

MAY-JUNE 2021

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The Gospel Magazine

The background of the cover features a full moon in a dark, starry night sky. Below the moon, there is a thick layer of golden, billowing clouds that fill the bottom half of the image.

God's remembering, and ours • God's incarnation in human flesh • Covenant communion with God

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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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EDITORIAL

‘And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved’ (Matthew 24:12–13)

READERS of *The Gospel Magazine* may or may not be aware that an almost complete set of past issues is held in a library at the Editor’s chapel. With it may be found volumes by former Editors, among whom David Doudney is undoubtedly the most prolific. The collection of past issues is replicated on our website, and is available for viewing by anyone with internet access. Anyone who wishes to visit the library to consult the physical copies may do so by prior arrangement, although volumes may not be removed.

Two other collections are housed with *The Gospel Magazine* library, and one of these belongs to a venerable Protestant society that is still in operation. As with many such organisations, it is now far smaller than it once was. The *Gospel Magazine* once had a far greater circulation, contained more pages, appeared every month, and was well supplied with a range of contributors. Of late,

the situation has been far different. Our circulation is small, our content reduced, and our appearance but six times in a year. Much the same can be said for the other Society. There are records of the number of branch secretaries, and of major contributors. There are lists of meetings, right across the nation, throughout the year. The names of those associated with the branches, and with the central committee, stand as evidence of the extent to which Protestantism was woven into the fabric of society. Men with clerical honorifics, military ranks and hereditary titles served together with professionals and laymen, in the cause of truth. Today, many Christian organisations with long and honourable histories struggle to find suitable people to serve in any capacity.

What has changed? Why is the cause of Protestantism so weak in our nation? I offer two explanations, which are in some respects opposite sides of the same coin.

On the one hand, we have the undoubted effect of time. Those who lived through the dreadful trials of Mary's reign, or of Laud's corruptions of practice, or of James II tyranny, well knew the blessings of good, Protestant monarchs who upheld freedom of worship and who maintained the cause of truth. But those who came after, for whom these things were just episodes from history, did not have the same clarity of understanding. People began to be Protestants because they were born into it, rather than by conviction. That is not their fault: we cannot control the time of our birth, any more than we should attempt to control the time of our death. However, gospel passion does not depend on being born into a time of trial, but of love for Christ, study of God's word, and that mutual encouragement that belongs to the fellowship of the saints. Where believers become comfortable in their practice and faith, without ever bringing these things seriously to the touchstone of Holy Scripture, the result will be formalism. It may not happen all at once, nor to the same degree in every place, but it will be the general condition of the church, unless the Lord have mercy. From time to time the Lord may graciously and mercifully grant a time of restoration. During the eighteenth century the church was greatly blessed through the Great Awakening. Further periods of revival may be mentioned, but one notices a pattern. It is as if, prior to the Protestant Reformation, the tide of true religion had gone out so far as to seem unlikely ever to return. Then, in the Lord's mercy, he brought the tide all the way in again, and restored all that had been lost. The tide then ebbed and flowed, but since that high tide has never come back as fully as it did in the sixteenth century. It came closest in the eighteenth, but since then the high tides have not left their mark on the nation for

long. They have reminded us of what the Lord can do, but they have also served to show how far we have fallen from those times when Protestant, gospel truth was truly valued and maintained in our church and nation. And most people seem to love to have it so.

On the other hand, we have the consequence of more than a century of ecumenism. The rapprochement with Rome has been going on for a long time. The old High Churchmen were vehemently anti-papal, and very aware of the deep doctrinal differences between Rome and Scripture. Anglo-catholicism differed. It was not keen to maintain the doctrinal differences because it wished to reintroduce the practices of Rome. Although attitudes to the Pope may have been cautious, there was a general thawing of relations. The attacks made on religion by the Enlightenment had affected both Protestant and Roman Catholic beliefs, and there was some common ground, it was believed, in replying to such attacks. The experiences of the First World War caused some to think that all division should be overcome in the interests of peace, and the sufferings of Protestants, Roman Catholics and Orthodox Christians under communism and resurgent Islam only added to those feelings. The explosion of liberal theology after the Second World War, and the appearance of the charismatic movement, also helped to set aside doctrinal differences. Today the primacy of the Bishop of Rome seems to be acknowledged by almost all churches and denominations, even if some try to maintain an almost-equal status with him.

But of course the rise of ecumenism could not have happened if the effect of the passage of time had not first weakened the resolve of Protestants.

The Old Testament shows how Israel, committed to serving the Lord before Moses

received the law from the Lord on Mount Sinai, and committed to serving him before entering the promised land under Joshua, and committed to serving him at the dedication of both the first and second temples, failed to maintain that commitment for any length of time. They rebelled against the Lord when Moses was on the mountain. They rebelled against the Lord shortly after the death of Joshua. They rebelled against the Lord after Solomon died. They rebelled against the Lord even while the second temple was being built.

What makes the difference? Love: love to Christ, love for God's word and truth, and

love for the brethren. Ecumenism prides itself on manifesting love, yet it does so at the expense of love for God's word and truth. True love holds all of these together, in such a way that no part is neglected. But how shall we encourage such love? Only by holding fast those things we have received. We will only do this when we see the true value of our spiritual heritage, that it is the same gospel of grace that has been preached and believed from the beginning. Commitment to Christ is the need of the hour, and love to him must characterise all we say and do.

May we be encouraged to have such love.

GOD'S REMEMBERING, AND OURS

by THE EDITOR

'God remembered Abraham' (Genesis 19:29)

'Remember Lot's wife' (Luke 17:32)

THESE two texts are connected. The events Genesis 19 were used by our Lord Jesus Christ to warn his hearers that God's just judgment on the earth will be sudden, grievous and final. That his warning be rightly heeded, he added, 'Remember Lot's wife', so none may think lightly of judgment, nor love this passing world more than Christ and his grace.

We know about the covenant God made with Noah, in which the Lord expressly promised never again to destroy the world again by a flood. We know about the covenant God made with Abraham, in which the Lord covenanted to make his descendants as

numerous as the dust of the earth, to live in a land set aside for them. Such is the ability of sinful man to corrupt the pure word of God, and to make of it something far different from what the Spirit says, that we are in danger of drawing the wrong conclusion from these two covenants. If the Lord God will never again destroy the world by water, and if the descendants of Abraham will be numerous and enjoy an eternal home, then what is to stop those descendants from repeating the sins of Noah's generation in the certain knowledge that they cannot be touched? They are secure in the land, and safe from God's wrath. Let them, it might be

supposed, live as they please, for they of all men may smile at all their foes.

It is at this point that we turn to our texts. 'God remembered Abraham.' 'Remember Lot's wife.' We have here God's remembering, and our remembering.

We must first ask, what, specifically, did God remember, and why?

Note v. 27. 'Abraham gat up early in the morning to the place where he stood before the Lord.' He was back in the same spot where, 18:23ff, he had pleaded with the Lord for the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. He interceded for them, trusting that the Lord, the righteous judge (18:25) would spare the many wicked for the sake of the few righteous, as few as ten, v. 32. The words of our text are taken from Moses' summary of the whole event, showing that the sending of the angels, and the protection they gave Lot and his household, as well as the patience shown in convincing him to leave that place, were direct effects of this act of remembrance. If any ask, what did the Lord remember? the answer is, Abraham's prayer. In saving Lot and his household the Lord showed that he had heard and accepted that righteous prayer, and was answering it visibly and really.

But here one may ask, why was the Lord God prepared to hear and answer this prayer? Why, some will think, was this prayer answered but my prayers are not? There are several parts to the answer to that question, but the central and most significant takes us back to the covenant God made with Abraham. In Gen 15:6 we read that Abraham 'believed in the Lord: and he counted it to him for righteousness.' The Lord promised the land to Abraham, and descendants as the sand on the sea shore for number. In the faith of this promise Abraham left home and family and travelled

to a land he did not know. There he lived, a stranger and pilgrim on earth, in a place he would never be able to call his own. As the years passed and he had no son, the promise must have appeared as mockery to him at times; and yet, when the Lord repeated the promise in chapter 15, Abraham's faith remained whole and entire. He believed in the Lord. It was this firmness of faith that was counted to him for righteousness. Abraham was justified by faith.

As a righteous man, whose person was accepted by the Lord, Abraham's prayers were received at the throne of grace. His intercession for Sodom and Gomorrah was effectual. Lot and his household were the evidence of God's mercy, in that they were wonderfully saved from the destruction that took away every other soul out of those cities.

We will return to this matter of intercession later.

We ask, secondly, what Lot's wife has to say to us

Note, first, that whereas God remembered Abraham, we are to remember Lot's wife. In the Old Testament the word 'remember' appears 175 times. On all but one occasion the same Hebrew word is being translated, and it means 'to call to mind'. The only variation is in 1 Sam. 15:2, where we read, 'Thus saith the Lord of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel...' Here, the meaning is not 'I call to mind that which Amalek did' but 'I appoint to Amalek...' It is as if the Lord, seeing what Amalek did to Israel (Ex. 17:8-16; Deut. 25:17-19), made an entry into his book of accounts. Now, in Saul's day, the time of reckoning has come, and the Lord is ready to call in the debt. It is not that he remembers a past wrong, but that he purposes to settle the account. This is not how we are to remember Lot's wife: the Greek

word here means remember or keep in mind. The meaning of 'remember' in our two texts is the same.

Note, secondly, that whereas God *did* remember Abraham, we are called upon to remember Lot's wife. God does not forget, but we are prone to forgetting. The Lord requires no prompt, but we must be reminded of things that ought to be uppermost in our hearts and minds, but are frequently pushed out by lesser concerns.

The Lord remembered Abraham and his intercessory prayer: what are we meant to remember about Lot's wife? the macabre fact that she was turned into a pillar of salt, or perhaps the reason why this terrible fate befell her? Consider, for a moment, what we know of this unnamed woman.

First, she was almost certainly a citizen of Sodom. There is no mention of Lot being married before this. The reference in 14:16 to 'Lot, and his goods, and the women also, and the people' might mean his household as well as the rest of the inhabitants, or it might just mean the inhabitants (the word 'women' can mean 'wives', but 'wives' does not suit every instance). It is possible that Lot was married before he separated from Abraham, but it is more probable that he married once he settled in Sodom. If this is the case, we see here a wonderful example of divine mercy. Lot's wife was spared for no other reason than that she was connected to the man whom the Lord intended to save. The same applies to their daughters and sons-in-law. They clearly had several daughters, two of whom were still at home, but at least two of whom were married (there was more than one son-in-law). Just as the Philippian gaoler was saved with his household, so Lot was the object of saving mercy with his whole family. The same can be said of Noah, and of others in Scripture.

Secondly, she was not ignorant of the sin of the place. Whether a native of Sodom or not, she cannot have been unaware of what occurred when her husband brought the visitors home, 19:1–11. Whatever she might have made of Lot's offer to the neighbours concerning their unmarried daughters, v. 8, she cannot have denied that her husband thought he was doing the right thing. The sin being considered against the visitors was so great that Lot was at his wits' end to find a way of avoiding it. His offer may have been wrong, but it was born of desperation. She cannot have been ignorant of this fact.

Thirdly, she was privy to the same truth that Lot heard. In vv. 12–13 the visitors (angels) warned that destruction was coming on the place. This was not a punishment for the harsh treatment they had received, but was the considered will of the Lord for the continual sin of the city, 13:13, 18:20f. The destruction threatened was not some distant event but was imminent. It is clear that Lot believed every word, because he went and pleaded with his sons in law to get out with him before the judgment of God came to pass. And in v. 22 she heard, with Lot, the certainty of her salvation: 'I cannot do any thing till thou come thither.' They were so protected that the Lord would rather delay judgment than risk harming them. What privileges she, her daughters and her husband enjoyed!

Fourthly, she was not a joyful recipient of salvation. This may seem strange, but it is clear that she did not consider God's mercy and grace to be of great value. In spite of the warning not to look back, she did look back towards the city as it was being destroyed. We will consider shortly why this might have been. Before we do, we note that she went with her husband and their daughters, and left the city in the company of the two angels,

v. 17ff. This was not the willing consequence of conviction, but was more a case of her being caught up in the moment. She went as a dutiful wife and mother, not as one who trusted the word of the Lord. The offer of salvation did not move her. She did not think that the visit of the angels was a sign of divine mercy, nor that the warning ahead of the destruction was a true blessing, nor that being led out of the place was an act of love. She could not see how any of the things said, promised or threatened had any bearing on her.

We come now to consider three possible reason why Lot's wife looked back

The first, and most common explanation is that she loved her old life too much. Suppose she was Lot's wife before the separation from Abraham. Her life to that point would have been the nomadic life of a tent-dweller. This was far more than camping: those tents would have been roomy and well equipped. There would have been coverings on the floor and furniture within. Since Lot was so blessed with flocks and herds, neither food nor money would have been in short supply. She would have been the head of a large staff, and have had servants to undertake the menial tasks. But when she came to Sodom, to a solid house with walls and a roof, she may have considered her old life to be something shameful, or at the very least a poor substitute for city life. And if she was in fact a daughter of the city, who married the newcomer Lot, then she was one who had known no other life, and who loved the life she had. To her, the convenience of city life was such that the thought of leaving it all behind for a small village some distance away (v. 20) might have been too much. Her heart seems to have been set on the things she was leaving behind: friends, neighbours, perhaps her

own family, as well as goods and possessions of every kind. Like Demas, she loved this present world, 2 Tim. 4:10.

The second possibility is that she did not really believe that such a destruction was possible. How could a city that had stood for perhaps a very long time be destroyed so suddenly? We do not know a very great deal about the place, but there is no reason to think that it had not weathered various storms during its existence. Perhaps various enemies had attempted to conquer the place, and failed. Perhaps natural disasters of one sort or another had struck the city, but it still stood. Whatever the history of Sodom, and of the other cities of the plain, nobody could believe that there was any risk of destruction. The phrase 'safe as houses' applied as much to Sodom as to anywhere else, and so she did not believe that anything serious or sudden was going to happen. These visitors to Sodom, who had come into her house, had panicked her husband with scary stories, but there was no substance to them. And so, when the destruction came, she looked back to see if it really was as bad as she was meant to believe. This was because she did not believe it would happen at all. In this she was like the people of Ezekiel's day, of whom the Lord said, 'The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceeding great, and the land is full of blood, and the city full of perverseness: for they say, The LORD hath forsaken the earth, and the LORD seeth not' (Ezek 9:9). Many think like this: if there is a God, he takes no notice of what I do, so I can do as I please without fear of consequence.

The third possibility is that she deeply disagreed with God's verdict on Sodom. Sodom's reputation was not newly acquired, 13:13. Either she and Lot had come to live in a place where sin was common and open and they

had learned to live with it, or she had grown up with it and saw nothing wrong with it. Either way, she could not think that there was a just cause to destroy the place. In this, she is like the general mass of humanity, including many in the church: they believe that right and wrong are determined by us, and according to our values and standards. Consequently, opinions change over time, and what was once deemed sinful is now acceptable, and what was once judged to be righteous is condemned as wicked. But human beings are not the arbiters of right and wrong: God the Creator is. He is the holy and just one, who decrees what is and is not acceptable to him. Furthermore, as the whole passage and its use by our Lord Jesus Christ in Luke 17 shows, he has power to punish and judge any and all who disobey him and break his commandments.

Which leaves us to consider, finally, why this act of remembering is important

We mentioned earlier the intercession of Abraham as being the thing God remembered, and we looked at why his prayer was received at the throne of grace. That Abraham interceded for the inhabitants of Sodom and the cities of the plain points us to the important truth being taught here.

To see this, we need to look again briefly at the covenant God made with Abraham. This covenant involved descendants and land, the former possessing the latter. This covenant was made with a man whom the Lord accounted righteous because he believed in the Lord. But it is evident that the path to the possession of the land by the descendants who had yet to appear would not be smooth. Towards the end of Gen. 15, the chapter that records Abraham being counted as righteous because of his faith, the Lord said that two things must happen. First, the

descendants would have to move away from the land and become servants in another place, Gen. 15:13. Then, the Lord would punish that enslaving nation for its behaviour, and the descendants would come out with great substance, v. 14. The departure of the descendants into the enslaving nation, and their subsequent return in the fourth generation, is connected to the sin of the present inhabitants of Canaan, v. 16. The Lord reveals his intention to judge the nation (Egypt) that will enslave the Hebrews. The sin of the Amorites is not yet full (that is, if the judgment they are reserving for themselves by their sins is not yet ready to fall). It follows that possession of the promised land requires God first to deal with sinners. That is, the descendants of Abraham cannot inherit the land while it is occupied by a sinful people who are under God's judgment. They cannot inherit another land, other than the promised land, since their residing anywhere else will not be as a free people. All they can do is wait until the Lord gives them the land he has promised them, but only after the present inhabitants have been removed for their sins.

That God does move against sinners is evident in the account of Sodom's destruction. God is justly angry with sinners, and hates the sins they commit. He hates sin so much that he is willing to destroy those who behave sinfully rather than permit their actions to continue.

In the midst of this, we want to know what happens to the righteous, those individuals who believe in the Lord, and who obey his commandments out of love for his holiness, and who worship him in love and awe. We see the answer here. The Lord has his way of delivering his people, no matter how dreadful the punishment he has prepared for sinners.

But why does he spare the righteous? After all, not one of us is worthy to be saved. Our righteousnesses are not truly righteous in themselves. Our faith is weak at best. Our love is frequently cold, and our worship falls very far short of what the Lord is worthy to receive. Why does he accept us at all? The answer is that, as with Lot for whom Abraham prayed, we have an intercessor with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

What, then, do we remember?

First, we remember that Jesus Christ came forth from the mercy of the Godhead. The promise of the Saviour was first made in the very day that sin corrupted and ruined man. It was the serpent who deceived the woman, and it was the serpent upon whom the curse first fell, Gen. 3:15. The ultimate curse is not death, but the judgment God would administer through the seed of the woman. Death is the most sobering manifestation of the curse, but it is that defeat of the wicked at the hands of the promised seed that marks the ultimate heavenly sanction against sin. This is final judgment.

Yet, at the same time, the promise of the seed is for the hope of sinners. If the devil and his works are overthrown by the seed's victory, those also who renounce the devil and all his works, and who trust in the promised seed, look for deliverance in that victory. This is why the curse was pronounced in the presence of Adam, that he might know and believe, and instruct his children accordingly, that the day is coming when God will overthrow the curse and reveal salvation. This is divine mercy, since we do not deserve and cannot merit salvation. It is all of grace, and that grace alone is sufficient to move our praises every day of our lives, if only we have wisdom to see it.

Secondly, we remember how we are saved from our sins. The coming of the Lord Jesus

Christ is salvation, but not just because he was born of Mary. No, his coming is salvation because he died on the cross to save us from our sins. He was loaded with our sins, which were imputed to him, when he died in our place on the tree. He is the Just one, who died for the unjust. He did this willingly, as Isa 53:12 reminds us, 'Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.' His blood cries out for mercy, Heb 12:24. This same Jesus pleaded for the forgiveness of his executioners, even as they nailed him to the cross, Luke 23:34. God delivered Lot from Sodom because Abraham pleaded for him. How much more will our Father in heaven receive the intercessions of his dear Son, and save eternally all who call on him?

Thirdly, we remember the constancy of faith. This is the reason why our Lord Jesus tells us to remember Lot's wife. She snatched defeat from the jaws of victory, and perished in her rebellion. For all the privileges granted to her, and for all her apparent participation in salvation, her heart was far from the Lord because she had no faith. How many will there be, on that great and dreadful day when the secrets of every heart will be revealed, who will discover that they never had any part in Christ? This will never happen to any who have faith, who have cried for mercy and who have loved the Lord Jesus. But it will happen to many who think that their outward demeanour and actions, in attending church, in giving money, in reading the Bible, and even in engaging in prayer, are the same as having faith in Christ. Some believe that their knowledge of Christian doctrine is the same as saving faith. Some believe that

their acceptance of the historical facts of that faith is the same as saving faith. But they delude themselves. The truth is that only those who believe the Lord, and who humble themselves before him, obeying his word in love and awe, and worshipping him as being worthy of all glory, will be received with joy at the Father's hand.

Abraham believed God, and he interceded for any righteous persons who dwelt

in Sodom and Gomorrah. For Abraham's sake the Lord spared Lot. God remembered Abraham. Lot's wife, rejecting the blessing set before her and the way of escape opened to her, perished in her sins. Let us remember Lot's wife, and be warned to flee the wrath to come by trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ and his finished work. This is our only hope, and the only deliverance from hell. May we all walk in this way. AMEN. ¶

A SERMON ON ISAIAH 1:2–3

REV. C. TUINMAN (1659–1728)

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

Part 14

The name of God's people is also given to us, because we are in God's covenant and are at the church. But yet few are truly God's people and of the most it must be said, 'Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth and they lied unto him with their tongues. For their heart was not right with him neither were they stedfast in his covenant' (Psalm 78:36, 37). The name without the deed is in vain, yes unto a heavier judgment. It is here as: 'You only have I known of all the families of the world: therefor I will punish you for your iniquities' (Amos 3:2).

O, how many are there among this Israel and nation, which have to be persuaded and put to shame by the ox and ass. It would have been better that they would not have been humans, but oxen and asses. God punisheth such by robbing them from their oxen and asses. (Deuteronomy 28:31; Zephaniah 1:3). Now there is a long and damaging death among the cattle. Who knows how soon it

would come unto the people who are worse than the cattle and because of their sin the beasts are suffering?

Is there not a lamentable and punishable ignorance and foolishness? All natural people are ignorant and foolish (Ephesians 4:18; Psalm 14:1; 1 Corinthians 2:14), and that is a miserable state (Proverbs 19:2). But it is even more abominable among the abundant and glorious means of grace that are so free and pure with us (1 Corinthians 15:34). This is a heavy judgment. (2 Corinthians 4:3; John 3:20). It is maliciously ungodly to reject instruction (Job 21:14) and it shall be succeeded by God's terrible revenge (2 Thessalonians 1:8). It is true that many have an outward knowledge, but that only puffs up and is not sanctified. They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate (Titus 1:16; compare 2 Peter 2:19–22).

TO BE CONTINUED

A CHANGE FOR THE BETTER

by CARINE MACKENZIE

We only have to look at an old photograph album to see how we have changed over the years. Our appearance, hair style, taste in clothes all change over time. As we get old we look quite different from what we did when we were young.

When we come to trust in the Lord Jesus through his redeeming work in our lives, then our behaviour should change. One of the many benefits the Christian receives from God is sanctification, when we ‘are enabled more and more to die unto sin and live unto righteousness’, as the Westminster Shorter Catechism says (Q. 34). Our attitude towards sin should change. We are never free from sin until God makes us perfect at death, but sin will grieve us more and more. We should be growing in grace. We are full of changes—good and bad—but God never changes.

He is consistent in all his attributes. He is constant always, trustworthy in all his acts. No plan of his fails. He never has to change his plan as we sometimes do. The Lord is the Creator of the heavens and the earth. They will perish one day, but the Lord shall endure (Psalm 102:26). The Lord is always the same, his years shall have no end (Psalm 102:27).

The Lord God is eternal; he has no beginning and no end—‘even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God’ says Moses in Psalm 90. God’s strength never changes—‘for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength’ (Isaiah 26:4). He never gets tired or weary like we do (Isaiah 40:28). God is completely trustworthy. ‘The Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting: and his truth endureth to all generations’ (Psalm 100:5).

We read in the Bible of God’s mercy to people like David, Abraham and Ruth. God is the same today and shows mercy and grace to us. It is because of his mercy and grace that we have God’s word, the Bible and are able to read it. Because of God’s unchanging mercy we have been offered the Gospel—the good news that the Lord Jesus, God’s Son was born of a woman, became one of us, lived among us and then died on the cross of Calvary for the ungodly.

God loves his people with an everlasting love (Jeremiah 31:3). We can be confident that his love for us will never end because it never started. ‘God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us’ (Romans 5:8). We are saved by God’s grace—quickenened or made alive together with Christ, even when we were dead in sins (Ephesians 2:3).

God’s power never changes. The Bible sometimes speaks of God’s arm which is strong to save (Psalm 89:13). God is a Spirit and does not have a body like we do but his strength is symbolised by a strong arm, which has done marvellous things (Psalm 98:1). God’s everlasting arms also tell us of his love and care always. ‘The eternal God is thy refuge and underneath are the everlasting arms’ (Deuteronomy 33:27). We can think of these loving arms like a parent cradling a little child; but also like a strong fireman rescuing someone from a burning building.

When we are in trouble we can be sure of the refuge and strength of our unchanging God. His arms are always underneath, no matter how low we get. He is always a present help in times of trouble. Jesus understands our weakness. He sympathises with us in all our infirmities. He knows what it is like to be hungry, despised and lonely. And we can confidently say that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and for ever (Hebrews 13:8).

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. _____ ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength. (Isaiah 26:4)
2. The _____ of thy testimonies is everlasting: give me understanding, and I shall live. (Psalm 119:144)
3. The eternal God is thy refuge, and _____ are the everlasting arms. (Deuteronomy 33:27)
4. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither _____ of turning. (James 1:17)
5. For I am the Lord, I change not; _____ ye sons of Jacob are not consumed. (Malachi 3:6)
6. Hast thou not known? Hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is _____? (Isaiah 40:28)
7. But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the _____ of faith. (Romans 16:26)
8. Surely he shall not be moved for ever: the righteous shall be in everlasting _____. (Psalm 112:6)
9. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the _____ that is gone out of my lips. (Psalm 89:34)
10. And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their _____.: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. (Isaiah 35:10)
11. For a thousand years in thy sight are but as _____ when it is past, and as a watch in the night. (Psalm 90:4)

SOVEREIGN FAITHFULNESS

by JOHN HOOPER (Saltash)

'Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.' (Philippians 1:6)

Dear Friends,

Are you discouraged by your slow rate of progress along the pilgrim path? Do you feel sometimes as though you have hardly begun? Whether you have been a Christian for fifty days or fifty years, you know that you still have a long way to go. Your strivings after holiness reap little reward. Your devotional life lacks felt communion with God. Your prayers are too often cold and lifeless. Life itself is still too shackled to this world and its demands upon your time and affections. And all this leaves you feeling frustrated and disheartened.

I am sure we all pass through such experiences, but in the Scriptures the Lord comes to us with encouragement. All of us are at the beginning. At whatever time of life, however long we have been travelling the pilgrim way, we can take these words and apply them to ourselves: 'the Lord has begun a good work in me.' This gives us hope. One writer I have recently read asks, 'Where does the godly life begin? It begins where we are, with small steps of obedience as a tangible expression of our faith' (Richard D. Phillips). So whether we have been on the road for fifty days or fifty years, there is a sense in which we can all say, 'The work has only just begun and there is so much more to be accomplished.' The fact that we are thinking in these terms is itself a good sign, a sign that the Spirit of God is at work within.

It may be that the Lord has only recently brought us through the little gate and onto

the narrow way that leads to life. We are still taking very early steps. We are not sure of our footing yet. We cannot see the way ahead clearly. But we have a guide. We have the Guide who knows the way (Job 23:10), who holds us by the right hand (Ps. 73:23), who delivers our feet from falling (Ps. 116:8), and who will never leave us nor forsake us (Heb. 13:5) but finish the work that he has begun.

We should take encouragement from the text that it is the Lord who has begun the work. It is the Lord who has saved us by his grace. It is the Lord who has redeemed us out of our spiritual Egypt and set us on the pilgrim way. Do you see how Paul helps us combat a fear that can so often trouble us and wear us down: the fear that at the last we will not be saved? Well, here is a good ground for confidence, for assurance: it was not our decision, it was not our choice that began the work and brought us into the blessings of salvation. If it had been, then a subsequent choice and decision of ours could take us out of those blessings. Our mind can change so easily and quickly, going back on its decisions in the face of the least difficulty. But no, it is his choice and the work of his Spirit that marked the very beginning of the good work, so we can be confident that by the power of his grace we will persevere all the way to the very end. Having begun a work God takes it to completion. He has promised and he will prove himself faithful.

To borrow words from A.W. Pink, we do not 'begin in the Spirit, but end in the flesh.'

If the ongoing work were ours, we would be in grave danger of failing, of not persevering. Most likely we would give up at the first sign of difficulty and opposition. We would grow weary from the effort. Just think of what we are up against. We summarise it as the world, the flesh and the devil. Those three trip off the tongue so easily, but what forces they represent, both around us and within us. How can we in our own strength hope to stand and survive the conflict against these three powers. But because we know the work is the Lord's, to whom belongs omnipotence and who has absolute sovereignty over all the foes arrayed against us, we can confidently say with the psalmist, 'The LORD will perfect that which concerneth me' (Ps. 138:8). His sovereignty is our peace and assurance. His power undergirds the promise, 'he...will perform it...'

There will be, there must be, progress. The steps may be small ones, but progress there will be. Each step takes us forward. Our journey to heaven takes us there one step at a time. We should bear in mind that since the work is the Lord's, he carries it out at his pace, in his time. Growth in grace will not be at the same speed for all of us. We do not all race along, making tangible progress

almost daily. For some of us, I would suggest most of us, the pace is rather more pedestrian. Rapid progress in the faith is not something we can relate to, and this may frustrate us, but when we look back over the years of our pilgrimage we will see that, yes, progress has been made. We are nearer the goal, we are more like Christ than when we first began. The Lord is far wiser in these things than we can ever be and he knows what is best for each one of us. The vital factor is that he is with us and the power is his. We can begin each day confident that he is doing a good work in us, a work that none but he can do, and that none can undo.

The work which His goodness began,
The arm of His strength will complete;
His promise is Yea and Amen,
And never was forfeited yet.
Things future, nor things that are now,
Not all things below nor above,
Can make Him His purpose forgo,
Or sever my soul from His love.

Augustus Montague Toplady (1740–78)

'Small beginnings...lead to great endings
when they are done through faith in God'
(Richard D. Phillips). ¶

WISDOM IN THE WORD

by EDWARD MALCOLM (Reading)

THERE is a wonderful symmetry about God's dealings with his creation. We see this in the pattern of creation: Day 1 is the creation of light, and Day 4 the creation of the sun, moon and stars; Day 2 is the separation of the water below and above the firmament, and Day 5 is the creation of marine life; Day

3 is the emerging of dry land and the creation of plants, and Day 6 is the creation of living creatures, culminating in the creation of man in the image of God. This pattern does not serve some vague and unstated liturgical purpose, but reveals a God of power, order and love: nothing is created before its

time, so that dark stars are not placed in the sky before there is light to shine from them; marine life is not created until after the water is prepared for them; plants are not created before the dry land appears; and man is not created until everything is ready for him to rule over.

When we examine the lives of the antediluvian world, and compare it with the postdiluvian, we see a pattern emerge here also.

Adam is the son of God (Lk 3:38). To him was born Seth, in whose day began men to call upon the name of the Lord. There has long been a preferred translation; 'then began men to call themselves by the name of the Lord.' This is taken to be a reference to the beginning of the visible Church, when the faithful gathered themselves apart to worship the Lord. Move on in the generations and we come to Enoch, a man so full of faith in the Lord and love for his Creator that he was taken from this earth as he walked with God. Note that Adam had died, but not Seth. Enoch's son, Methuselah, has the distinction of being the longest-lived person the world has ever known. His grandson, Noah, was the one who, full of faith and living righteously (Gen 6:8-9), was chosen by the Lord to build the ark. Into that ark went Noah and his family, and those animals whom the Lord sent so that life would continue on earth after the destruction of the wicked.

Noah had a son, Shem, who was with him in the ark and experienced the judgment of God on the world and the wicked. Afterwards he showed himself to be righteous, and he inherited the blessing, Gen 9:26. This shows that Noah saw Shem as the next in the line of promise, and not Japheth. Shem's great-grandson, Heber, was the father of the Hebrews, who were named after their ancestor. To him belongs the honour of being the longest-lived of

the postdiluvian generations, at 434 years. Heber saw Abraham, the one whom the Lord called righteous, the father of the faithful, and whom he accounted justified for his faith in the promise. Abraham is more than the father of the faithful: he is also the second Noah. From him will come the Son of God.

When the Lord appeared to Abraham in Genesis 15, and confirmed the covenant and accounted him righteous, he made certain promises. These included a repetition of the promise that Abraham would be the father of a great nation, v. 15. The beginning of that nation would be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them, v. 13. The enslaving nation would be punished and the descendants would depart wealthy, v. 14. Abraham would not live to see this, v. 15, but in the fourth generation [of the residence in the foreign land] his descendants would return. It could not be earlier, 'for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.'

Taking all this information as given to Abraham, what are we being told? We are being told that God has looked upon the Amorites and has seen that every thought of the imagination of their hearts is only evil continually. His spirit will not always strive with them, but a time has been determined upon them: not 120 years, as in the days of Noah, but to the fourth generation of the captivity. In order to save Abraham's descendants from the coming wrath, God would take them out of the way, and store them, in a manner of speaking, not in an ark but in a strange country with their flocks and herds. Then, when the time of judgment had come, he would bring forth his people with wealth, and they would become the instrument of judgment on the wicked Amorites. When Noah came out of the ark, he offered a burnt sacrifice to the Lord: when Moses

sought the release of the Israelites from Egypt, he told Pharaoh that they wished to offer a sacrifice to the Lord.

Methuselah stands as a connection between Seth and Noah: Heber stands as a connection between Noah and Abraham. Seth called on the name of the Lord, beginning the church: in Peleg's day the earth was divided (Gen 10:25), but the population, refusing to go the places allotted to them by Noah, gathered in the plain of Shinar, built the tower of Babel and the city of Babylon. By implication (given that they are the messianic line) Peleg and his sons did not join the rebellion against God, but separated themselves from the unrighteousness and pride of others.

Might Noah have met Abraham? This depends on how we understand the chronology of Terah and Abraham. We are told that 'Terah lived seventy years, and begat Abram, Nahor and Haran' (Gen. 11:27). If this does not refer primarily to Terah's age when Abraham was born, we have no idea when he was born, since we have no other information: this would make Abraham unique among the forebears of the Messiah in Genesis. The next piece of information we have is that Abraham was 75 years old when he went to Canaan, Gen. 12:4, making his father 145. The problem arises when we note that Genesis 11 ends with the news of Terah's death, after which we read about Abraham's journey to Canaan. Stephen appears to support this reading in Acts 7:4. However, if we note Moses' method in Genesis, we see that he tells the whole story of one generation before telling the whole story of the next. If, in telling the story of the father, it is necessary to tell something of the son's story (as the life of Joseph cannot wait until after the death of Jacob has been recorded), then Moses does so. Thus we have at the end of Genesis 11 the

record of Terah's life, with mention of a key fact, the birth of his sons, of whom two will play significant parts in what is to follow. Sixty years before he died, Terah had to be parted from his son Abraham, who obeyed the Lord's calling and went to Canaan. On the basis of this chronology, Noah would have died when Abraham was around 49 years old. They could indeed have met. The two faithful men whom the Lord called to be ark-builders (one actual, one metaphorical) would have been a blessing to each other. Old Noah would have been a constant reminder to all who had wisdom and humility to take note, that God both looks on his creation, judges his creation, and remains faithful to his word. Abraham would have been greatly encouraged to know that what he was being called to do was not hard for the Lord, who had once sent a flood upon the world to destroy all life, and yet had spared those whom he purposed to save. To have sat and talked with Noah would have been a theological education itself. More, it would have been an opportunity to have fellowship with one who had walked with the Lord through the most trying of time, and found him always to be faithful. Although Abraham's descendants would at times feel as if their life was over, the Lord had power to save.

This helps to illustrate the wisdom of our heavenly Father in causing his servants, the writers of Scripture, to order their material according to the divine purpose. Very often we come across writers who treat Scripture as if it were written by a modern degree-level student of English Literature. Such writers tie themselves up in their attempts to explain certain things that do not follow their neat patterns. Far better to see the wise way in which our gracious God has written his word, and follow the light of Christ that shines forth in that word. ¶

GOD'S INCARNATION IN HUMAN FLESH (PT. 1)

by WILLIAM T. FOLEY

THERE are many key doctrines in the Bible, which must be preached, taught, believed and defended. The profit and saving of one's soul depend on these different doctrines. Subscription to biblical doctrine is vital to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Christians need to rejoice in Bible doctrines, to the glory of God. Christ Jesus, our Lord, must be central to all our Bible reading and study. He is the key to unlocking the treasury of Holy Scripture. The doctrine of the incarnation of Christ in human flesh is an essential doctrine.

We are going to examine one verse in 1 Timothy 3:16, for there are stupendous truths in this remarkable verse in connection with Christ's incarnation and so forth. Beware of the Bible you read. Some Bibles come from faulty manuscripts. Some modern Bibles omit 'God' (Theos) in this verse. Furthermore, some well-known versions omit many verses of Scripture. Holy Scripture is the foundation, warrant and evidence for believing in the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ. The word of God becomes incarnational in the Christian's life as one fully trusts the Lord, as revealed in the Bible. Our interest currently is the breadth, length, depth and height of meaning in 1 Timothy 3:16. Just like there are in the words of Christ, and in all Scripture, which is equally 'God breathed' and testifies of Christ from Genesis to Revelation (John 5:39). Jesus said, 'the Scripture cannot be broken' (John 10:35).

Paul, writing to the young pastor Timothy, is reminding him of the full orbit

of truth in terms of Christ, coming down from God, in the incarnation and so forth, together with his pastoral or ecclesiastical responsibilities in looking after the church, the *ecclesia*, 'the pillar and ground of truth' (1 Tim. 3:15).

There is a certain and defined progression in Christ's first advent, his condescension, and his present exaltation, in the glory. These are especially to be observed in 1 Timothy 3:16. From heaven he came to Bethlehem's manger and to heaven he returned from the Mount of Olives to sit, in 'session in glory' at the right hand of God Almighty, in intercession, until Christ's second advent. Incredibly, God lived and walked on this earth, which he created, and performed supernatural and powerful miracles. In his flesh, Christ is the Son of Man. In his deity, Christ is the Son of God. So, the Saviour is both the Son of God and the Son of Man, deity and humanity, two natures, in the true Messiah of Israel. Christ, the Anointed One, preached the Word of God in convincing and transforming power to the multitudes and the religious establishment of Israel, before returning to the glory of heaven. The greatest sermon ever preached by Christ is the Sermon on the Mount. The greatest preacher, the Lord Jesus Christ, is the Prophet, Priest and King, and is to be hailed as such, together in his offices and titles.

In 1 Timothy 3:16 the gospel is encapsulated so beautifully in a few phrases. Among other factors, I repeat, we see here the perfect life and death, and the resurrection, and the

glorious ascension of Christ in embryonic form. It is no good skirting over the surface of the verse, one must dig for the gold of the Holy Spirit's meaning. What a wonder in this verse: the gospel in miniature and majesty! The central theme is Christ, the Son of God, and his incarnation. This should evoke worship and praise from God's people, the Elect, with much thankfulness, with total and exclusive focus on the God of majesty and glory.

It is suggested that there are seven significant factors which are characteristic of this amazing verse, as follows.

1. The Godhead in Mystery and Godliness

Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness...

This statement is Christological. Christ is the theme of this verse. Christ unlocks the meaning of this verse. The mystery is Christ (Col. 1:26–27; 4:3). Christ is no doubt great and greatly to be praise. He was the greatest person that ever lived. The mystery of God is without controversy. Christ is God. It is without dispute; it is an inconvertible fact that Christ is God. There can be no valid argument. Only a fool would challenge God (Ps. 14:1) and any doctrine about God. Great is the mystery of God in revelation and incarnation. Great is our everlasting God manifest in the flesh. God is unchanging. 'I am the Lord, I change not' (Mal. 3:6). The things of God are deep, they are never superficial. Some teachers today are frivolous with God's word as if it lacked the status of final authority in faith and morals or theology. Every word of God is pure and is to be approached with reverence. The Bible is our final and supreme authority and must be believed for happiness in this life and to come.

But some people do not believe that Jesus ever existed. They are wrong, for the evidence is overwhelming that Jesus existed.

The historian Flavius Josephus (AD 37–100) left in his work, *Jewish Antiquities*, at least one indisputable reference. Pliny the Younger (AD 61–113) and Tacitus (AD 56–120) also wrote about Jesus. The latter explained that the founder of the sect of Christians was executed during the mandate of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governing in Judea.

The school of Christian apologetics is a valid system of defence in witnessing to a questioning and unbelieving age. Christian apologetics is a sphere of Christian theology that defends Christianity against objections. Christian confessions seem to be put aside today. Godly men put these confessions together to help the church such as the:

- Heidelberg Catechism, (1563)
- The 39 Articles (1563/71)
- Westminster Confession of Faith (1646) after revisions (1648)
- The Savoy Confession of Faith (1658)
- The Baptist Confession of Faith (1689)

They are very important in defending the doctrine of the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ. Some regard this statement as confessional in 1 Tim 3:16, a kind of creedal hymn, a statement of Christian devotion to Christ.

The common Christian confession of this mystery indicates its greatness (the Greek says it is 'confessedly' great, i.e. great by common consent). There follows a quotation from such a confession, abruptly introduced in the Greek by a masculine pronoun, obviously referring to Christ; for this 'mystery' is a Person (cf. Col. 1:27). The rhythmical and antithetical phrases suggest a quotation from an early creedal hymn. Christ's pre-existence is implied and his incarnation asserted. (*New Bible Commentary* Revised, 1970, IVP, p.1172)

Certainty, the whole verse of 1 Timothy 3:16 should fully command our attention to derive spiritual encouragement. Its tremendous truths are God-breathed and therefore are authentic and authoritative in every respect. What must also be stated is the whole objective of God's word, which is 'to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ' (Eph. 3:9). It is extraordinary that God, the Creator of all things, humbled himself, and walked and ministered to sinners on this earth.

Great is God in his holiness and beauty. Great and weighty is his truth and it is so important to assert it in these days of increasing apostasy. A person cannot be godly who does not have the life of God in their soul. The order is: God first, then godliness. A work of God done within will show itself outwardly in true godliness. Godliness without God is a misnomer. Mankind has invented several religions and idolatrous inventions to represent God, but they are not true godliness. Neither can they be. Godliness can never truly make sense to a man who has not been born again of God, by the Holy Spirit. Knowing the biblical God is the vital aspect to all true godliness. Godliness is meaningless from a person without God the Father, and without Christ, the Saviour, and the Holy Spirit. Christian godliness is of comprehensive value to show what the Lord has done first in regeneration. The soul of the sinner, in recumbency, resting in the Saviour, and showing sanctification, or true godliness in their walk and talk, will honour the Lord God Almighty. The opposite of godliness is ungodliness, which generates unrighteousness. This is shown in chapter one of the Epistle to the Romans. Ungodliness brings a revelation

of God's wrath against sin, iniquity and transgressors. This can be witnessed in history. Man without God sinks into depravity and utter folly and foolishness. History and the Bible demonstrate this fact. Alienation from God through wicked works brings certain judgement, resulting in the fires of eternal hell. The problem today is that few people take the doctrine of hell seriously. The obituary columns in newspapers tell us what we would like to hear rather than the truth.

Remember Paul, the born again man, in this epistle, is writing to another born again man. True spirituality will cause us to fix our eyes upon God, through trusting Christ, by the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. This is what produces godliness. Godliness with contentment is great gain (see 1 Tim. 6:6). Furthermore, without controversy, great is the mystery of God. God is a Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is an incredible mystery, which the Bible sets forth. The revelation of the Godhead unfolds in the Word of God from Genesis to Revelation.

Great is the mystery of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, to all humanity that is dead and trespasses and sins. Great is the mystery of godliness in some churches, for they relegate God to the side-lines. Humanity has developed its own type of God(s) and has not submitted to the revelation of God in the Bible. It is worth noting that the term 'mystery of God' is scriptural. Paul says, 'unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ' (Col. 2:2). Again, we have the term 'mystery of God' used in the Apocalypse, 'But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants

the prophets' (Rev. 10:7). The unfolding mystery of the Trinity, leads us to the mystery of the incarnation. God with us, the Son given (Is. 9:6), is revealed in the whole series of events, and personalities, particularly set out for us in the early chapters of Matthew's and Luke's gospels. The deity of Christ is set forth too in John 1, which is an astonishing revelation of divine truth. Christ's pre-existence is asserted, time and time again, in the New Testament and supported by many Old Testament prophecies. Christ must have the pre-eminence in all things.

Incidentally and briefly, there are many mysteries in scripture. The mystery of Israel (Ro. 11:5); the mystery of the kingdom of God (Mark 4:11); the mystery of Christ (Eph. 3:4 with Col. 4:3); the mystery of the gospel (Eph. 6:19); the mystery of iniquity (2 Thess. 2:7), the mystery of BABYLON, THE GREAT (Rev. 17:5); the mystery of the seven stars (Rev. 1:20); the mystery of the woman (Rev. 17:7); the mystery of the faith (1 Tim. 3:9). We are so privileged to have fellowship in the mystery of Christ. We are to hold forth 'the mystery of faith' in a pure conscience.

Moreover, think upon the eternal plan and decrees of God. Listening to some preachers, one would think, that they have a plan for God. One preacher wrote a book called: 'Forgiving God.' Trendy titles are becoming more blatant. One should meditate on the attributes of God, the names of God, the titles of God and so forth, and not get side-tracked by apostates. The whole verse, in 1 Timothy 3:16, is about God from eternity past to eternity present and eternity future. Actually, God is the 'eternal present I am' and God created time.

Some make the term 'godliness' as godly living, or piety, in 1 Timothy 3:16 or a reference to the Christian religion. These

ideas have some merit, but we must compare scripture with scripture to arrive at concrete conclusions. But, this is a phrase that is pregnant with meaning. There are three syllables in godliness and these are: god-li-ness. The stressed syllable is god. 'Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh'. Moreover, it is suggested, merely to focus on 'godliness' without acknowledging the source of 'godliness'—GOD, Christ, is to miss the profound meaning of the text. The incarnation starts with God, in the counsels of the eternal Trinity, and the purpose of the Eternal God was manifested in time, in the incarnational Word, to bring the Elect to himself. This verse is the revelation of the plan of God. Godliness includes the word: 'God', and it is included by the Holy Spirit.

Of course, the people of God must live in godliness, and Timothy was reminded of this in 1 Timothy 3:15. Godliness is the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Timothy had to behave properly in the Church of God. That is a lesson for all pastors in ruling and teaching and ministering to God's people. There are exact things a pastor must exhibit in his life, in terms of doctrine, that is true and that honours God. A minister's life must be holy, underpinned by prayer and devotion to God in Christian service. Church officers must be exemplary. Women's ordination is not biblical, and many churches are ignoring scripture on this point, among other aspects.

When we have been in heaven for ten thousand years we will only have known a fraction of the triune God. Meanwhile, we must glorify and work for God's cause and holy name throughout the earth in preaching the gospel, and exhibit true godliness.

All through this verse, 1 Timothy 3:16, we must maintain without doubt that:

- Christ is, without controversy, great, and the mystery.
- God was literally manifested in the flesh;
- God was justified in the Spirit;
- God was seen of angels;
- God was preached unto the Gentiles;
- God was believed in the world;
- God was received up to glory.

Moreover, we must maintain that it was God, the Son of God, that is spoken about in this verse in the sequence of statements. We must maintain and defend the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is fully God and fully man. We must believe and teach the hypostatic union. This term is used in Christology to describe the union of Christ's humanity and divinity in one hypostasis, or individual existence.

The Athanasian Creed recognized this doctrine and affirmed its importance, stating that 'He is God from the essence of the Father, begotten before time; and he is human from the essence of his mother, born in time; completely God, completely human, with a rational soul and human flesh; equal to the Father as regards divinity, less than the Father as regards humanity. Although he is God and human, yet Christ is not two, but one. He is one, however, not by his divinity being turned into flesh, but by God's taking humanity to himself. He is one, certainly not by the blending of his essence, but by the unity of his person. For just as one human is both rational soul and flesh, so too the one Christ is both God and human.' (https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hypostatic_union)

Another consideration, it is suggested, when looking at the idea of 'godliness' is to apply the ultimate meaning to Christ. If Christ is the 'mystery' revealed, then he is the supreme example of 'godliness'. For he lived a godly life to the maximum extent. He honoured God. He obeyed God in all points, 'Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered' (Heb. 5:7-8). There has never been an Old Testament priest like Christ. Also, 'For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens' (Heb. 7:26).

Though he was weary at times and suffered in his flesh, a man of sorrows (Is. 53), yet he never sinned. Unerring godliness was practiced by the Son of Man in his flesh. He lived for the glory of God, yet he is God manifest in the flesh. He lived an impeccable life of godliness. If we need perfect standards look at Christ. He obeyed the law in all points. His doing and dying were perfect. Never did a man speak or act as the Son of Man. He was tempted in all points, yet without sin. Satan tried to tempt him in his flesh, yet he prevailed, resisted and triumphed, and returned from forty days in the wilderness. He always did the things that pleased the Father. He was humble and compassionate, merciful and kind. Yes, Christ Jesus, the Messiah of Israel, was kind and godly. He was the epitome of godliness. He showed his godliness throughout his ministry. His humanity was the embodiment of perfection, and his deity is always holy.

OF THE RIGHT KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST CRUCIFIED (PART 4)

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.

Lasting, we must follow Christ in *humility*, whereof he is a wonderful spectacle, in that, being God, he became man for us; and of a man, became a worm that is trodden under foot, that he might save man. Phil. 2:5 ‘Let the same mind be in you that was in Jesus Christ, who being in the form of God, humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross.’

And here we must observe that the *example* of Christ hath more in it than any other example hath or can have: for it doth not only show us what we ought to do (as the example of other men do) but it is a *remedy* against many vices, and a *motive* to many good duties. First of all, the serious consideration of this, that the very Son of God himself suffered all the pains and torments of hell on the cross for our sins, is a proper and most effectual means to stir up our hearts to a godly sorrow for them. And that this thing come to pass, every man must be settled without doubt that he was the man that crucified Christ: that he is to be blamed as well as Judas, Herod, Pontius Pilate, and the Jews: and that his sins should be the nails, the spears, and the thorns that pierced him. When this meditation begins to take place, bitterness of spirit, with wailing and mourning, takes place in like manner. Zech. 12:10, ‘And they shall look upon him, whom they have pierced, and they shall lament for him as one that lamenteth for his only son.’ Peter

in his first sermon struck the Jews as with a thunderclap from heaven, when he said unto them, ‘Ye have crucified the Lord of glory,’ so at the same time 3,000 men were pricked in their hearts, and said, Acts 2:37, ‘Men and brethren, what shall we do to be saved?’ Again, if Christ for our sins shed his blood, and if our sins made him sweat water and blood; O then why should not we ourselves shed bitter tears, and why should not our hearts bleed for them? He that finds himself so dull and hardened that the passion of Christ doth not humble him, is in a lamentable case, for there is no faith in the death of Christ effectual in him as yet.

Secondly, the mediation and the passion of Christ is a most notable means to breed repentance and reformation of life in time to come. For when we begin to think that Christ crucified, by suffering the first and second death, hath procured unto us remission of all our sins past, and freed us from hell, death and damnation; then if there be but a spark of grace in us, we begin to be of another mind, and to reason thus with ourselves; What? hath the Lord been thus merciful unto me, that am in myself but a firebrand of hell, as to free me from the deserved destruction, and to receive me to favour in Christ? yea, no doubt he hath: his name be blessed therefore: I will not therefore sin any more as I have done, but rather endeavour to keep myself from every evil

way. And this faith purifies both heart and life.

Thirdly, when thou art in any pain of body or sickness, think how light these are compared to the agony and bloody sweat, to the crown of thorns and nails of Christ. When thou art wronged in word or deed, by any man, turn thine eye to the cross, consider how meekly he suffered all abuses for the most part in silence, and prayed for them that crucified him. When thou art tempted with pride or vain-glory, consider how for thy proper sins Christ was despised and mocked, and condemned among thieves. When anger and desire of revenge inflame thine heart, think how Christ gave himself to death to save his enemies, even when they did most cruelly intreat him, and shed his blood: and by these meditations, especially if they be mingled with faith, thy mind shall be eased.

Thus we see how *Christ crucified* is to be known: and hence ariseth a three-fold knowledge: one of God, the second of our neighbours, the third of ourselves.

Touching the first: if we would know the true God aright, and know him to our salvation, we must know him only in *Christ crucified*. God in himself, and in his own majesty, is invisible, not only to the eyes of the body, but also to the very minds of men; and he is revealed to us only in Christ, in whom he is to be seen, as in a glass. For in Christ he setteth forth and giveth his justice, goodness, wisdom, and himself wholly unto us. For this cause he is called the brightness of the glory, and the ingraven form of the person of the Father, Heb. 1:3, and the image of the invisible God, Col. 1:15. Therefore we must not know God, and seek him any where else but in Christ: and whatsoever out of Christ comes unto us in the name of God, is a flat idol of man's brain.

As for our neighbours, those that are especially of Christ's Church, they are to be known of us on this manner. When we are to do any duty unto them, we must not barely respect their persons, but *Christ crucified* in them, and them in Christ. When Paul persecuted such as called on the name of Christ, he then from heaven cries, 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?' (Acts 9:4). Here then let this be marked, that when the poor comes to us for release, it is Christ that comes to our doors, and saith, I am hungry, I am thirsty, I am naked: and let the bowels of compassion be in us towards them: as towards Christ, unless we will hear that fearful sentence in the day of judgment, 'Go, ye cursed, into hell: I was hungry, and ye fed me not, I was naked, and ye clothed me not' etc. Matt. 25:42.

Thirdly, the right knowledge of ourselves ariseth of the right knowledge of *Christ crucified*, in whom, and by whom, we come to know five special things concerning ourselves. The first, how grievous our sins are, and therefore how miserable we are in regard of them. If we consider our offences in themselves, and as they are in us, we may soon be deceived, because the conscience being corrupted, often erreth in giving testimony, and by that means maketh sin to appear less than it is indeed. But if sin be considered in the death and passion of Christ, whereof it was the cause, and the vileness thereof measured by the unspeakable torments endured by the Son of God: and if the greatness of the offence of man be esteemed by the endless satisfaction made to the justice of God, the least sin that there is will appear to be a sin indeed, and that most grievous and ugly. Therefore *Christ crucified* must be used of us as a mirror or looking glass, in which we may fully take a view of our wretchedness and misery, and what we are by nature. For such as the passion of Christ was in the eyes

of men, such is our passion or condition in the eyes of God: and that which wicked men did to Christ, the same doth sin and Satan do to our very soul.

The second point is that men believing in Christ are not their own or lords of themselves, but wholly both body and soul belong to Christ, in that they were given to him of God the Father, and he hath purchased them with his own blood. 1 Cor. 3:13, 'Ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.' Hence it cometh to pass (which is not to be forgotten) that Christ esteemeth all the crosses and afflictions of his people as his own proper afflictions. Hence again we must learn to give up ourselves, both body and soul, to the honour and service of Christ, whose we are.

The third is that every true believer, not as he is as *a man*, but as he is a *new man*, or a Christian, hath his being and subsisting from Christ. 'We are members of his body, of his flesh and of his bone' (Eph. 5:20). In which words Paul alludes to the speech of Adam, Gen 2:23, 'Thou art bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh;' and thereby he teacheth that, as Eve was made of a rib taken out of the side of Adam, so doth the whole Church of God, and every man regenerate, spring and arise out of the blood that streamed from the heart and side of *Christ crucified*.

The fourth is that all good works done of us proceed from the virtue and merit of *Christ crucified*: he is the cause of them in us, and we are the causes of them, in and by him. 'Without me,' saith he, John 15:5, 'ye can do nothing;' and 'Every branch that bears not fruit in me'—mark well, he saith 'in me'—'he taketh away', John 15:2.

The fifth point is that we owe unto Christ an endless debt. For he was crucified only as our surety and pledge, and in the spectacle of his passion we must consider ourselves as the

chief debtors, and that the very discharge of our debt—that is, the sins which are inherent in us—were the proper cause of all the endless pains and torments that Christ endured, that he might set us most miserable bankrupts at liberty from hell, death and damnation. For this his unspeakable goodness, if we do but once think of it seriously, we must needs confess that we owe ourselves, our souls and bodies, and all that we have, as a debt unto him. And so soon as any man begins to know *Christ crucified*, he knows his own debt, and thinks of the payment of it.

Thus we see how Christ is to be known: now we shall not need to make much examination whether this matter of knowing and acknowledging of Christ take place in the world, or not. For few there be that know him as they ought. The Turk [Muslim-Ed] even at this very day knows him not, but as he was a prophet. The Jew scorneth his cross, and passion. The Popish Churches, though in word they confess him, yet do they not know him as they ought. The Friars and Jesuits in their sermons at this day commonly use the passion as a means to stir up pity and compassion towards Christ, who being so righteous a man was so hardly intreated, and to inflame their hearers to a hatred of the Jews, and Judas, and Pontius Pilate, that put our blessed Saviour to death: but all this may be done in any other history. And the service of God which in the church stands now in force by the Canons of the Council of Trent, defaceth *Christ crucified*, in that the passions of martyrs are made meritorious, and the very wood of the cross their only help: and the Virgin Mary the Queen of heaven, and a mother of mercies, who in remission of sins may command her son. And they give a religious adoration to dumb crucifixes, made by the hand and art of man.

TO BE CONCLUDED

COVENANT COMMUNION WITH GOD

by JOHN HOOPER (Saltash)

2. OUR COVENANT GOD

TO understand what God's covenant is we must not do as is so often done, which is to look to man's use of the word or to human pacts and treaties. Rather we should look to God. It is in God himself, as he reveals himself to us in Holy Scripture, that we will find the answer. God, in his trinitarian life of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is a covenant God. Even the Divine name Elohim strongly suggests this. Andrew Jukes, in his popular work on the names of God, writes: 'The idea conveyed by the name Elohim is always that of "One in covenant".' He goes on to say that it 'refers to and implies One who stands in a covenant-relationship.'¹ 'From the beginning God is "Elohim," in covenant-union with himself for evermore.'²

Perhaps nowhere in Scripture do we find this relationship within the Godhead more fully revealed than in the gospel record of John. In the very first verse we are informed 'and the Word was with God.' On one occasion when he was instructing his disciples, our Lord Jesus Christ expanded on the relationship that exists between himself and his heavenly Father. Addressing Philip in particular he asked him, 'Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the

Father, and the Father in me' (John 14:10–11). Again in John 17 Jesus prays, 'Thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee' (v. 21). While the persons of the Godhead are distinct, they are not in isolation. Jesus said, 'The Son can do nothing of himself' (John 5:19), and concerning the Holy Spirit, 'he shall not speak of himself' (John 16:13).³

It would not be idle speculation to say that the inner life of God, by which we mean the inter-trinitarian life of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is a life of perfect harmony, joy, peace, unbroken fellowship and love. 'God is love' (1 John 4:8).

In Psalm 25 David writes, 'The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant' (v. 14). In a sermon preached on this text in the Princeton Theological Seminary chapel in 1902 Geerhardus Vos noted, 'The Psalmists are convinced that God himself desires to enter upon close fellowship with man; that if he institutes a covenant for his servants, it is because *he is in his very nature a covenant God*.'⁴

³ The technical terms used by theologians to describe this mutual indwelling of the three persons of the trinity are *perichoresis* or *circuminsession*. 'The Father and the Son—and, by extension, the Spirit—are in each other in indissoluble union. This union does not infringe the distinctness of either.' (Robert Letham, *Union with Christ* [Phillipsburg NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2011], p.49).

⁴ Geerhardus Vos, 1902, downloaded from <http://www.kerux.com/doc/0301A1.asp>.

¹ Andrew Jukes, *The Names of God*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1967), p.28.

² *Ibid.*, p.20.

In the Netherlands Dr. Abraham Kuyper described the divine economy of the three persons 'as a covenant relation.' He wrote,

We then confess that in the one personality of the divine essence there consists a three-personal distinction, which has in the covenant relation its unity and an inseparable tie. According to this conception, God himself is the living and eternal foundation, not only of every covenant, but also of the covenant idea as such, and the essential unity has its conscious expression in the covenant relation.⁵

Kuyper's contemporary Herman Bavinck wrote similarly of '[the] life of the three persons in the Divine Being as a covenantal life, a life of consummate self-consciousness and freedom. Here, within the Divine Being, the covenant flourishes to the full.'⁶ Others in the Dutch Reformed tradition, notably

⁵ Abraham Kuyper, *Dictaten Dogmatiek* [Dictated Dogmatics], 2nd ed., Vol. 3, p. 80-81. Quoted in Herman Hoeksema, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2nd ed., Vol. 1, (Grandville, MI: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2004), pp.419-420.

⁶ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 3, *Sin and Salvation in Christ*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2006), p.214.

Herman Hoeksema, have further developed this line of thought.

In the UK David McKay, in his book *The Bond of Love: God's Covenantal Relationship with His Church*, makes the assertion, 'God within his own being is relational',⁷ although his preferred definition of the covenant is still the traditional one of an agreement.⁸ Louis Berkhof too, while viewing the covenant of grace preeminently as an agreement, was also happy to speak of it as:

a relation of friendship between God and man, a communion of life in which man is made to share in the divine life, the life of the resurrection.⁹

To share in the divine life! That may seem to us now a distant, if not unobtainable goal, but that is the end to which God has saved us and called us into covenant with himself (2 Pe. 1:4). It lifts the doctrine of the covenant out of the intellectual and into the experiential, from the head to the heart, and that is the direction we will be taking over coming pages.

⁷ David McKay, *The Bond of Love: God's covenantal Relationship with His Church* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2001), p.39.

⁸ Ibid., p.24.

⁹ Louis Berkhof, *Manual of Christian Doctrine*, p.158.

TO BE CONTINUED

FORMER DAYS

BEING A SUMMARY OF PAST ISSUES FROM THE GOSPEL MAGAZINE

250 years ago: May & June 1771

'Love to Christ the test of evangelical faith' is the title of the first piece in the May magazine. It is an exposition of 1 Peter 1:8. 'He

who truly believes in Christ, loves him,

1. For his own personal excellencies... 2. Because of the near resemblance he bears to God as man and mediator... 3. Because of

the excellency of his finished work... 4. In a concern for his interests, and endeavours to promote it according to the measure of grace... 5. If we truly love Christ, we shall have a delightful regard for those things by which we may be helped to remember him... 6. Where there is sincere love to Christ, there will be strong desires after the nearest and fullest enjoyment of him in heaven...'

Next we have an examination of certain heresies that have plagued and still plague the church. The first is that of Simon Magus, an unconverted person who looked on the Christian faith as a means by which to enrich himself. Various practical observations are made in this, and applied to the reader. This is followed by the autobiography of the Rev. Hanserd Knollys, a 17th century clergyman who came under conviction in his ministry. He resigned his living, and later renounced his ordination, setting himself to seek the Lord before he would preach again. After much prayer he was led to a silenced minister, who, after talking with him, showed him that he was relying on the covenant of works, and that he was a stranger to the covenant of grace. Through the spiritual assistance of this godly man, Knollys was wonderfully and truly converted. The account is marked as 'to be continued.'

It is perhaps suitable, in light of the previous piece, that it should be followed by 'Reflections on God's husbandry', 1 Cor 3:9. As the natural man can be likened to an unfruitful field and plant, having no power to help himself, so through God's husbandry we become fruitful through his working in us.

The Letter to a Friend discusses the state of the ministry, particularly regarding the lack of willingness evident in many to help the poor. Instead, ministers look first to their own comforts, rather than trusting in the

Lord. Then comes a piece on the usefulness of prophecy, being an extract from the funeral sermon of John, Earl of Rochester (d. 1680). A man who actively pursued atheism (though with a constant sense of sinfulness in so doing), he was brought to faith by hearing Isaiah 53 read, and seeing that the sufferings of Christ were prophesied long before.

John Ryland addresses a letter to the Deists of his day, which is a follow-up to the previous piece, and is intended to show that evangelical faith is the only right response to the truth of God.

'A real Protestant' submits an extract from a small tract by John Wesley, in which the evangelist shows how he had leaned too much on Calvinism in the past. The whole is a plea for readers (by Wesley) to see that salvation is by works—not the *merit* of works, but the *condition* of them. Unless we show ourselves to be desirous of salvation, by turning from sin to righteousness, we have no reason to believe we will be justified. 'A true Protestant' invites responses to this claim.

The article on Serious thoughts on marriage is continued from the previous number. Several hymns conclude the issue, including Toplady's solemn yet glorious 'A debtor to mercy alone.'

The magazine for **June** opens with the next part of the series on heresies, and take Sabellianism. These followed Noetus of Smyrna in teaching that there is but one God, and that the Trinity is of names and functions only. Sabellius taught that, as there is only one Divine person, it follows that God died in the cross. The heresy of patripassianism is explicitly denied in the Reformed Confessions, such as Article I of the 39 Articles of Religion.

The autobiography of Hanserd Knollys continues. His sufferings before, during and after the English Civil War, with his travels

and ministry, make for very interesting reading. It is appropriate that the next piece is a letter to a Christian friend under affliction. The author considers that this person is under either of two afflictions: God hiding his face, and the person having to spend much time in the company of the ungodly. The writer shows that, under the former affliction, God's comfort is never removed, even if at times we do not feel it. Under the latter affliction we are taught not to value the things of this passing world, and instead learn to cast ourselves on Christ for supplies of grace.

The Wesley extract arouses many responses, none favourable. A concluding note from the Editors refers to a newspaper article in which Wesley accused *The Gospel Magazine* of misrepresenting him, and of denying him the right of reply. They respond that they could only print what they were sent, and that he, Wesley, had never sent a reply.

A Letter to a Student of Divinity answers a concern about how young men enter places of theological education with humility, and come out with pride. The author suggests that the fault lies not in the institution, but in the individual who seizes on ideas without properly understanding them. The whole is a plea to young men to get wisdom by the right means—the study of Scripture, and prayer. A second letter, On the Importance of Salvation, sees the author dare to write to a friend about the most serious matter of all, our absolute need of salvation.

In an earlier issue the question was asked, 'Can a person be a hypocrite and not know it?' A correspondent answers 'yes', on the ground that hypocrites are unregenerate, and therefore ignorant of their true spiritual state. Another question is now asked, about how a person might know if he is a hypocrite. Poetry concludes the issue, the first being on The covenant of grace.

200 years ago: May & June 1821

The May issue opens with an article that examines the doctrine of the sovereignty of God. 'God has but one mind in the disposal of all things, whether in wrath, or in affliction, in the kingdoms of this world, or in the kingdom of grace and of glory.' The doctrine is related particularly to the covenant. 'A lover of truth' concludes his series on the restoration of the Jews to their homeland. A correspondent submits thoughts on 1 Cor. 2:1–2, and another on John 16:32, The saint's time legacy. The question of whether the trials the child of God meets are punishments for sin is answered by one who calls himself Research. He affirms that they might be, in the case of sin, and uses David as his example. However those trials that come to us for Christ and the gospel's sake are to be taken for crowns and not trials: though these might exercise us at the time, and we cannot see their purpose, we will find comfort when we cast ourselves on Christ. Sarah takes Less than the Least to task for his heterodox views expressed in his answers to Myra. These views concern the humanity of Christ.

Susannah writes 'A word to the Lord's dear people in the present day of great events.' Although there is no date for the article, other pieces in this issue are given as having been written in early April. While no specific event is mentioned, Greece's War of Independence against the Ottoman Empire began on April 6, Napoleon lay dying on St Helena, and Simon Bolivar was nearing the conclusion of Venezuela's fight for independence from Spain. Susannah's aim is to remind readers that, although the affairs of this world are unstable, 'the foundation of God standeth sure.'

W. Ward writes in defence of his views on the Trinity, which in a previous number were criticised by the *Magazine*. Ward believes

the extract published misrepresented his whole doctrine, and he is careful to show that he differs from the Sabellian heresy. In response, the Editors assert that, even if he is not a Sabellian, neither is Ward an orthodox Trinitarian.

The obituary of one Elizabeth Upcraft of Suffolk is supplied. This godly woman clearly suffered in body for a considerable time, and on occasions was almost overwhelmed by her burden. The writer says that she was given grace to hold fast to her Saviour, declaring, shortly before her death, 'O what a shout will I give when I get home!' He concludes, 'We do well to remember that conquering grace is promised in a dying hour.'

Poetry concludes the issue. The first submission is a treatise in verse form, with many scriptural references, on the sovereignty of God. The Editors suggest it was sent in because, at that time, attacks on God's sovereignty were increasing, and man's will was being made the hinge on which all events turn.

'A broken heart' is the title of the first piece in the **June** issue. It deals with the need for that work of grace by which our hearts of stone are ground to powder, before they can bear the impression of God's image. The writer encourages readers to seek that breaking of the heart that yields such a glorious result. The doctrine of the humanity of Christ is dealt with once more, this time by one who has long been a member of the Western Baptist Association. He writes as one who is intimately acquainted with the Scriptures, and finds in them all the evidence he needs to see that Christ must be more than a man, if he is to be the Saviour of any. His reason for writing is made evident towards the end. There are some, he says, who teach the having of the name of Christian without having the nature, and others who teach that the consent of the unsanctified mind is the

faith of the operation of God. He then names 'Sandeman ... a fox' and 'Fuller ... a snake in the grass' who has 'placed Dan, Gen 49:17, in the Western Baptist Association.' Sandeman taught that intellectual acceptance of the facts of the Christian faith is saving faith, a view known as Sandemanianism. Andrew Fuller, though sometimes lumped in with the Puritans and their successors (see, eg. Robert P. Martin's otherwise very useful *A Guide to the Puritans*, published by Banner of Truth)—and though a strong critic of Sandemanianism, is severely criticised by George Ella as the author of much error and confusion. Taking the unnamed author of this piece at face value (and we have no cause to do otherwise) we can only conclude that a thorough knowledge of God's word, and an experimental knowledge of Christ and his grace, are essential if the church is to be kept from error, or rescued from it. Where are the able ministers of the gospel today?

In this vein, Tarsus is highly critical of Less than the Least for his assault on Myra and Sarah. He encourages his opponent to imitate the Bereans, and to search the Scriptures, whether these things be so. The gospel practice of perfection is the subject of another article, this one arguing that the words, 'Walk thou before me, and be thou perfect', imply a progression. Walking is not standing still, and we know this desire for progress when we hunger and thirst after righteousness. The question of whether a believer is punished for sin is given an answer: the believer is not punished in a penal or vindictive sense for those sins that are laid on Christ. The believer must, however, undergo such trials and burdens as are common to mankind, or peculiar to the child of God.

Tomlinson continues his attempt to rescue Holy Scripture from ridicule, by offering a new translation of portions of Genesis 3

and 4 with comment. Several sermon skeletons follow, and then comes the section of Theological Review. First is Dr Hawker's notes on Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and he is commended for rescuing 'this prince of poets from the shackles of his commentators.' Hawker sees the whole as a gospel poem. A short essay on the doctrine of the Trinity is warmly commended; another calling on congregations to remain seated while singing is not. Two sermons, one by William Gadsby (and possibly a third sermon, although the Editors are so careful in their language that one cannot be sure), take up the matter of George IV's wife, Caroline of Brunswick, from whom he was estranged, who was turned away from the coronation in July, and who died that year. None of the sermons are considered fit.

100 years ago: May & June 1921

The **May** number opens with the Editor's sermon on living and walking by the Spirit, Gal 5:25. It is briefer than usual because his Wayside Notes are longer. These concern 'Neo-Evangelicals and the Atonement.' Beginning with a series of short quotations from another publication, Thomas Houghton shows that some, who would call themselves Evangelical, are in fact nothing of the sort. The quotations are from a Birmingham clergyman who is happy to have candles on the altar, and to light them if none of the congregation object. Along with coloured stoles (the scarf-like object that has replaced the black preaching scarf of the early Reformers in many Anglican churches), and critical views of Scripture, this gentleman considers it best to preach to the whole man, and not to concentrate only on the need to be saved. The said clergyman

concludes that few young men will come into the ministry if they are to be hampered by the limits of former generations.

What is the objection? Put simply, these Neo-Evangelicals consider the Romish mass rather than the substitutionary atonement to be more suited to modern tastes. Houghton quotes other authors who make the same claim. He then supplies quotations from Calvin, Luther, the Church of England, and many others down the centuries, to show that true Evangelicals have always upheld the substitutionary nature of Christ's atonement.

Two further pieces extol the sovereignty of God, and take leprosy as a type of sin. A number of short pieces follow, including one on the three appearances of Christ. Neo-Evangelicalism is revisited in the Review section.

The **June** magazine opens with a sermon on Isaiah 40:31. Wayside Notes considers Divine Love: its object, extent and design, from John 3:16. Wellsprings takes Psalm 38:21–22, and shows how dependent the believer is on the Lord's gracious presence.

Among many other articles, W.H. Griffith Thomas, formerly Principle of Wycliffe Hall, Oxford, writes about the influence of Higher Criticism on missionaries in China. CMS was then only a little over a year away from the split, which would see BCMS appear. Both the former Editor and his father served with that society.

Among the remaining items is one on crucifixes, in which the writer shows that all images were unknown to the early Church. Another, echoing the testimony of Hanserd Knollys, is from a clergyman who puts himself forward as an object to saving grace, against the prevailing errors of the day.

TO BE CONTINUED

BOOK REVIEWS

Swift and Beautiful: The amazing stories of faithful missionaries

David B. Calhoun

Banner of Truth, 2020 £6.25 240pp pbk ISBN 978-1-84871-938-5

David B. Calhoun is Emeritus Professor of Church History at Covenant Theological Seminary, St Louis, Missouri. He has succeeded in writing a book that is both scholarly with 40 pages of notes and at the same time written in a popular, easy-to-read style suitable to the ordinary Christian reader.

The title is taken from Frances Ridley Havergal's well-known hymn of consecration, 'Take my life and let it be', which the author also associates with Isaiah 52:7, 'How beautiful upon the mountain are the feet of him who brings good news.' He has selected stories of 12 missionaries, including two pairs, which are told in ten chapters of around 16 to 20 pages each.

Professor Calhoun's missionaries are for the most part Americans, mainly from the Presbyterian and Independent churches, and with the exception of the early pioneers, John Eliot and David Brainerd, these are likely to be unknown to most British readers, as indeed they were to this reviewer. There are also, however, two Scots, who are likely to be better known, David Livingstone and Mary Slessor.

Eight of the missionaries selected by the writer, including the two Scots, laboured on the continent of Africa. Of these Samuel Lapsley and the missionary couple, William and Lucy Sheppard, are of particular interest. Lapsley, a white American, and William Sheppard, a Black, originally went out to the Belgian Congo together in 1890, but after only two years Lapsley succumbed to fever. This was by no means a rare occurrence in the history of Christian missions in Africa but, as often happens, Lapsley's death and example encouraged others all the more. William Sheppard, later joined by his wife, Lucy, combined the preaching of the gospel with a powerful stand for the rights of the Africans who had been cruelly oppressed by the Belgians under King Leopold.

Equally inspiring is the story of the two friends, Mary Beam and Betty Cridland, who are also the most recent of the missionaries featured in the book, both born in the early 20th century and surviving into the 21st. They laboured for many years among the Uduk people of the Southern Sudan. The story of this tribe provides a powerful rebuff to those who denigrate Christian missionary work by claiming that it destroys the culture of primitive peoples. The 'culture' of the Uduks, governed by their witch-doctors, included the burial alive of twins who were regarded as a curse and also of the babies of mothers who had died in childbirth. These hideous practices died out when almost the entire tribe espoused Christianity.

The remaining four missionaries laboured in their own country, Eliot and Brainerd being the first to bring the gospel to the native Americans or 'Indians.' James Bryan and Bob Childress were evangelists who worked among their own people, Bryan spending almost his entire ministry in the city of Birmingham, Alabama, where he was known to black and white alike as Brother Bryan. The story of Bob Childress is in some respects the most remarkable

in the book. He was brought up among the 'Hardshell' Baptists of the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia, who, if not explicitly antinomian in their doctrine, seem to have contributed to a pervasive lawlessness in which the principal local industry of distilling grain into whiskey played its part. His parents were 'hard-working and hard-drinking people' and Bob followed them, learning to 'fight mean, to drink and to gamble.' Happily Bob was then converted to Christ and gave the rest of his life to serving his own people in the Blue Ridge and in the comparable Buffalo Mountain community of North Carolina.

Professor Calhoun has written an enthralling book about missionaries who laboured for Christ in Africa and North America. Perhaps one could express the hope that he might return to the subject with a second book, covering perhaps some of those who laboured in other regions such as Asia and South America?

JBD

Devoted to God's Church

Sinclair B. Ferguson

Banner of Truth Trust, 2020 200pp £6.50 pbk ISBN 978-1-84871-976-7

Are you sitting comfortably? You will not be comfortable for long if you begin reading this book! In eleven chapters the author explores the meaning of belonging: belonging *to* the church as an expression of our belonging *to* Christ.

The book is aimed primarily at church members, but it also explains the Christian faith, and some of its less obvious aspects, to readers who are interested but otherwise uninformed.

Church members who read this are likely to be made uncomfortable by the gentle, searching, manner in which the author explains what it means to belong *to* the church (the setting of the title is deliberate). Their discomfort will arise from the realisation that, in one or more areas, and to varying degrees, our expectations are wrong, and our participation is therefore affected. The careful, prayerful reader will come away with a renewed commitment to *belong* to the church as an expression of *belonging* to Christ. The interested but uninformed non-member will discover that church is not what it is often made out to be, even by its members.

The necessity of the new birth is made very plain, and is the subject of the second chapter, 'What is your story, or, Are you a Christian?' Other chapters cover Discipleship, Membership, Worship, The Bible, Christian Baptism, Prayer, Christian Service, Communion, and Christian Witness and World Mission.

The tone is set by the first chapter, 'What is a Church?' One trusts no reader of this magazine would get the answer totally wrong, but one suspects that few would get it all right.

Liberal illustrated with anecdotes, and written in a warm, conversational and pastoral style, readers will find themselves being reminded of things they have heard before, but perhaps not in such a concentrated manner. It is the bringing together of all these topics under one title that makes this work so worth reading.

The chapter on Baptism deliberately steps past the endless debate over the age of the candidate and the quantity of water to be used, and instead focuses on the ongoing application of our own baptism to our lives in Christ. It is this ability to address throughout the book a broad

spectrum of church traditions, ancient and modern, that makes it so easy to recommend it to you, the author's enthusiasm for the ESV notwithstanding.

If, by the time you are reading this, the restrictions on worship have not yet been lifted, use the time well: buy a copy, read it, and prepare yourself to come back to church so that, when the doors are open, you really arrive. If that confuses you, read chapter 5! If they have been lifted, read it anyway, and be helped.

EJM

POETRY

The following lines have been sent in by a subscriber, who writes,

It was interesting to read about the contents of *The Gospel Magazines* of Jan & Feb 1771 in the latest issue, particularly with regards to George Whitefield. You may have come across the hymn which John Berridge wrote following the death

of Whitefield—it is no. 374 in Gadsby's selection (see below). Perhaps it would be worth publishing in the *Magazine* some time. If ever there was a time when we need faithful ministers to be raised up it is today.

Prayer for Increase of Faithful Ministers. *Matt. 9:38*

Send help, O Lord, we pray,
And thy own gospel bless;
For godly men decay,
And faithful pastors cease;
The righteous are removed home,
And scorers rise up in their room.

While Satan's troops are bold,
And thrive in number too,
The flocks in Jesus' fold,
Are growing lank and few;
Old sheep are moving off each year,
And few lambs in the fold appear.

Old shepherds, too, retire,
Who gathered flocks below,
And young ones catch no fire,
Or worldly-prudent grow;
Few run with trumpets in their hand,
To sound alarms by sea and land.

O Lord, stir up thy power,
To make the gospel spread;
And thrust out preachers more,
With voice to raise the dead;
With feet to run where thou dost call;
With faith to fight and conquer all.

The flocks that long have dwelt
Around fair Zion's hill,
And thy sweet grace have felt,
Uphold and feed them still;
But fresh folds build up everywhere,
And plenteously thy truth declare.

As one Elijah dies,
True prophet of the Lord,
Let some Elisha rise
To blaze the gospel-word;
And fast as sheep to Jesus go,
May lambs recruit his fold below.

J. Berridge

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

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

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

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