for the *called* people of God and not the nations round about with which they were to have nothing to do—for believers and not rejecters. The promise was for Israel and for the remnant called by God’s

name. For the promise of salvation, says Peter, 'is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call' (Acts 2:38–39). The promise is 'sure to all the seed,' or to those called 'children of the promise' to whom it is sent (Romans 4:16; 9:8), and that 'not of the Jews only but also of the Gentiles.'

That we might further see the sureness of this promise of the immutable Jehovah, I remind you also that, if in the covenant arrangements of God you have been called effectually to Christ in salvation, then you

are sure to be among the finally '*glorified*' (Romans 8:28–31). Did it ever occur to you that Romans 8:28 is true only because God and his Word never fail? Have you come to see that if ANY promise of the Bible is false, so may this one be? And then you could not plant your feet with assurance on any portion of your Bible. You would be left without a 'sure foundation' in the midst of a world that seeks to destroy you!

Friend, I trust ALL of God's Book, because I know the unchangeable *character* of its Author! Do you? ¶

COVENANT COMMUNION WITH GOD

by JOHN HOOPER (Saltash)

1. WHAT IS GOD'S COVENANT?

C.H. SPURGEON once wrote, 'The doctrine of the divine covenant lies at the root of all true theology.'¹ Indeed it does, and it lies at the root of the gospel, of your and my salvation, and of our relationship with God. And yet the serious Bible student will soon discover that it is also a word fraught with controversy and much debate, even as to the most basic question of all, What *is* 'the doctrine of the divine covenant'?

At first this may seem a rather unnecessary question. We all know what a covenant is, don't we? And if we don't, we only need to look in a dictionary. Unfortunately, we all too often derive our definitions of holy things from the *unholy* things in the world

around us, like dictionaries, and unsurprisingly that can lead us astray. We can see some evidence of this in the way in which God's 'covenant' is sometimes defined.

Generally speaking, at the purely earthly level of a covenant between men, the usual definition is that of a pact or agreement between two or more parties. The *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* defines covenant as: 'A mutual agreement between two or more persons to do or refrain from doing certain acts.'²

Overwhelmingly we find it is this idea of a covenant as a legal pact, agreement or contract that has been carried over into the spiritual realm and is traditionally used to

¹ C.H. Spurgeon, *God's Grace to You* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker, rptnt. 1997), p.5.

² *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* Vol. I (Oxford: OUP, 1973), p.444.

define the covenant arrangement between God and men in Christ.

Writing in the seventeenth century Francis Turretin (1623–87), a Swiss Reformed theologian, said, ‘God’s covenant ... denotes properly a pact and agreement entered into between God and man, consisting partly in a stipulation of duty ... and partly in the promise of a reward.’³

By the twentieth century little had changed. Prof. Louis Berkhof’s definition runs like this:

The covenant of grace may be defined as *that gracious agreement between the offended God and the offending but elect sinner, in which God promises salvation through faith in Christ, and the sinner accepts this believingly, promising a life of faith and obedience.*⁴

Such words as agreement, pact, compact, contract and even bargain have been used, summoning up imagery of two parties negotiating with one another and agreeing respective promises, commitments and conditions. Already this strikes me as being rather unworthy of our sovereign God. But notice Berkhof’s use of the word ‘may.’ Perhaps he too had misgivings.

Are there any alternatives to the agreement idea? Well, yes, there are and a short historical survey will help us identify them. Samuel Waldron, in his exposition of the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith, prefers to define covenant as ‘a sworn promise—a commitment certified by an oath’,⁵ and certainly

promise, particularly sworn promise, cannot be separated from the Biblical covenant idea. One of the Biblical pictures illustrating God’s covenant with his people is marriage, in which promises form an integral part. Scripture makes it clear that integral to God’s covenant with us is his promise, ‘I will be their God, and they shall be my people’ (Jeremiah 31:33; 2 Corinthians 6:16).

Another possibility is hinted at by Thomas Chalmers when he writes: ‘There is no one term which is more frequently employed in the Bible to denote our relationship to God than the term *covenant*.’⁶ Chalmers is here introducing the believer’s relationship with God as something that is intrinsic to the covenant idea. Other related words would be bond, fellowship, friendship, and communion.

Such an understanding of the covenant as Chalmers is hinting at here is certainly not foreign to older writers. One of the earliest covenant theologians was the Swiss Reformer Heinrich Bullinger (1504–75) who in 1534 described the covenant as ‘this mystery of the unity and fellowship with the divine.’⁷ He went on to describe the wonder of this:

For what greater deed than this has ever been heard of in the world, that the eternal power and majesty, the immortal all-knowing God, the creator of the universe, in whom all things subsist, by whom all things exist, and through whom all things are preserved, joined himself in covenant with miserable mortals corrupted by sin. This indisputably is

³ Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology* Vol. 2 (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1994), p.172.

⁴ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Edinburgh: BoT, 1984), p.277 (emphasis Berkhof’s).

⁵ Samuel E Waldron, *A Modern Exposition of the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith* (Darlington, UK: EP, 1999), p.117.

⁶ Thomas Chalmers, *Introduction to The Reign of Grace* by Abraham Booth (Swengel, PA: Bible Truth Depot, nd), p.1. Emphasis original.

⁷ Heinrich Bullinger, *The One and Eternal Testament or Covenant of God*, in *Fountainhead of Federalism* by Charles S. McCoy and J. Wayne Baker (Louisville, KY: WJK Press, 1991), p.103.

the origin of our religion and its primary point: we are saved solely through the goodness and mercy of God.⁸

Also Francis Turretin, despite seeing the covenant primarily as a pact or agreement, was able to describe it in such exalted terms as these: ‘the centre and bond of all religion, consisting in the communion of God with man and embracing in its compass all the benefits of God towards man and his duties towards God.’⁹ Dutch Reformed theologian Johannes Cocceius (1603–69) wrote that ‘by grace alone is man drawn to the covenant and to the grace or friendship of God,’¹⁰ while his compatriot Herman Witsius (1636–1708) described the promised blessing of the covenant as ‘the communion and enjoyment of God.’¹¹

Among British writers John Ball (1585–1640) saw the gospel as bringing a people of all nations ‘into the bond of the covenant.’¹² Samuel Rutherford (c.1600–1661) spoke of believers as having a ‘covenant relation’ to God,¹³ while Thomas Boston (1676–1732) would frequently refer to the ‘bond’ of the covenant¹⁴ ‘and the communion thereof.’¹⁵ With reference to John 17:20–22, Boston spoke of ‘a covenant-state of union,

communion, peace, and favour with God.’¹⁶ Finally we turn to Nehemiah Coxe (d. 1688), a Baptist Puritan who drew on the work of Cocceius to formulate his own definition of God’s covenant with men: ‘A declaration of his sovereign pleasure concerning the benefits he will bestow on them, the communion they will have with him, and the way and means by which this will be enjoyed by them.’¹⁷ Coxe, who has been described as ‘the most significant Baptist theologian when it comes to covenant theology,’¹⁸ goes on to say that the idea of a covenant ‘implies a special bond of favour and friendship which belongs to federal-interest and relation.’¹⁹

In more recent times Prof. Berkhof was not averse to calling God’s gracious covenant ‘a covenant of friendship with man.’²⁰ He described the very essence of the covenant, from the believer’s point of view, as ‘the relation of friendship with God.’²¹

Most notable in developing this understanding of the covenant has been Herman Hoeksema (1886–1965). He held that the Biblical emphasis ‘is not on the idea of an agreement or a pact, but rather upon a living relation of friendship between God and those whom he has chosen in Jesus Christ their Lord.’²²

⁸ Ibid., p.105.

⁹ Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1994), Vol. 2, p. 169.

¹⁰ Quoted in Heinrich Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics* (London: The Wakeman Trust, rprnt [nd]), p. 388.

¹¹ Herman Witsius, *The Oeconomy of the Covenants Between God and Man* Vol. 1 (New York: Thomas Kirk, 1804), p. 364. Viewed on-line.

¹² John Ball, *A Treatise of the Covenant of Grace* (London, 1645), pp.160, 202. Viewed on-line.

¹³ Samuel Rutherford, *The Covenant of Life Opened* (Edinburgh, 1655), p.351. Viewed on-line.

¹⁴ Thomas Boston, *A View of the Covenant of Grace* (Lewes, UK: Focus Christian Ministries Trust, 1990), pp.29, 33, 156, 158, 181, 199, 204.

¹⁵ Ibid., p.33.

¹⁶ Ibid., p.190.

¹⁷ Nehemiah Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, in *Nehemiah Coxe and John Owen: Covenant Theology from Adam to Christ*, (Palmdale, CA: Reformed Baptist Academic Press, 2005), p.36.

¹⁸ Pascal Denault, *The Distinctiveness of Baptist Covenant Theology* (Birmingham AL: Solid Ground Christian Books, 2013), p.17.

¹⁹ Nehemiah Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, p.36.

²⁰ Louis Berkhof, *Manual of Christian Doctrine*, (Grand Rapids MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1933), p.157.

²¹ Ibid., p.162.

²² Herman Hoeksema, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2nd ed., Vol. 1, (Grandville, MI: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2004), p.462.

So historically we find three words or groups of words associated with the Biblical idea of *covenant*. They are *agreement* (including also pact, contract and compact), *promise*, and *relationship* (with which we should also include bond, union, fellowship,

communion and friendship). I think we can see already that writers have struggled to find any single word or even family of words that will adequately define the glorious concept that is God's covenant.

TO BE CONTINUED

OF THE RIGHT KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST CRUCIFIED (PART 3)

by WILLIAM PERKINS (1558–1602)

The following article appears in Volume 9 of the RHB edition of the Complete Works of William Perkins. The text below is taken from the 1626 edition.

That which I have now said of meats, drinks, apparel, must now be understood of gentry and nobility, inasmuch as noble birth without new birth in Christ, is but an earthly vanity: the like may be said of physic, sleep, health, liberty, yea of the very breathing of the air. And to go yet further, in our recreation Christ must be known: for all recreation stands in the use of all things indifferent: and the holy use of all things indifferent is purchased unto us by the blood of Christ. For this cause it is very meet that Christian men and women should with their earthly recreation join spiritual meditation of the death of Christ, and of the one take occasion to bethink themselves of the other. If this were practiced there should not be so many unlawful sports and delights, and so much abuse of lawful recreations as there is.

The third benefit is that all crosses, afflictions, and judgments whatsoever cease to be curses and punishments to them that are in Christ, and are only means of correction or

trial, because his death has taken away, not some few parts, but all, and every part of the curse of the whole law. Now, in all crosses, Christ is to be known of us on this manner. We must judge of our afflictions, as chastisements or trials, not as proceeding from a revenging judge, but from the hand of a bountiful and loving Father; and therefore they must be conceived in, and with the merit of Christ; and if we do otherwise regard them, we take them as curses and punishments of sin. And hence it follows, that subjection to God's hand in all crosses, is a mark and badge of the true Church.

The last benefit is, that death is properly no death, but a rest of sleep. Death therefore must be known and considered, not as it is set forth in the law, but as it is altered and changed by the death of Christ: and when death comes we must then look upon it through Christ's death, as through a glass: and thus it will appear to be but a passage from this life to everlasting life.

Thus much of the *merit* of Christ crucified. Now follows his *virtue*, which is the power of his Godhead, whereby he creates new hearts in all them that believe in him, and makes them new creatures. This virtue is double: the first is the *power of his death*, whereby he freed himself from the punishment and imputation of our sins: and the same virtue serveth to mortify and crucify the corruptions of our minds, wills, affections, even as a corrosive doth waste and consume the rotten and dead flesh in any part of man's body.

The second is, the *virtue of Christ's resurrection*, which is also the power of his Godhead, whereby he raised himself from death to life: and the very same power serveth to raise those that belong to Christ, from their sins in this life, and from the grave in the day of the last judgment. Now the knowledge of this double virtue must not be only speculative, that is, barely conceived in the brain, but it must be experimental: because we ought to have experience of it in our hearts and lives, and we should labour by all means possible, to feel the power of Christ's death, killing and mortifying our sins, and the virtue of his resurrection, in the putting of spiritual life into us that we may be able to say, that we live not, but that Christ lives in us. This is one of the most excellent things which Paul sought for, who saith, 'I have counted all things but loss, and do judge them to be dung, that I might know him, and the virtue of his resurrection' (Phil. 3:8, 10). And he saith that this is the right way to know and learn Christ, 'to cast off the old man, which is corrupt through the deceiveable lusts, and to put on the new man, which is created in righteousness and true holiness' (Eph. 4:22, 24).

The third benefit, is the *example* of Christ. We deceive ourselves if we think that he is only to be known of us as a redeemer, and not as a spectacle or pattern of all good duties, to

which we ought to conform ourselves. Good men indeed, that have been, or in present are upon the earth the servants of God must be followed of us: but they must be followed no otherwise than they follow Christ, and Christ must be followed in the practice of every good duty that may concern us, without exception, simply and absolutely, 1 Cor. 11:1.

Our conformity with Christ stands either in the framing of our inward and spiritual life, or in the practice of outward and moral duties.

Conformity of spiritual life is, not by doing that which Christ did upon the cross, and afterwards, but by a doing of the like, by a certain kind of imitation. And it hath four parts. The first is a *spiritual oblation*. For as Christ in the garden, and upon the cross, by prayer made with strong cries and tears, presented and resigned himself to be a sacrifice of propitiation to the justice of his Father for man's sins, so must we in prayer present and resign ourselves, our souls and bodies, our understanding, will, memories, affections, and all we have, to the service of God, in the general calling of a Christian, and in the particular callings in which he has placed us. Take an example in David, 'Sacrifice and burnt offering (saith he) thou wouldest not, but ears thou hast pierced unto me; then said I, Lo, I come: I desire to do thy will, O God, yea, thy law is within my heart' (Psalm 40:7). The second is, *conformity in the cross*, two ways. For first, as he bare his own cross to the place of execution, so must we, as good disciples of Christ, deny ourselves, and take up all the crosses and afflictions that the hand of God shall lay upon us. Again, we must become like unto him, in the crucifying and mortifying of the body of sin, which we carry about us. Gal. 5:24, 'They which are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts thereof.' We must do as the Jews did, we must set up the crosses and gibbets,

whereon we are to fasten and hang this flesh of ours: that is, the sin and corruption that cleaves and sticks unto us, and by the sword the Spirit wound it even unto death. This being done, we must yet go further, and labour by experience to see and feel the very death of it, and to lay it as it were in a grave, never to rise again: and therefore we should daily cast new moulds upon it. The third is a *spiritual resurrection*, whereby we should by God's grace use means that we may every day more and more come out of our sins, as out of a loathsome grave; to live unto God in newness of life, as Christ rose from his grave. And because it is an hard matter for a man to come out of the grave or rather dungeon of his sins, this work cannot be done at once, but by degrees, as God shall give grace. Considering we lie by nature dead in our sins, and stink in them as loathsome carrion, first, we must begin to stir ourselves as a man that comes out of a swoon, awakened by the word and voice of Christ's sounding in our dead ears; secondly, we must raise up our minds to a better state and condition, as we use to raise up our bodies: after this we must put out of the grave, first one hand, and then the other. This done, we must do our endeavour, as it were, upon our knees, at least to put one foot out of the sepulchre of sin, the rather when we see ourselves to have one foot of the body in the grave of the earth, that in the day of judgment we may be wholly delivered from all bonds of corruption. The fourth part is, a *spiritual ascension* into heaven, by a continual elevation of the heart and mind to Christ, sitting at the right hand of the Father, as Paul saith, Phil. 3:20, 'Have your conversation in heaven,' and Col. 3:1, 'If ye be risen with Christ, seek those things that are above.'

Conformity in moral duties is either general or special. General is to be holy

as he is holy. Rom. 8:29, 'Those whom he knew before he hath also predestinate to be like the image of his Son,' that is, not only in the cross, but also in holiness and glory. 1 John 3:3, 'He which hath this hope, purifieth himself even as he is pure.'

Special conformity is chiefly in four virtues: Faith, Love, Meekness, Humility.

We must be like him in *faith*. For as he, when he apprehended the wrath of God, and the very pangs of hell were upon him, wholly stayed himself upon the aid, help, protection and good pleasure of his Father, even to the last: so must we by a true and lively faith depend wholly on God's mercy in Christ, as it were with both our hands, in peace, in trouble, in life, and in the very pang of death: and we must not in any wise let our hold go; no, though we should feel ourselves descend to hell.

We must be like him in *meekness*. Matt. 11:29, 'Learn of me, that I am meek and lowly.' His meekness showed itself in the patient bearing of all injuries and abuses offered by the hands of sinful and wretched men, and in the suffering of the curse of the law, without grudging or repining, and with submission to his Father in all things. Now the more we follow him therein, the more shall we be conformable to him in his death and passion, Phil. 3:10.

Thirdly, he must be our example in *love*. He loved his enemies more than himself. Eph. 5:2, 'Walk in love, even as Christ loved us, and hath given himself for us an oblation and sacrifice of a sweet smelling savour unto God.' The like love ought we to show, by doing service to all men in the compass of our calling, and by being all things to all men (as Paul was), that we might do them all the good we can, both for body and soul, 1 Cor. 9:19.

TO BE CONTINUED

IF THE LORD WILL

by PHILIP LIEVESLEY (Frinton-on-Sea)

‘Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that. But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil. Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.’ James 4:13–16

2020 became the year of ‘Tales of the Unexpected’. Who would ever have thought that a British Prime Minister albeit reluctantly would announce to the nation that people were to stay at home and churches were to be closed? That extremely popular industries such as aviation, tourism, hospitality, entertainment, and sport would be decimated? Even Wimbledon fortnight was cancelled. Before 2020 and the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic we were perhaps all guilty in the UK to some degree of taking many things in life for granted. Not least expectancy of a long life and grand plans for the future. After all, we live in the land of the renowned NHS and opportunity. Generally, we had come to take for granted an excellence in health care and an unprecedented high standard of living and quality of life even in retirement that previous generations could only dream of. Even during the first national lockdown the shelves in our supermarkets were filled to the brim with a variety of groceries. Although we all desire longevity we see in our text that it is vain to promise ourselves long life because that is God’s prerogative alone to give us as our maker and preserver of our life. The coronavirus which is a respiratory illness reminds us of the fragility of human life which is dependent on the fundamental ability to breath. ‘Cease

ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?’ (Isa. 2:22). Although at the time of preparing this sermon in the divine providence the UK has started the roll out of its national inoculation scheme of vaccines to give Covid-19 immunity mainly to the elderly this formerly unknown and incurable virus was in actual fact throughout 2020 a grim near and present life-threatening danger to our senior citizens. We have been reminded that we live as long as God appoints and must be submissive to him even with our very lives.

Although we desire to prosper in all our endeavours it is vain to promise ourselves guaranteed success even if our plans are well thought through if without God’s leave and blessing. The psalmist says in Ps. 127:1; ‘except the lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the lord keepeth the city, the watchman waketh but in vain’. Prov. 16:9 ‘a man’s heart deviseth his way: but the lord directeth his steps’. People today, whether great or small, sadly tend to plan their aspirations in life without consulting Almighty God. But the sovereign God overrules those plans however seemingly meticulously designed and full proof.

We need to acknowledge the frailty of our lives even today with sophisticated medical science. We need to base the dependence

of our actions even with modern technology upon God's will, because both our lives and our aspirations are at God's disposal. We ourselves are always at God's disposal. It is wise to acknowledge the Divine Providence in every aspect of our lives and especially our hopes for a long life and aspirations of future prosperity because the pages of the Bible tell us it is foolish not to do so.

What is God's intended meaning of this text?

I. The arrogance of self-confidence in life plans

1. Over-optimistic view of the future to fulfill their plans: (v. 13) 'and continue there a year'

These men referred to in our text had no guarantee of tomorrow, let alone confidently forecasting twelve whole months ahead. The idea that they might die in six months time, or that there might be an unexpected economic recession, or that there might be some other unforeseeable catastrophe just round the corner never seems to have entered into their thinking. The point that the text is making is the principle that these men were acting as if the whole of the future was so secure that they could plan it without any fear of failure. What they thought was that they had plenty of time to fulfil their plans. Although in a sense we do have all the time in the world it doesn't follow that we have an over-abundance of time in the world.

2. Over-optimistic view of the right conditions to fulfil their plans: (v. 13) 'and buy and sell'

The arrogance of saying 'there will be the right market conditions in the short, medium and long term.' 'There will be enough supply and demand, we will have enough money to buy, enough suppliers to supply us, enough goods to sell; enough customers

to charge.' This was their confident attitude towards their plans.

3. Over-optimistic view of financial return: (v. 13) 'and get gain'

That is, a driven, selfish and greedy passion for making money. Although the world of business and commerce has always been competitive we live in a world today driven by the pursuit of profit margins, bonuses and market share.

4. Over-optimistic view of natural ability to guarantee success: (v. 16) 'but now ye rejoice in your boastings'

A conceited self-confidence in one's own ability. This attitude is wrong because the apostle James criticises it in (v. 16) 'all such rejoicing is evil.' It is wrong because like all sinful thoughts, words and actions God is neglected throughout. There is no mention in our text of prayer, of reading the Bible or of reverential church attendance on the Lord's Day. We live today in a society in the UK that is generally atheistic and not theistic. People generally live their lives without a place in it for God. And sadly, the Bible warns us that even God's people can become complacent and even arrogant about God in their lives especially when things are going well. 'Beware that thou forget not the LORD thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day: Lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein; And when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied; Then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the LORD thy God, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage'... 'And thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth' (Deut. 8:11-13, 17). For

anybody, especially the Lord's people to go through life without acknowledging God is proud and arrogant which we know from the pages of the Bible is something that greatly displeases the Lord.

II. The humility of submission to the divine providence in life plans

(vv. 14 and 15) 'whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. for what is your life? it is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, if the lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that'.

1. Acknowledgment of the brevity and fragility of human life (v. 14)

Having highlighted the pride in our own capabilities and independence from God as wrong, the apostle James next advises what our correct attitude should be. His advice is given in v. 15. But before that he gives a reminder of the brevity and fragility of human life in v. 14 which is a truth that is linked to the advice. How can we plan for a whole year in advance when we do not even know for certain what is going to happen tomorrow? 'Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow'. In Proverbs we read 'boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth' (Prov. 27:1). The truth that we need to learn from this is that the Bible tells us that to deliberately leave God out of our plans is wrong and it is also arrogant.

Following on from this the apostle James next asks the question. 'For what is your life?' He answers his own question with the solemn truth. 'It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away'. This solemn truth pervades throughout the whole Bible. 'Our days on the earth are as a shadow' (1 Chron. 29:15). 'Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth'

(Ps. 39:5). 'For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass' (1 Pe. 1:24). In other words, we are all born fallen creatures with the ageing process of decay and corruption intrinsically inside us. We start to die the moment we are born, even those who are blessed with good health. We are but mortal creatures that are prone to die at any time by disease, disaster, accident or a contagious and incurable virus that appears from nowhere. We need to learn the lesson that we are not meant for this life permanently but the next.

2. Acknowledgment of the divine providence (v. 15)

It is foolish and arrogant to leave the LORD God Almighty out of our thinking. We ought always to acknowledge the Divine Providence in every aspect of our life: 'For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that' (v. 15). In other words, we should at all times acknowledge the basic truth that God as our maker, or author of life, therefore has authority over our lives and has total control of it. This truth permeates through the whole of the New Testament. The apostle Paul declares God to be the one who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will' (Eph. 1:11). Unlike with us, the nation and the whole world the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic at the beginning of 2020 did not take the Almighty God by surprise. Moreover, God is always able to fully work out his plans for you and me, for everybody, for our nation and the whole world. His plans and purposes are never thwarted.

This basic truth is not only revealed to us as doctrine by the apostle Paul but also by his commendable example too. The apostle to the Gentiles was a dynamic man of decision and initiative who rightly mapped his life out with plans for the future as is

right and manly but always subject to the Divine Providence. All his aspirations were stamped 'D.V.' (*Deo Volente!*) which is Latin for 'God willing'. He tells the Christians at Ephesus that 'I will return again unto you, if God will' (Acts 18:21). He writes to the church at Rome that 'I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God' (Rom. 1:10). To the Christians at Corinth, he writes 'But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will' (1 Cor. 4:19).

Application

How is this text relevant? What do we learn?

First, that life is brief and even in our well medicated country in which we live the coronavirus pandemic, where those most at risk are the elderly, is an awesome reminder that threescore years and ten, (or seventy years) is basically the average span of human life. According to research from Imperial College London we now know that during the first wave the older someone was the greater their risk from Covid-19, particularly over the age of sixty-five. We had got used to thinking that someone dying in their seventies is not a 'great age'. As we observe the beginning of the roll out of Covid-19 vaccines in the UK starting with the most vulnerable elderly and hopefully in the Providence of God the beginning of the end of this dreadful national affliction we do well to remember and acknowledge this fundamental lesson of the shortness of our lives which is the revealed will of God in Scripture.

Secondly, that we are not meant to live this life to please ourselves by indulging in the pursuit of earthly treasure but to honour God and glorify his name by seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness (Matt. 6:33).

Thirdly, that we are not meant for this life permanently but the next. The hereos of

the faith that are mentioned in Hebrews 11 are commended because they lived this life looking for a better country which is heavenly bliss. The main emphasis of the ministry of Dr Martyn Lloyd Jones, apart from rightly preaching the gospel of Christ, was to prepare people for eternity and to get them to set their affections on Christ and things above.

Fourthly, that although to say or write D.V. or God willing is an attitude that does not come naturally to us, but rather as we grow in grace through sanctification by the Holy Spirit, so doing is the remedy for the stress of 21st century life and the convulsions of world events we now observe. We do not have to be anxious about the future if we believe in an Almighty God. What is so wonderful and comforting about some of the prayers in the 1662 BCP is how God is described as both Almighty and also a merciful loving heavenly Father. From the Christian perspective the future is in the hands of a sovereign God who has an infinite love and care for his sheep.

Fifthly, that as Christians we need to maintain the healthy balance between, on the one hand making plans without acknowledging God's prerogative to overrule them, and on the other being so carefree about life that we drift from one year to the next avoiding any responsibility in the hope God will somehow work it all out for us. The apostle Paul's first prayer to God after his dramatic conversion on the road to Damascus was 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do' (Acts 9:6). According to John Blanchard, (to who I am indebted for his fine exegesis of this text of Scripture), that prayer of the apostle Paul's is a prayer that fully incorporates God's sovereignty and man's responsibility.

Last but not least, acknowledging that the whole world is suffering the anguish of

this global pandemic let us humbly pray for national repentance so that our nation the United Kingdom may be delivered from this and potentially future worse afflictions. This needs to start in the church the household of faith. This is for another sermon.

Summary

The purpose of this text is to teach us to say, if the Lord will, we shall live and do this or that. One lesson we do well to learn from 2020 is to acknowledge the Divine Providence in every aspect of our lives. As C.H. Spurgeon said on 2nd January 1859 'O child of God, leave the future to your God!' This does not mean that we should fall into the error of fatalism. This does not mean that it is wrong to plan for the future. The Bible tells us that divine sovereignty and human responsibility exist in tandem. Especially for men it is right and proper and manly to make decisions and plan for the future but they should always begin and continue with the reverential prayer to the Almighty God and loving heavenly Father 'Thy will be done.'

Another lesson we learn from our text and the Covid pandemic is of the brevity and fragility of human life. Believers saved by grace need to redeem the time for the days are evil (Eph. 5:16). To quote from Charles Bridges commenting on this verse:

'Let us turn our eyes on him (Christ). if we suffer our hearts to wander from that centre, we immediately become palsied creatures, living for no earthly object or value at all. In conclusion, let us remember, in the exercise of our life, that he who died for us has a claim on the best of our time and the whole of our heart.' And for those who remain impenitent it is therefore wise to make your peace with God in this short mortal life while there is still time. Do not leave it too late to receive your full and free pardon from God. With the utmost urgency turn away from your sin by repentance and come to the Lord Jesus Christ by faith without delay and be freely saved. Make peace with God while there is still time, as the Holy Bible gives us fair warning that there is no second chance of salvation for the impenitent after death for all eternity. 'Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near' (Isaiah 55:6). 'Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation' (2 Cor. 6:2). Will you spend eternity in heavenly bliss with Christ? Humbly acknowledge and confess to God that you have offended against God's holy laws, and with a contrite heart ask the Lord Jesus Christ to save you and take His rightful place as Lord and King of your life to the Glory of God. Amen. ¶

The Lord hath not forgot his covenant, neither will he cast off his people: but though he hath resolved to chastise them for their great and bitter provocations, yet he knows both how and when to deliver them that are his; and deliver them he will. Only you must give him leave to take his own time, and it shall be the best time. He is a God of judgment, ie., a just God and a wise God, and therefore he will do it, when it shall be most seasonable; he will wait the fittest opportunity, and therefore in the interim it will be both your duty and your wisdom to wait his leisure.

Thomas Case

FORMER DAYS

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

250 years ago: March & April 1771

Comfort for troubled souls is offered through the continuation of the letter to a Friend. Christ's words, 'They shall never perish,' are shown to be a source and ground of constancy in the midst of our troubles. Since Christ himself affirmed this glorious truth, there can be no doubt in our minds that all his sheep will be gathered to him, else the evil one will have cause to rejoice at his failure. The writer is careful to show that such confidence cannot lead to carelessness, nor to Antinomian thinking. We do not have license here to live in sin, on the ground that, if we are Christ's, we can never perish.

The superficial contradiction between Hebrews 4:3 and 11 is examined. Since our rest is had in Christ (Matt 11:27), the writer proposes that the first reference is to rest on earth, and the second to rest in heaven. A meditation on the death and resurrection of our Saviour follows.

The Biographical sketch continues the funeral sermon of the Rev. Stephen Charnock, and a notice advises the reader that a new assessment of Charnock's works and character, from John Ryland, will appear next time.

'Christ's Habitation the Christian's Glory' is based on Eph 3:17, by William Mason. The table setting out prophecies and their fulfilments concludes. Serious Thoughts on Marriage continues, and is followed by the first part of 'The believer made happy by a union with Jesus Christ, the Fountain of life.' A lengthy and highly critical review forms the last major piece. It concerns a book on the sovereignty of God which targets the writing of Elisha Coles. The author is shown

to be a darling of the Arminians. Poetry, including a new composition by William Cowper, concludes the issues.

The April edition opens with the conclusion of William Mason's 'Letter to a Friend.' Charnock's funeral sermon is concluded, but the reader will have to wait for Mr Ryland's contribution. A Good Friday meditation is followed by the next part of Serious Thoughts on Marriage. William Mason contributes 'An Anecdote of Mr Whitefield.' Augustus Toplady contributes three letters, two by James Hervey, the other by Dr Doddridge. William Mason adds a letter sent to him by a friend who heard he was ill. The piece on 'The Believer made happy in Christ' is concluded, and poetry ends the issue. There is a contribution by William Cowper, and another which, according to a pencilled marginal note, is by Augustus Toplady.

200 years ago: March & April 1821

The March issue opens with an article that considers the Christian as a soldier, with his armour, Captain, warfare and crown. The controversy between Amicus and Myra is continued. Thoughts on the work of faith suggest that the power of faith is between Christ and the new man, excluding the old man of the flesh. This is to explain why we strive against sin. The unregenerate, convincing themselves that mere assent to gospel truth is saving faith, do not experience this struggle.

Juvenis of Kettering writes about the difference he finds between Paul's method, and that of modern divines: the old apostle aims at the edification of his flock, whereas the

moderns keep them in bondage. The consideration of Jeremiah as an example of true ordination is continued, and the controversy about Abraham's perfection is also continued. A question on whether a man can damn himself is put for answer, and an answer to a previous question—can a man be born again and not know it?—is answered.

At the end of another controversial piece the Editors insert an anecdote worth repeating. It was given to illustrate the danger of writing, or speaking, in a confusing manner.

Dr Samuel Johnson, in his early days, received a severe castigation for his turgidity of expression, in a three-shilling book, entitled, *Lexiphanes*. We remember a Frenchman looking into the Doctor's dictionary for information respecting 'Net-work', the explanation ran as follows: 'Anything articulated or decussated, with meshes of interstitial vacuities.' The French gentleman was put to his wit's end, he turned over the leaves to find what 'decussated' meant, he was referred to 'see articulated,' and when he found the latter, he was sent back to the former.

The quotation ends with an indication that Dr Johnson, on hearing this, altered the definition in later editions.

The Review section commends, with some qualification, a volume on prophecy. Viewed through the lens of time, it is apparent that the author was wrong: he believed that a number of prophecies were fulfilled with the rise and power of Napoleon Bonaparte. This illustrates both the church's need in every generation to see the relevance of prophecy to itself, and the church's error in assuming it has found what no previous generation has found. The two invariably co-exist. A far briefer review of Dr Hawker's

A Poor Man's Prayer Book is commended to all. An extract is supplied to encourage purchases. A sermon preached to the Prayer Book and Homily Society gets a poor reception. 'A number of our divinity botchers go about their subject, and round about it, but never enter into the pith or heart of what they take in hand: and when they attempt to make an effort, they are like tinkers in a country town, bawling out for pots and kettles to repair, and who in mending one hole make two.' Several other works are reviewed.

The **April** number begins with an exposition of Psalm 84:11, taken as 'a clear description of the all-adorable Immanuel.' Myra writes on The Humanity of Christ. Less Than the Least writes on the Risen Humanity of Christ. The series on the restoration of the Jews to their homeland is continued. The controversy over Abraham and perfection continues to be aired. Thoughts on the person, love and salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ are addressed to a minister, and the ordination of Jeremiah appears to be concluded. Tomlinson's attempt to rescue Scripture from ridicule is continued. He is examining the conclusion to the creation account, at the beginning of Genesis 2.

There follows an approval of Myra, a hymn on the Spirit by Dr Hawker, a brief piece on the believer's affliction, and a query by W. Ward concerning criticism levelled against him previously. His doctrine of the Trinity is certainly not orthodox, as he denies the personality of the Holy Spirit, calling him 'a breathed form.' Poetry concludes the issue.

100 years ago: March & April 1921

The March issue opens with a sermon on the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ: that it was brought about by a union of the forces of evil; that it was due to hatred, malice

and falsehood; and that it was the outcome of the eternal purpose of God. Christ's resurrection is the subject of the second piece. Wellsprings considers Genesis 27:33, 'Yea, and he shall be blessed.' The first part of a sermon by William Romaine, preached at St Dunstan's in the West, on Song of Songs 1:1 is reprinted. A suggested translation of Psalm 59:10, 'The God of my mercy shall prevent me,' is given as 'My God with his loving-kindness shall meet me at every corner' leads a writer to expand that theme.

The subject of perfection appears again, but in a different form from the controversy involving Myra a century before. Here, the writer speaks of our being changed and cleansed by grace. The question posed in Psalm 53:5 gives a writer thoughts on the subject of being cast down, and proposes answers from Scripture.

Several short pieces lead into 'A memorial of the late George Alexander of Birkenhead,' supplied by one of his children. It shows a man who was thoroughly converted, and a lover of gospel, Protestant truth.

The Protestant Beacon quotes William Cunningham on Luther and the doctrine of justification. A review of an abbreviated version of Calvin's *Institutes* warmly commends the work. We are blessed today to have access to better editions and translations of the full work than were available then.

The **April** number begins with a sermon on Malachi 4:2, the Sun of Righteousness. Wayside Notes takes the subject of pride, and the power of God to abase the proud, from Daniel 4:37. Isaiah 66:5 is taken by Wellsprings, asking what is to be understood by trembling at the Lord's word. Notes on a sermon by the late Rev. James Ormiston, on John 18:4-6 are followed by the second half of the sermon by William Romaine on Song of Songs 1:1. Psalm 27:1 provides the next

Question Propounded in Holy Scripture, to which an answer is given. Exodus 6:1 provides the text for 'Man's "Then" and God's "Now".' We return to the Song of Songs, at 4:16, for a piece on Pleasant Fruits. A brief meditation follows, on our waiting for the Christ who promised, 'I come.'

The prayer of Daniel and his friends, Daniel 2:18, leads the writer to suppose that some might consider their prayer to lack public spirit: they prayed for their own deliverance. However, as he points out, their future was full of such things as a fiery furnace and a den of lions. They faced these in perfect trust in their God. By this we see that they desired above all things the glory of their God, as did the Apostle Paul when he appealed to Caesar. The article is entitled, 'What have we that we have not received?'

'An old man's testimony' could have been written today. It begins,

A good many of our readers are aged people—some over eighty years of age. To such our Family Magazine is a real help and comfort. In many instances there is no real gospel ministry near to them, and in some cases bodily infirmities would hinder them from attending such a ministry if it were within reach. The Magazine thus supplies a great need.

The Editor concludes, 'Let us pray regularly, dear readers, for all the readers of the Magazine, and especially for the aged, lonely and isolated saints of God.' Amen.

'The Saviour's assurance and pledge' takes John 6:37 and speaks of the spiritual joy we have because we know we were chosen to salvation, and that our Saviour did not cast us out in spite of our waywardness and wanderings. It is reproduced from the *Magazine* for July 1872, and is by George Alexander.

A correspondent asks if it is right to pray to the Holy Spirit. The question is answered briefly and positively, with justification. The conclusion, however, is that prayer is normally offered *to* the Father, *through* the Son, and *by* the Holy Spirit. Two letters, and a brief In Memoriam, lead to the Protestant Beacon. Here, the Protestant Rule of Faith

is discussed. Chillingworth's aphorism, 'The Bible, and the Bible alone, is the religion of Protestants,' is amended to read, 'The Bible, and the Bible alone, is the Protestant rule of faith.' This statement is ably defended from Scripture, showing that this is the right use of God's word.

Brief reviews conclude the issue.

TO BE CONTINUED

BOOK REVIEWS

The Works of Thomas Manton

Banner of Truth, 2020. 22 vols £330 11,076pp cloth ISBN 978-1-84871-913-2

Thomas Manton (1620–77) left behind a vast library of sermons, and these comprise his Collected Works. They are back in print for the first time in almost 150 years. The publishers have chosen to send the volume *By Faith*, Manton's sermons on Hebrews 11:1–31, for review. Given that this is a facsimile of the 1873 edition, it is impossible to say anything about the new setting. However, potential purchasers will almost certainly know what to expect from the Trust.

Various other of Manton's sermons have been published already, including the first three volumes of his works, being his sermons on James, Jude and Psalm 119, and these sermons on Hebrews 11. They provide a very fair sample of the preaching style of this great expositor, and this reviewer is happy to confess that he almost always finds Manton's division of the text, and the points of application he draws out, to be food for the soul.

In terms of style, Manton is easier to read than Owen (who isn't?). Where Richard Sibbes brings the reader up to Christ ascended, Manton brings Christ down to the reader. It is very rare that Manton misses, but in one or two of his sermons one feels he has not reached the marrow of the text: but then, what preacher would profess to hit the target squarely every time?

The sermons on Hebrews 11 might be compared to William Perkins' expositions of the same chapter, to which they bear more than a passing resemblance. Where Manton displays his learning, particularly in the discussion of faith in the first sermon, Perkins hides his. The result is that Perkins progresses a little more speedily through the first three verses, with eleven from Manton compared with Perkins's three. In all, we have sixty-five sermons from Manton, whereas Perkins is through the whole chapter in thirty-four. The excellency of faith is displayed here, so that the readers is left in no doubt that belief is not foolish, nor are we guilty of grasping at mist, but we are holding fast the everlasting promises of the faithful covenant God. The examples we find in Hebrews 11 display the certainty, reality and reasonableness of

faith in such a Sovereign Lord. Oh that such faith were more evident among professing believers today.

We recommend this set, and if anyone has the funds the purchase it, they will have obtained a veritable library for years to come.

EJM

From the Mouth of Lions

Hugh M Cartwright

Reformation Press, 11 Churchill Drive, Stornoway, Isle of Lewis, Scotland, HS1 2NP
pbk 240pp £12 + postage

Walking in the Light

Hugh M Cartwright

Ettrick Press, 98 The Brow, Brighton, BN2 6LN
hbk 253pp £14 + postage

The contents of these two books have been compiled from the ministry of the late Rev. Hugh Cartwright who was a minister, firstly in the Free Church of Scotland at Ferintosh and later Professor of Church History in the Free Church Theological Hall. He was to move to the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland where he ministered to the Edinburgh Congregation of that denomination. These sermons and Prayer Meeting addresses are taken from the latter part of his ministry within the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland.

The first volume, *From The Mouth of Lions*, is a series of sermons preached on each chapter of the Book of Daniel from January to March, 2008. They have been transcribed from recordings made at the time and, thus, the editor tells us that the sermons have been edited 'as minimally as possible to prepare them for publication' (p. 8). I found the continual use of 'it's' irritating when the editor should have used 'it is'. Nonetheless, this does not make the book unreadable and spoil the actual message of the book, which is the overall message of the Sovereignty of God, as the author says:

We have been noticing that the general thrust of this book is an emphasis on the fact that the history of the Church is completely under the control of God, and that although God brings his people through times of great trial and testing, both individually and collectively, yet he is making everything work together to the accomplishing of the purposes which he has in view. (p. 223)

There are no prophetic speculations undertaken by the preacher; he takes an Historicist interpretation of the prophecies. He applies the Scriptures to the situation of believers living in today's world who should be reliant upon the sovereign purposes of Almighty God.

The second volume is a collection of Prayer Meeting Addresses taken from the notes of one of the members of the congregation in Edinburgh. Again, in this book we have good pastoral counsels to the Lord's people. The book is divided into four sections on particular themes, and the fifth and final section is given over to five addresses from various texts of Scripture.

There is much of spiritual instruction in this book. The following quotation from the first section of the book ('The Gospel in Galatians'):

If we belong to Christ, then a breach has been made with sin. Sin no longer has dominion over the believer. Instead the believer has the grace to bring forth the fruit of the Spirit... The apostle speaks about believers as they are Christ's. How are they Christ's? They were Christ's from all eternity—they were given to him in the everlasting covenant and he willingly received them when the Father gave him them to save. They are Christ's because he redeemed them, purchased them. He paid dearly for them. They are Christ's in that they are drawn to him by the Spirit in their effectual calling. ... They are Christ's in that they give themselves willingly to him ... They are Christ's by profession. They acknowledge him to be their Saviour... They are Christ's in that they are the people who have come to rely on Christ alone for salvation... they have entrusted themselves wholly to him for salvation. ... So they are Christ's in all these ways. (pp 51, 52)

This reviewer was glad to receive these two books. He read them with, he trusts, profit and therefore recommends them to the readers of *The Gospel Magazine*.

JEN

Grace and Glory

Geerhardus Vos

Banner of Truth 2020. 304pp cloth £12.50 ISBN 978-1-84871-918-7

At the age of 19, Geerhardus Vos (1862–1949) removed with his family from the country of his birth, the Netherlands, to Grand Rapids, Michigan. He began his association with Princeton Theological Seminary as a student in 1883, where in 1892 he became professor of Biblical Theology and continued until his retirement in 1932. Vos is today less well known than his colleagues there, B.B. Warfield and J. Gresham Machen, though arguably a finer scholar than both. Professor John Murray expressed high words of praise indeed, stating that Vos was 'the most penetrating exegete it has been my privilege to know'; and in his judgment 'the most incisive exegete that has appeared in the English-speaking world in this [20th] century.'

This present work, *Grace and Glory*, is a collection of sixteen sermons that Vos delivered at Princeton between 1898 and 1913. Whilst transcripts can never compare with hearing the word preached with the unction of God in the assemblies of the saints, these sermons rank among some of the finest that one may come across, so it is a blessing that they are still in print. Studying them in 1994, Sinclair B. Ferguson averred that they combine such depths of biblical and theological understanding with soaring eloquence that 'it is difficult to imagine their like being heard in any pulpit in the world today', and that not even the theological students present at the time could surely have taken in their full wealth. It is difficult to imagine the profound effects that these sermons must have had on their hearers at the time, though J. Gresham Machen described as 'one of the finest expository sermons I have ever heard' the one entitled 'Rabboni!' (based on the text of John 20:16) included in this collection.

Maurice Roberts remarks that 'there is an important difference between lecturing and

preaching. Whereas both lecturing and preaching address the mind and convey information to the understanding, preaching must go further. Preaching not only gives theological knowledge to the hearers; it also rouses the conscience.' Certainly these selected sermons by Vos are by no means theological lectures but deal with topics in a way that excites the conscience. Here are sermons whose very titles are inviting in respect of the life of faith: 'Running the Race', 'The Essence of Christianity' (which deals with true and false views of self-renunciation), 'Hungering and Thirsting after Righteousness', 'Seeking and Saving the Lost', 'Heavenly-Mindedness', 'The Joy of Resurrection Life', 'Songs from the Soul', 'The Christian's Hope'. Others have their focus on God: 'The Eternal Christ', 'Our Holy and Glorious God', 'Christ's Deliberate Work'; and there are more. Behind all these sermons we discern the aim of the preacher to be that of deepening the believer's communion with God who is exalted.

The sermon 'Songs from the Soul' has the Psalms as its theme, and Vos notes that 'we can always find our hearts mirrored there' because the Psalms 'reflect that experimental religion of the heart, which is unvarying at all times and under all circumstances... The well at which we drink may flow more abundantly than that at which the psalmists drank, but the experience of thirst, of drinking and of satisfaction must still be the same as it was in the time of David.'

Reflecting on the faith of the patriarchs in Hebrews 11:9, 10, Vos tells us in his sermon on heavenly-mindedness that 'He who knows that for him a palace is in building does not dally with desires for improvement on a lower scale. Contentment with the lowest becomes in such a case a profession of the highest'. Our Reformed confessions teach that assurance is not of the essence of faith; but Vos reminds us that it is nevertheless of the essence of faith *to crave* assurance, and true faith 'cannot come to rest until it have cast its anchor into the eternal. And heaven above all else partakes of the character of eternity... [T]here is neither quietness nor repose for the believer's heart except on the bosom of eternity. There and there alone is shelter from the relentless pursuit of change.'

In his sermon 'Christ's Deliberate Work' based on Mark 10:45, Vos deplores that the concept of service, though much spoken of in the early Twentieth Century, had often been reduced to 'purely that of benevolence and helpfulness to man', whereas 'the only true religious service is the one that puts foremost and guards foremost the supreme interest of God'. Accordingly, Christ's work being 'supremely a service of God, it had connected with it the promise of abounding fruitfulness.'

His whole sermon 'The More Excellent Ministry' preached from 2 Corinthians 3:18 is a masterful description of 'the ministry of the covenant of grace in both dispensations', drawing out the superiority of the New Testament ministry over the Old. In relation to the gospel ministry, Vos is at pains to point out that 'It is not chiefly the question whether we are strong in the cause, but whether the cause is strong in and through us.'

These few brief remarks cannot do justice to the treasures found throughout this fine volume of sermons, *Grace and Glory*, which amply repay meditation and study. Highly recommended.

KMcG

MINISTRY

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

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

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

LANDFORD WOOD, WILTSHIRE: *Landford Wood Mission Hall*, Stock Lane, Landford Wood, SP5 2ES (off A36). Weekly Service on each Lord's Day at 3 pm, (God

willing) from February to December). Conservative Evangelical Worship using the AV at all services. Elder: J.E. North, phone 07500265419

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

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