

NOVEMBER–DECEMBER 2021

£1.50

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 appear to be illuminated from below, creating a dramatic and ethereal atmosphere.

Sarah • Covenant Communion with God • The Burning Bush

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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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THE GOSPEL MAGAZINE

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

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NOVEMBER—DECEMBER 2021

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EDITORIAL

READERS may have been aware of a gathering that took place in Glasgow recently. The purpose of the gathering was to discuss ways and means of addressing the changing climate. We are all aware that the current accepted orthodoxy on the matter is that human beings have, by their combined actions over recent centuries, effected changes in the ambient temperature. The production of certain gases, and their increased concentration in the atmosphere, is said to be driving a rise in global temperatures. Such rises have devastating consequences in terms of famine, floods and extreme weather events—hurricanes, monsoons, heat waves and extreme drops in winter temperatures, and so on.

The issue is compounded by the undeniable blight and damage caused by pollution. The discovery of oil as a source of both fuel and plastic has been very beneficial to mankind on the whole, but at a cost that now seems rather high. We have all seen what happens when oil spills into the sea, and we are all aware of the mountains of rubbish

that now accumulate. Plastic seems almost indestructible as far as its complete breakdown goes, and burning it only releases the very gases that are deemed responsible for the rise in global temperatures.

What to do about it—assuming, of course, one believes the official version?

The first matter is to correctly diagnose the problem. If the central complaint of the environmental lobby is to be taken as true, then the problem does not really lie with oil or anything else, but with people and the way we use such things. It is, at bottom, a question of greed and selfishness: we prefer an easy life, and we like the convenience of disposable goods. Mass production brings down prices, and many (though not all, by any means) are able to enjoy a far higher standard of living than would otherwise be the case. Cheap power means cheaper food, which in part explains the obesity problem in the West. The problem, at bottom, is not oil or anything of the sort, but the way in which things are used: the problem is people, and their greedy, selfish natures.

The second matter is to correctly assess the situation. If the central fear of the environmental lobby is taken to be true, then the future of mankind is in peril. Allowed to continue as things are, the effect of climate change will be to destroy large areas of the world, pushing the population into ever smaller areas, while putting an increasing strain on reduced resources. This will lead to conflict, and will exacerbate the spread of diseases. Mankind's future looks bleak. We would not disagree, as far as the conclusion goes: mankind's future is indeed bleak, but not for the reasons advanced by the environmentalists. Mankind's future is bleak because all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. The greed and selfishness mentioned a moment ago are manifestations of that sin. The wages of sin is death, and the death threatened is not mere physical death (although that is included) but is that spiritual death that has come upon all. We are alienated from God by our sin, and hell is before us. One effect of sin is that we live in a world where wars and rumours of wars are common: Scripture warns us about this, and we are not to be unduly alarmed.

The third matter is to correctly judge the consequence. If the central foreboding of the environmental lobby is taken to be true, then the world itself has only a limited time left. We would not deny this, since Scripture teaches it. 'The heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.' (2 Pe 3:7.) The day is coming when our Lord Jesus Christ will appear in power and glory, descending from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God. That day will be unmistakable, since the dead in Christ will rise, then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up with

them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air. Although this day comes as a thief in the night, in that we have no knowledge of when it will happen, the certainty of that day is not to be doubted. People put locks on doors because they know the thief could come, but they lock them every night because they do not know when the thief will come.

When I was young the great threat to the world was the proliferation of nuclear weapons. The warning was that the world could destroy itself many times over, and that the risk of such an act was so great that it was a near certainty. For various reasons, which had nothing to do with protests or peace camps, the threat receded. It has been argued in the secular press that once that threat receded the campaigners looked around for a new cause, and found it in environmentalism. This implies that there are people who are determined to be members of a doomsday cult, and who believe it is their duty to warn the rest of us about the dangers we face.

The Christian church is not a doomsday cult. We do not go about crying 'the end is nigh,' but we preach Christ crucified. We set forth hope and not despair. Yes, we warn our neighbours to flee from the wrath to come, but we do so by pointing them to our Lord Jesus Christ as the only hope of sinners. We also know that a new heaven and a new earth are to appear, wherein dwelleth righteousness, 2 Pe 3:13. This new creation will be eternal. It will also be without sin, meaning that whatever has corrupted this present world will not be found in the new creation. We seek to set forth Jesus Christ so as to teach our hearers the necessity of the new birth, of repentance and faith, and of that joyful walk of obedience with our blessed Saviour.

Does this mean we do not care about our polluted, troubled world? By no means. It does, however, mean that we can view the

present troubles without resorting to panic. We know what the future holds, even if we do not know exactly when that will come about. We know what we have committed

to Jesus Christ, and we know that he is able to keep what we have committed unto him against that day. ¶

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

A SERMON BY THE EDITOR

‘Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life’ (John 8:12)

The ‘I am’ sayings of our Lord Jesus Christ are precious pictures, painted in a few brief words, of his wonderful grace and loving mercies. Jesus Christ said, ‘I am the bread of life,’ 6:35; ‘the door of the sheep,’ 10:7; ‘the good shepherd,’ 10:11; ‘the resurrection and the life,’ 11:25; ‘the way, the truth and the life,’ 14:6; and ‘the true vine,’ 15:1. With the words of our text, this makes seven such sayings. Each one teaches us something truly wonderful, and wonderfully comforting, about our security and hope in Christ. In every case there is further teaching in the subsequent verses to explain what is meant by the ‘I am’ expression. Here, the explanatory words are these: ‘he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.’ What does it mean to know that Jesus Christ is the light of the world? What does it mean to follow him? What does it mean to have the light of life?

1. Jesus Christ is the light of the world

That our Lord Jesus is the light of the world ought to be known already, for John in his prologue, 1:1–14, has declared as much. He wrote, ‘In him [that is, the Word who was with God and who is God] was life; and the

life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.’ John knows this to be true because he knows the testimony of his namesake, the Baptist, the man sent from God. ‘The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.’ John the Evangelist saw that light, adding, ‘And we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace, and truth.’

It is significant that Nicodemus came to Jesus by night. He did not go to one who surpassed him in ignorance, but to the one who could enlighten his mind and open his eyes to the truth. ‘We know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him’ (3:2). Nicodemus could not understand the nature of the light, but he recognised light when he saw it, and was drawn to it.

How is Jesus Christ the light of the world?

Consider, in the first place, that the light was the first part of the creation decreed by God after he had called the heavens and

earth into existence, while they were still in their unformed state. So Genesis 1:3. We may wonder that our great God could create light days before he created the source of light; but although we may wonder, our faith must accept this: and if it cannot, then our faith is weak indeed. The sun, moon and stars, created on the fourth day, were created in order to serve the earth, so that man might recognise the seasons and discern the months, as well as have the blessing of darkness for rest and light for activity. Note also that the creator is given as being our Lord Jesus Christ, for we are told in John 1:3 that 'all things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made.' The Apostle Paul teaches the same doctrine, Colossians 1:16. He who was from the beginning created that which was also from the beginning.

Consider, in the second place, that light is a symbol of hope. In 1 Kings 15:4 we read, 'Nevertheless for David's sake did the Lord his God give [Abijam] a lamp in Jerusalem, to set up his son after him and to establish Jerusalem.' That son was Asa. Abijam followed the religion of his father Rehoboam, the grandson of King David, who was himself called the light of Israel, 2 Sa 21:17. 'Asa did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, as did David his father,' 1 Ki 15:11. Thus the giving of a son to Abijam was not a sign of blessing on him, but was a sign of hope for the faithful in Judah. Through that son came the prolonging of the covenant, so that the Lord's anger was not aroused against his people. Asa removed all manner of wicked and idolatrous practices which had begun under his grandfather Rehoboam, 14:22-24, and so he was the instrument to turn aside divine judgment. Our Lord Jesus Christ came to restore what was corrupt and false in his people, turning them back to the Lord, to love him with all the heart, with all

the soul, and with all the mind, and to love their neighbour as themselves, Matt 22:37-39. He came to preach the acceptable year of the Lord, and to gather the scattered lambs of the flock. He came to lay down his life for his sheep, being the propitiation for our sins. Asa was not himself a propitiation for sin, but by his righteous rule he turned aside the wrath of God. In that, he points us to his great descendant, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Consider, in the third place, that the Messiah would be the light of his people. So 2 Chron 21:7, where we are told that 'the Lord would not destroy the house of David, because of the covenant that he had made with David, and as he promised to give a light to him and to his sons for ever.' When our Lord Jesus Christ declared himself to be the light of the world, he was saying that he is the true son and heir of David, the one whose reign should be eternal, 2 Sa 7:16. Rather than the Lord giving him, Jesus Christ, a light, he is the light himself. But in this he is not only the light of his people, for he calls himself here the light of the world. Simeon called him 'a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel,' Lk 2:32. When the gospel was first preached in Eden, it was preached to all mankind: for not only was all mankind accounted fallen in Adam, but all mankind heard the promise of the coming seed who should bruise the serpent's head. Says Calvin in his commentary on this verse,

It is a beautiful commendation of Christ, when he is called the light of the world; for, since we are all blind by nature, a remedy is offered, by which we may be free, and rescued from darkness and made partakers of the true light. Nor is it only to one person or to another that this benefit offered, for Christ declares that he is the light of the whole world; for by this universal statement

he intended to remove the distinction, not only between Jews and Gentiles, but between the learned and ignorant, between persons of distinction and the common people.

Consider, in the fourth place, that this light cannot be dimmed. 'The darkness comprehendeth it not,' we are told, John 1:5. The darkness of this world, through sin and unbelief, could not bring the light into captivity to its ignorance. It could not smother the light, as if it were dark enough to extinguish it. Moses was a proper child, and it was not long before he could not longer be hidden, Ex 2:3. Our Lord Jesus Christ could not be hidden. Angels announced his birth to shepherds, who, finding the infant, told all they met. A star guided wise men from the east, and the leaders at Jerusalem were informed that the King of the Jews had been born. When our Lord Jesus began his public ministry he was soon the centre of much attention, through his miracles of healing, of making water into wine, and through his preaching and teaching. More, there was that graciousness about him that drew many to him, so that people loved him for himself, and not only for what they might hope to see or gain. He came into the world to be proclaimed. John the Baptist knew that he must decrease, but that Christ must increase, John 3:30. Jesus said, 'And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me,' 12:32. This was a reference to the death he should die, but it reminds us also of his teaching in the Sermon on the Mount about the lamp set on the candlestick, or lampstand, to give light to the whole house, Matt 5:15.

Consider, in the fifth place, that this is the eternal light. In the heavenly city, new Jerusalem, there will be 'no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the

glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof,' Rev. 21:23. In this, we see how the creation of light at the beginning does indeed point us to the eternity and unspeakable glory of our Saviour Christ. The glory of Christ ought to be very evident in the church on earth: not necessarily in any denomination or congregation, but in the body of all faithful people, which is the true church. The church of Jesus Christ needs no other light, and has no other light, except insofar as the written word is our lamp and light, Ps 119:105. And in that the scriptures testify of Christ, they both reveal him and are revealed by him. Such is the infinite wisdom of our loving heavenly Father.

2. To follow Jesus Christ is to be in light and not in darkness

It surely follows that if Jesus Christ is the light of the world, then all who come to him and all who follow him, must walk in his light. We take this, first, as a statement of fact, and secondly as a command.

This is, in the first place, a statement of fact. To walk with and after Jesus Christ is to walk in light. In this way we walk in light when we walk by the word of God, Ps 119:105. It is as if we carry a light with us, and as we progress along the way, so the light we carry goes with us. The wonderful blessing of God's word is that it lights the way after first showing us where the way is. There is no stumbling about in the hope of finding the path: the light of God's word keeps us on the path. So with coming to Jesus Christ. When we come to him we have come to the place we need to come. He is the door of the sheep, the good shepherd, the way, the truth and the life. Without him we have no entrance into life, no guardian and guide to lead us in safety, and no hope of the resurrection to everlasting life.

It is a fact that we walk in the light when we walk with Jesus Christ, but *it is also a necessity*: there is no other light. Where else might we look for guidance, if not from him? Shall we turn to human philosophy, as if that could reveal to us the mystery of godliness, or explain to us our place in the universe? Shall man's wisdom really provide the balm for the troubled conscience, or take away the burden of guilt? There is no light in man's wisdom when we compare that to the light that is Jesus Christ our Lord. Some lean on traditions, as if treading the same path as others who have gone before is a safe guide through life. Let us enquire into their destination, and into the inner peace, or lack of, that they encountered. Were their traditions able to supply their needs, or did they in fact find that they were simply on a treadmill of repetitious and pointless exercises? Blind leaders of the blind find themselves at the bottom of the same ditch, without hope in this world or the next. It is essential that we walk in the light that is Jesus Christ.

In that it is a necessity to walk in the light when we walk with Jesus Christ, *it is also a blessing*. We are never called to do something for its own sake, but because it is necessary: and if necessary, then it is a blessing. There can be no greater blessing than to know and be enabled to do what the Lord would have us do. From that first command, to be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, the Lord God called man to do something he was able to do. The reason he was able was not that he had the power to make himself able, but that the Lord had made him that way. In other words, the command intended man to fulfil the Lord's will for us. We can apply this to the matter before us. Walk in the light because otherwise we cannot walk as the Lord made us to walk. The alternatives are these: we either walk in darkness, or we

walk not at all. If we walk in darkness we stumble in ignorance, not knowing where we are going, nor what dangers or blessings lie before us. If we walk not at all, we remain where we are, and Scripture declares that where we are by nature is dead in trespasses and sins. Therefore to be called to walk in the light, where Jesus Christ is that light, is to be called to a great blessing. We both walk, and we walk in such a situation that both dangers and blessings are made plain, and the way itself is made plain. That way may not be evident from beginning to end, but we are given to see enough of it that we may go on confidently.

This is, in the second place, a command. Likely, enough has been said so far to show this. In case it has not, consider this. To reject the light is to seek another, an alternative, form of guidance. This has been indicated already: human wisdom and philosophy have been mentioned. There is also false religion, that which arises from the imagination of people rather than being revealed from heaven. Such is the corrupting effect of sin that it is possible to justify false practices and doctrines, and convince ourselves that these are the true ones. One of the most tragic events in the history of the church in our nation was the passing in 1401 of the act, *De Heretico Comburendo*, the Act for the Burning of Heretics. It was justified in this way. The Church, like the Sanhedrin or Council of the Jews, has authority to judge in spiritual matters. The King, like Pontius Pilate, has authority to sentence a heretic to death. As the Sanhedrin condemned Christ and Pilate sentenced him to death, so the Church will reveal the heretics and the King will execute them. Since their crime is spiritual and not political, a different manner of execution must be used. Since heretics will go to hell, let them enter the fire now in the

hope that they might repent in this life, and thus have hope of salvation. On the face of it, people who were ignorant of the Scriptures might have thought this to be reasonable and just. Anyone who knows the Scriptures sees immediately the gross error at the heart of the law, never mind the intolerable cruelty of those who thought of it.

This shows us that the command to walk in the light is not always easy. It is not that the light is dim or uncertain, nor can it be readily mistaken for anything else. Rather, there are many obstacles in our way, and temptations to overcome. Yet it is the light and the light alone that will reveal both the dangers and the right way. The only way of walking in the light in the midst of such problems is to walk in the light! This is why we are commanded to walk in the light: there is no alternative. Any guiding principle or method that is not Christ the light of the world, is error. Light and truth go hand in hand, and so do darkness and error. These are inseparable pairs, and we do well to learn this lesson.

How may we be helped by this?

Consider, first, the blessing of light. What are its properties?

The light is a source of life. We know that plants for the most part require light in order to grow. Give a plant every necessary thing, as water and nutrition, but take away the light, and it will perish. Without light there can be very little life. It is no coincidence that our heavenly Father called the light into being as the first act of bringing order and life to the creation.

The light is a source of warmth. After the cold of winter we enjoy the feel of the sun on our faces. Cold-blooded animals and reptiles love to bask in the warmth of the sun, before they are able to get on with the necessities of living. The snow and ice melt away before the

warmth of the sun. The ground thaws and the farmer knows he can at last begin to prepare the soil for seed.

The light is a means of guidance. It is a guide in that it lights up our way, showing what is ahead as far as the eye can see. We know that the stars and constellations act as guides to those who know the heavens, and who can plot their position in relation to what they see in the heavens. The appearance and position of certain lights in the night sky mark the passing of the seasons. For millennia the rising of the new moon marked the beginning of the month, and both divine worship and the ordinary affairs of life were regulated by them.

Consider, secondly, the blessing of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Creator of light is above all the source of life, for in him we live and move and have our being. We know that we live in the truest sense only insofar as we enjoy the light of his countenance and the warmth of his presence. We know that without that divine guidance we have no knowledge of ourselves nor of our place in this world—and nothing whatsoever of our standing before our God. The properties of light reflect the glorious nature and compassion of our heavenly Father, made known most wonderfully in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our greatest blessing is our Saviour Christ, the light of the world.

How do we know that Jesus Christ is the light? We know that he is because he rose again from the dead. He is the light that cannot be hidden nor extinguished: death could not hold him, nor the powers of darkness overcome him. He is the light because he teaches us truth, bringing our feet into the way of life. He is the light because we rejoice in the warmth of his dear presence, knowing

that his love for us is stronger than death. He is the light because in him we have the promise of eternal life, and we long to see him as he is, and to know him as we are known. He is the light because he makes manifest all that would otherwise remain hidden from

us, concerning our sins and the just wrath of God, concerning our need and the pure mercy of God, concerning our helplessness and the wonderful grace of God.

To walk in the light is to have life because Christ is the light. ¶

IN CONVERSATION

by CARINE MACKENZIE

It is fascinating to watch a little child learning to speak. The first word may be a simple sound like mama or dada. But soon words are learned one at a time, then phrases and sentences. It is reckoned that a five year old child will know around ten thousand words. The average adult knows thirty thousand words, learning one new word every day till middle age. It is said that we use around 12 to 15 thousand words each day.

Conversations are important. Talking with our family, neighbours, colleagues, friends, is a big part of daily life. The casual greeting to a passer-by can be really appreciated. A conversation need not always be in person, but perhaps on the telephone or by email, social media message or even a letter in the post. Our words are important and powerful. They can encourage and help another person, but sadly they can also hurt and upset.

Do we remember that God hears every conversation? He knows all about us and knows every word and thought. 'There is not a word in my tongue, but lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether' (Psalm 139:4). This should make us careful with our speech.

Christians love to get together to talk and have fellowship. The prophet Malachi tells us that 'they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name' (Malachi 3:16). How wonderful to think that when we are speaking to one another, the Lord is not just hearing us, but taking note of our conversation and remembering it.

The prophet Isaiah gives us advice about how to use our words. He tells us to

- a) Praise the Lord.
- b) Call upon his name.
- c) Declare his doings among the people.
- d) Make mention that his name is exalted. (Isaiah 12.4.)

Are we using our words to pray and praise God? Are we telling others about what God has done for us? Are we speaking about the Lord Jesus and his finished work on the cross, as he died for the ungodly.

Sometimes we find it difficult to speak out for the Lord Jesus. We feel inadequate and unskilled. Moses felt like that too. He was given the task of speaking God's word to the elders

of Israel and then to Pharaoh. Moses was reluctant. 'I am not eloquent,' he said, 'I am slow of speech and of a slow tongue.'

God reminded him that he had made man's tongue. 'Go,' he encouraged Moses, 'and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say.' The Lord was angry with Moses' continued reluctance but he agreed that Aaron could be the spokesperson to actually speak the words that God had given to Moses. God promises to be with Moses' mouth and with Aaron's. He would teach them what to do (Exodus 4.10-16).

Paul also did not feel that he was a gifted speaker. He told the church at Corinth that he did not come to them with excellency of speech or of wisdom. He came in weakness and fear and trembling. His speech and preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom. But his message was delivered by the power of the Holy Spirit. His message was about Jesus Christ and him crucified (1 Corinthians 2:1-4). He was helped by God, just as Moses and Aaron were.

In all the thousands of words that we use every day, can we not use some of them to tell about the Lord Jesus? The Psalmist wanted to speak about what the Lord had done for him. 'Come and hear,' he said, 'all he that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul' (Psalm 66:16).

Our testimony is not about what we have done but about what God has done through his Son the Lord Jesus Christ to give us new life, to forgive our sins by dying for us on the cross.

Pray that you would 'be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear' (1 Peter 3:15).

Bible Search

Find the missing words from the verses. The initial letters of the correct answers will spell out the topic of the story.

1. Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto him, Take away all iniquity and receive us graciously: so we will render the _____ of our lips. (Hosea 14:2)
2. If any man _____ not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle also the whole body. (James 3:2)
3. Make he mention to the _____; behold publish against Jerusalem, that watchers come from a far country, and give out their voice against the cities of Judah. (Jeremiah 4:16)
4. There is no speech nor language, where their _____ is not heard. (Psalm 19:3)
5. Hear diligently my speech, and my declaration with your _____. (Job 13:17)

6. My doctrine shall drop as the _____, my speech shall distil as the dew... (Deuteronomy 30:2)
7. In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, _____ speech, that cannot be condemned... (Titus 2:8)
8. Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to _____ every man. (Colossians 4:6)
9. And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the _____ of God. (1 Corinthians 2:1)
10. And they bring unto him one that was deaf, and had an _____ in his speech; and they beseech him to put his hand upon him. (Mark 7:32)
11. Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that _____ his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God. (Psalm 50:23)
12. I will declare thy _____ unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee. (Hebrews 2:12)

SARAH

by the REV. P. LOS (1815–1888)

A miracle of God's grace

Chapter 1 – *In the salon*

‘Sarah! Sarah! Dear child, what must become of you. You are so worldly. Do you have ever a solemn moment? Child, although you are young, your life is so short and uncertain.’

‘O, Mother, you always speak about these hard things. I am still young enough to think about those things. Whenever I sing an joyful song, I am rebuked immediately.’

‘If you like to sing, sing a Psalm. I like to hear that, but I do not like to hear those vain songs.’

‘You do not even know what I have sang and you condemn it without knowing what it is about. I just song these lines:

“Everybody who is young and sweet sings,
Singing is the joy of life”

Is that really that vain Mother?’

‘O, child, I prefer it to be in another way, but I cannot convert you. The Lord must do that, but I am very sad about you.’

‘But Mother, how do I make you sad? Just look around in house and see how tidy everything is and you will not find a single tear in our cloths.’

‘No, my child. As far as that is concerned, you are to be praised, but even though these things are good, they have to value for eternity.’

‘But Mother, I cannot convert myself.’

‘Rather say that you do not want to convert, because you refuse to use the means. I so often desired that you would come with me on Sunday, but I never could get you to do so.’

‘Well, I will go tomorrow with you. I do not want to make you sad any longer. But not every Sunday. The minister whom you attend, did not even study.’

‘I believe, my child, he studied at the best seminary.’

‘Alright, Mother, please stop. Tomorrow I will go with you.’

This conversation took place in the lounge of the house, where Mr. R. did his business and lived wealthily together with his wife Sarah, his twenty-four year-old daughter. The man lived only for his business and to the great sorrow of his wife, he did not want to know anything concerning God or his commandments. It was no wonder that Sarah stood on the side of her father and, although she loved her mother dearly, she had a dislike of her mother’s solemn feelings. Mrs. R. feared God very much and liked an experimental minister, who was not learned, but called by God and preached the

word of God. Not many among the noble and mighty came to listen to him. Therefore it was no wonder that those who gathered there, suffered much scorn from the world.

It was Sunday morning. The mother was, as she always was, ready on time and sat having her Psalm book in front of her waiting for her daughter., who had promised to come with her. But when it was time to go, Sarah came in undressed and said: ‘Mother, I cannot be ready in time. I will go tonight with you.’

The Mother sighed and went, but during the sermon her soul became so much comforted and restored, that all burdens were lifted.

That night Sarah went with her mother and when they came back she said that she did not like it that mother had told that man everything. Mother answered: ‘Child, I have not spoken to him and thus I could not have told him anything.’

Sarah was, unusually, quiet and withdrawn, and went early to bed, ‘because,’ she said, ‘I am having a headache. It was so close in that little church.’

The next morning she came down with red eyes and said that she could not sleep. ‘The minister,’ she said, ‘has distressed me so much that I refuse to go there a again. I would lose all my pleasure and get a restless life and, Mother, I do not feel like that.’

Sarah was right when she said that she would go not go there anymore. She never went there again.

The impressions were, it seemed, extinguished very soon. She turned even more than before to her rowdy pleasure and she remained the same worldly Sarah.

Later were shall see what became of her.

TO BE CONTINUED

ESSEX MARTYR MEMORIAL

by STEPHEN A. TOMS (Essex)

A PLAQUE has been erected to the memory of William Bamford in the town of Harwich, where he was burned for his Protestant faith on 15th June, 1555. William Bamford, sometimes called William Butler, was a native of Coggeshall, and was a weaver by trade. The exact spot where the martyrdom took place is not known but it is thought that it would have been in what was known as the 'punishment area,' and the Essex Protestant Council (EPC) therefore arranged for the plaque to be placed on the New Bell Inn, in a street called Outpart Eastward, which is in that area. A meeting was organised by the EPC to mark the occasion and this was held on 16th October, the anniversary of the burning of Latimer and Ridley at Oxford. The plaque was unveiled by the Mayor of Harwich, who, with other councillors, has shown great

interest in this cruel burning. Mr David Butler led the meeting and Mr Charles Scott-Pearson, general secretary of the Protestant Alliance, ably addressed the gathering, preaching from Deuteronomy 8. The Gospel was clearly presented, the Protestant position plainly emphasised.

There were other inhabitants of Coggeshall tried with William Bamford and these persons were sent to different parts of Essex, witnessing to their belief in the teaching of the Bible, God's Holy Word, and protesting against the false teaching of Romanism. One of them was Thomas Osmond who was burned in nearby Manningtree. Another was Nicholas Chamberlain who was sent to Colchester. These all died in faith. ¶

FATHER AND SON

Or, How a Prodigal was Brought to Repentance and True Faith

THE blessing of the Triune God is invariably upon his people and especially those who are parents, and many of them see and experience the mercy of God, not only in their lives, but also in the lives and experiences of their children in that they are brought to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It rejoices the hearts of those parents who see this happening in the lives of their children.

But, there are many parents who do not see that happening. There are no evidences

of faith in their children, rather, there is rebellion. They have sought to bring them up in the nurture and faith of God's elect, but they turn away from that pathway choosing rather to travel on the broad road that leads to destruction.

They have been the children of many prayers, and it would appear that the prayers of the parents have not been answered. Many prayers! Many tears! Many cries by the parents! Have they been uttered in vain? The

Christian parent has prayed for many a long year and groaned in prayer for the life and salvation of their children, and it all seems to have been in vain.

But he continues to his dying day to pray for his children, his rebellious children for prayer is the 'native air' of the child of God.

Prayer is the Christian's vital breath,
The Christian's native air;
His watchword at the gates of death;
He enters heaven with prayer.

But are the prayers, the cries, the tears and groans in vain? Hope presses on and the parent continues in prayer until his dying day. Their prayers uttered over many years are locked up in the heart of Almighty God for the 'golden vials are full of odours which are the prayers of saints (Rev. 5:8)'. Although the parent may have died and entered into heaven, the prayers have not died! The inditing of prayer is the work of the Holy Spirit. It is the Lord the Spirit who gives the Spirit of grace and Supplication (Zech 12:10). It is he, the Holy Spirit who initiated the prayers which were presented by the parent at the throne of grace.

Such were some of the thoughts that presented themselves to the writer when he recently read in the Scriptures of Truth of the life, death and experience of King Hezekiah and the conduct of his son, Manasseh.

'And he (Hezekiah) did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that David his father did' (2 Kings 18:3). We are told in Scripture that he was struck down with an illness and that he had to put his house in order for he would die. 'In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came unto him, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live' (Isa. 38:1). At

the time he was struck down, he had no heir. Who would come to the throne of the nation and succeed him when he came to die? Who would rule in his place? He therefore prayed that his days upon earth would be extended. His life was extended in answer to his prayer by fifteen years: 'Go, and say to Hezekiah, Thus saith the LORD, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years' (Isa. 38:5).

(The payer of Hezekiah is recorded in Isaiah chapter 38).

So his life was extended by fifteen years. It was during this fifteen year extension that Manasseh was born, for we are told that Manasseh was twelve year old when he came to the throne. Does this mean that Almighty God changed his mind? That he had to think again in the matter of the history of the Jews and the coming of the Redeemer? Of course not! If we look at the genealogy of the Lord Jesus Christ, we read that the Lord Jesus that his descent through his putative father came through the royal line of the kings of Judah: 'And Ezekias (Hezekiah) begat Manasses (Manasseh)...' (Matt. 1:10). The Lord Jesus Christ as the Saviour of sinners was promised from the fall of man into sin (Cf. Gen. 3:15ff). The Lord Jesus Christ is called the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8). The plan of Redemption and the decree of God stood long before fifteen years were added to the life of Hezekiah! Could Almighty God change his mind and will? Of course not! Malachi tells us that the Lord is unchanging. 'I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed' (Mal. 3:6).

We are told that Hezekiah was a righteous king, as we have noticed above, that he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord. We have no doubt in our mind,

therefore, that he would have prayed for his son Manasseh. For twelve years he prayed unto his Lord and God for his son, Manasseh; for his son and heir. For twelve years he would have been watched and trained in the ways of the Lord and the Mosaic economy. For twelve years he cried unto his God for his son, but there was no change of heart and life in the lad.

And after twelve years Hezekiah died without seeing an answer to his prayers. He never saw on earth the fruit of his prayers. But as we have written above, those prayers were not forgotten; they were lodged in heaven and they would be answered in due time.

The appointed time rolls on apace,
Not to propose, but call by grace,
To change the mind, renew the will
And set the feet to Zion's hill.

What an encouragement this must be to Christian parents of today whose children seem to be so hard-hearted against anything of the Gospel. We continue to pray for our children - and God grant that we do so. We see our children grow through childhood into adulthood, but sometimes we see no change of heart; we see no change in their lives, no profession of faith. Oh, how we feel discouraged. Do we not plead the Scriptures before the throne of grace. Do we not bring the promises of God before him? 'For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call' (Acts 2:39). And still we see no evidence of the work of the Spirit of God in their hearts. And so, many of the Lord's people after serving their generation, and after many prayers have been uttered pass into the immediate presence of the Lord in heaven, not having received the answer to their prayers, and without seeing their children being brought by faith to the

Lord Jesus Christ.

Such a case was that of Hezekiah and his son Manasseh. We therefore move from a consideration of King Hezekiah and father of Manasseh to Manasseh himself. We will follow his life as recorded in Scripture and see how he was brought back to the God of his fathers.

The life of Manasseh is recorded in two portions of the Word of God: firstly in 2 Kings 21:1-17 and 2 Chronicles 33. The record is almost identical with the exception that the passage in Chronicles mentions Manasseh's repentance. We notice, first of all Manasseh's wickedness, then the judgment of God upon Judah and then finally, Manasseh's prayer and repentance.

1. Manasseh's Wickedness

In both the passages cited above, there is a catalogue of the sinful practices he introduced. These included the re-introduction of the worship of the heathen gods of Canaan which had been cast out in the time of Joshua and the Judges. He reversed the cleansing work of the temple which had been undertaken by his father, Hezekiah (2 Chron. 33:3). He introduced idolatry, desecrating the temple by building altars to the hosts of heaven (2 Chron 33:4,5). He sacrificing his own children in the fire, probably to the heathen god Molech (2 Chron. 33:6). He consulted with familiar spirits (2 Chron. 33:6). Although not recorded in Scripture, tradition has it that Manasseh was responsible for the murder of the prophet Isaiah by cutting him in half—not just decapitating him but sawing him into two pieces so that he bled to death suffering anguish. It may be that that is to what the apostle is making an allusion in the Epistle to the Hebrews: 'They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword...' (Heb.

11:37). And the conclusion of all his actions of rebelling against the Lord was summed up as follows: 'So Manasseh made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, and to do worse than the heathen, whom the LORD had destroyed before the children of Israel' (2 Chron 33:9).

His actions and the conduct of the nation invariably brought the judgment of God upon the nation with the result that Manasseh and his people were taken into captivity into Babylon, but it was there in Babylon Manasseh was humbled.

2. Manasseh's Repentance

Mrs Mortimer, the authoress of *The Peep of Day* writes:

How did Manasseh feel when plunged in a dungeon, or shut up in a prison? He thought over his sins, and he REPENTED. He besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto him.

Manasseh may have heard Isaiah say at some time, 'Let the wicked forsake his way, and let him turn unto the Lord and he will abundantly pardon.'

Manasseh was a wicked man, and the Lord did abundantly pardon him.

We are not informed in Scripture when he was taken captive, nor do we know for how long he was in Babylon. We do know that he returned to Jerusalem and undertook a work of reformation within the nation including his demolishing the idols that he himself had established in the temple. He took away the 'strange gods' and repaired 'the altar of the Lord'. But the people had followed his example into sin and kept in that way. Sometimes the word 'nevertheless' is used in a merciful way, that notwithstanding the wickedness of

man and his action the Lord is recorded as saying to the people "Nevertheless" meaning that in spite of their wickedness, they were still made recipients of the mercy of God. But here in 2 Chronicles, the 'nevertheless' is a word of judgment upon the children of Israel. Manasseh's sinful conduct had led Judah into sinful practices, and now that he had repented and sought to reform the nation, the people were hardened in their sinful ways and would not wholly turn again to the living God but their worship contained a mixture of the heathenism and true religion. 'Nevertheless the people did sacrifice still in the high places, , yet unto the Lord their God' (2 Chron. 33:17).

3. Manasseh's Prayer.

This chapter in Chronicles concludes by giving the final details of Manasseh's life and death that he was buried in his own house (verse 20). But there is reference in verse 19 of the prayer that Manasseh prayed to Almighty God in his repentance, and it tells us that the prayer was written and recorded in the Sayings of the Seers. There is, in the Apocrypha a piece with the title of "The Prayer of Manasses." It is not accepted as Scripture, although Martin Luther published it in his translation of the Scriptures. It dates from before the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. Article VI of the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England speaks of the Apocrypha thus: 'And the other Books (as *Hierome* saith) the Church doth read for example of life and instruction of manners; but yet doth it not apply them to establish any doctrine.' Bearing in mind what that Article says, we reproduce the Prayer of Manasseh in full, not to infer that it is Scripture, but as a copy of prayer which may have been spoken by Manasseh, and which will give instruction on the true nature of

repentance and sorrow for sin.

O Lord, Almighty God of our fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and of their righteous seed; who hast made heaven and earth, with all the ornament thereof; who hast bound the sea by the word of thy commandment; who hast shut up the deep, and sealed it by thy terrible and glorious name; whom all men fear, and tremble before thy power; for the majesty of thy glory cannot be borne, and thine angry threatening toward sinners is importable: but thy merciful promise is unmeasurable and unsearchable; for thou art the most high Lord, of great compassion, longsuffering, very merciful, and repentest of the evils of men. Thou, O Lord, according to thy great goodness hast promised repentance and forgiveness to them that have sinned against thee: and of thine infinite mercies hast appointed repentance unto sinners, that they may be saved. Thou therefore, O Lord, that art the God of the just, hast not appointed repentance to the just, as to Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, which have not sinned against thee; but thou hast appointed repentance unto me that am a sinner: for I have sinned above the number of the sands of the sea. My transgressions, O Lord, are multiplied: my transgressions are multiplied, and I am not worthy to behold and see the height of heaven for the multitude of mine iniquities. I am bowed down with many iron bands, that I cannot lift up mine head, neither have any release: for I have provoked thy wrath, and done evil before thee: I did not thy will, neither kept I thy commandments: I have set up abominations, and have multiplied offences. Now therefore I bow the knee of mine

heart, beseeching thee of grace. I have sinned, O Lord, I have sinned, and I acknowledge mine iniquities: wherefore, I humbly beseech thee, forgive me, O Lord, forgive me, and destroy me not with mine iniquities. Be not angry with me for ever, by reserving evil for me; neither condemn me to the lower parts of the earth. For thou art the God, even the God of them that repent; and in me thou wilt shew all thy goodness: for thou wilt save me, that am unworthy, according to thy great mercy. Therefore I will praise thee for ever all the days of my life: for all the powers of the heavens do praise thee, and thine is the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

We commenced this article with a short discussion of the faithfulness of Christian parents in praying for their unbelieving children even down to the time of their departure from this vale of tears. Whilst it is not possible to say that all unbelieving children of Christian parents will eventually be brought to faith in Christ, the example of Manasseh does give encouragement to continue and persevere in prayer for them and to embrace the hope that our unbelieving children may be brought by faith to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Beneath the sacred throne of God
I saw a river rise,
The streams were peace and pardoning
Descending from the skies. [blood,

That sacred flood, from Jesus' veins,
Was free to take away
A Mary's or Manasseh's stains,
Or sins more vile than they. ¶

COVENANT COMMUNION WITH GOD

by JOHN HOOPER (Saltash)

5. THE COVENANT 'FORMULA'

IT was the entrance of sin into the garden of Eden that caused separation and division, creating two parties at enmity with each other. Through the gospel, however, by the powerful operation of his saving grace, God wonderfully restores the fellowship between himself and his elect so that in Christ there are no longer two parties but once again just one. As it was the Word who created Adam the friend of God in the beginning (John 1:1–3), so now it is the Word who regenerates and gives eternal life to those who by nature are alienated from God (1 Peter 1:23–25). They are made a new creation and are gloriously reconciled to God by the blood of his Son to enjoy sweet friendship and communion with him in everlasting bliss. He fulfils in them the promise he gave to the captives in Babylon, 'I will bring you into the bond of the covenant' (Ezekiel 20:37).

What is sometimes referred to, quite justifiably, as Scripture's covenant formula, 'I will be your God, and ye shall be my people,' summarizes beautifully this core principle. 'This is more than reconciliation and adoption: it is the height of the relation to God, which a sinful creature could be advanced unto.'¹ As we shall see, it is a formula that recurs many times in Scripture and has been described by Reformation and Puritan writers variously as the soul, substance and head of the covenant. Obadiah Sedgwick

described it as 'the very quintessence' of the covenant,² and again as 'the very marrow and sum of it.'³

Sedgwick goes on to suggest that if one was to summarise the meaning, nature and blessings of God's covenant in just one word, it would be the word *mine*, and surely he is right. As we consider in wonder and amazement the power, grace and dazzling glory of our God, the language bursting forth from our hearts and lips is the language of the covenant, that such a God is mine.

This one word (*mine*) makes up the covenant. When you sum up all, it is in this: God is mine, he is my God, he is my lord, he is my father, he is my friend, he is my mercy, he is my wisdom, he is my counsel, he is my rock, he is my help, he is my comfort, he is my hope, he is my salvation, he is my portion, he is my life, he is my happiness. And when God looks on my person in covenant with him, he can say, This person is mine: he is my child and my friend, and my servant; I have all his heart, and all his love, and all his hope, and all his trust, and all his delight, and all his desire, and all his fear and all his service.⁴

The first occurrence of the formula

² Obadiah Sedgwick, *The Bowels of Tender Mercy*, p.16.

³ Ibid., p.116.

⁴ Ibid., p.24.

¹ Thomas Boston, *A View of the Covenant of Grace*, p.113.

appears in Genesis 17:7–8 where God promises to be a God to Abraham and to his seed after him. To a later generation of Abraham's children God renews his promise, 'And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God' (Exodus 6:7; cf. Deuteronomy 29:13). Developing this more fully God gives to Israel his sovereign pledge, 'I will set my tabernacle among you: and my soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people' (Leviticus 26:11–12; see also Deuteronomy 29:13).

The formula appears again in Jeremiah 31 but this time, and very significantly, it is in connection with a prophecy of the new covenant: 'After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people' (v. 33; also 32:38). We find a similar thought in Ezekiel, where God makes the following promise: 'And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh: That they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God' (Ezekiel 11:19–20).

So, when we turn to the New and discover the fulfilment of these prophecies, it should not surprise us to find exactly the same covenant formula being brought into use. In Hebrews 8:10 the inspired writer, in describing the blessings of the new covenant,

quotes directly from the prophet Jeremiah: 'For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.'

To whatever extent the old covenant was the means of establishing the peculiar relation of the Lord to Israel as their God and their relation to him as his people, the new covenant places this older intimacy of relation in the shadow. For it is the new covenant par excellence which brings to realization the promise 'I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people' (Heb. 8:10). In other words, the spiritual relationship which lay at the centre of the covenant grace disclosed in both the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants reaches its ripest fruition in the new covenant. So great is the enhancement that a comparative contrast can be stated as if it were absolute. The new covenant is enacted upon better promises (Heb. 8:6).⁵

This use of a common covenant formula throughout Old Testament and New is a clear testimony to the unity of the covenant. It is God's covenant, his one and only.

⁵ John Murray, *The Covenant of Grace*, p.28.

6. GOD'S DWELLING PLACE

In 2 Corinthians 6:16 the formula is invoked once again. Here the New Testament church is described as 'the temple of the living God'

in the midst of whom God dwells and walks: 'as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and

they shall be my people.' The apostle is casting his mind back to the tabernacle and the temple of the old covenant where the Shekinah glory of the holiest place represented the presence of God with His people throughout much of the Old Testament age. First the tabernacle, pitched from place to place, followed by Solomon's more permanent temple in Jerusalem: these were His typical dwelling place in the midst of His covenant people. The LORD had said to Moses, 'And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them' (Exodus 25:8), before going on to prescribe in the finest detail how His sanctuary should be constructed. 'I will set my tabernacle [Heb. = dwelling place or tent of meeting] among you ... And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people' (Leviticus 26:11,12). As the children of Israel wandered through the wilderness, never were they separated from their God for He went with them 'from tent to tent, and from one tabernacle to another' (1 Chronicles 17:5).

Under Solomon all of that changed so that the LORD no longer 'walked in a tent and in a tabernacle' (2 Samuel 7:6) but dwelled in a house, a temple concerning which He said, 'I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will not forsake my people Israel. So Solomon built the house, and finished it' (1 Kings 6:13,14). Still the underlying principle remained the same, however, that of God dwelling in the midst of His people. Solomon recognized this continuum: 'I have built an house of habitation for thee, and a place for thy dwelling for ever' (2 Chronicles 6:2). To the king it was a cause of never ceasing wonder and amazement that the God of heaven should dwell in a house that he had built: 'But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how

much less this house which I have built!' (2 Chronicles 6:18).

Solomon's words were full of truth. God says, 'The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? And where is the place of my rest?' (Isaiah 66:1). When we read this in conjunction with the words of David in 1 Chronicles 28:2 a truly remarkable picture emerges: 'As for me, I had in mine heart to build an house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and for the footstool of our God.' Here we see God seated on His throne in heaven and He has His feet resting on the earth—specifically in the holy of holies and on the ark of the covenant itself. The holy of holies is nothing less than an extension of heaven itself upon earth!

During the Babylonian exile we begin to see a further development in preparation for the blessings of New Testament days. The people have been carried off captive far away from Jerusalem and its temple and into the heart of heathen territory, but still God dwelled with them. The 'glory of the God of Israel' went with them, having departed from the temple in Jerusalem to be 'as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come' (Ezekiel 8:4; 9:3; 10:4, 18–19; 11:15–23).

It is true, they are in a sense far removed, and miserably scattered; but that by no means necessarily involves their being also in a state of distance from God. They have lost access to the outward temple, where fellowship with God has chiefly been maintained; but God himself has come near to them; he has become their sanctuary; and as his presence can make any place a temple, so it has proved a present sanctuary to them...

A great truth unfolds itself here for

all times, —that the Lord is not confined to temples made with hands, and that if there be but the lowly and spiritual heart, he is to be found in the most remote and lonely regions, not less than in the place more especially consecrated to his service and glory.⁶

And so it is now. Still God dwells by his Spirit in the hearts of his people in the temple that is his church, wherever that church is to be found (2 Corinthians 6:16). The poet William Cowper has expressed it so simply and we know it so well:

Jesus, where'er Thy people meet,
There they behold Thy mercy seat.
Where'er they seek Thee Thou art found,
And every place is hallowed ground.⁷

Zechariah prophesied of a coming day when there would be a great rejoicing in Zion at the restoration of the presence of the Lord amongst them: 'Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the LORD' (Zechariah 2:10). Here again we find a reference to the covenant formula, but this time it undoubtedly refers to the incarnation of the everlasting Word who would be made flesh and dwell on earth in the midst of his people (John 1:14). The prophet goes on to

explain who these people are among whom the LORD will dwell, and that they are not of one nation only: 'And many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people: and I will dwell in the midst of thee, and thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto thee' (Zechariah 2:11). This reminds us of Micah's prophecy, 'But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob' (Micah 4:1–2; cf. Isaiah 2:1–3).

Many nations shall be joined to the Lord! Many nations shall go to his house! The promise enshrined in the covenant formula, the promise of God dwelling in the midst of his people, is to be fulfilled in an Israel that comprises not just one nationality but many. This is the Israel of God, the Israel that God takes to himself as 'my people.' 'God would dwell in his Church, formed of Israel and the Gentiles, yet so that the Gentiles should be grafted into Israel, becoming one with them.'⁸ What an amazing privilege! Surely rejoicing and praising God is the only appropriate response of our hearts to the realisation that he has joined *us* to himself and made *us* to be His people and dwelling place, fallen sinners as we are.

⁶ Patrick Fairbairn, *Commentary on Ezekiel*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1989), p.121.

⁷ William Cowper, *Olney Hymns*, Book II, No. 44, (repr. 1984), p.234.

⁸ E B Pusey, *The Minor Prophets*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, repr. 2005), p.352.

CROSSING THE LINE

by WALLACE BELL, (Californian, USA)

Unbelievers have different ways of trying to defend themselves against the Gospel. One of them is, when an attempt is made to evangelise them, to say, 'You're crossing the line.' The use of this defensive mechanism caused me to ask the question: What does it mean to cross the line?

It caused me to think of the many who had:

God himself crossed the line with Adam and Eve. They had sinned and did not want an invasion of their privacy. They hid. God caught up, found them, and in so doing crossed the line that they had drawn.

Moses crossed the line with Pharaoh of Egypt. The Israelites were under Egyptian bondage. Moses went into Pharaoh and said, 'Let my people go...' It was an invasion of Pharaoh's privacy.

Elijah crossed the line when he asked the Israelites whom they would serve, God or Baal. They wanted to continue in their idolatry.

Ahab the King considered Elijah a troubler in Israel: 1 Kings 18:17.

Jeremiah crossed the line when he preached to Judah. He said that he had come at God's command 'to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down' Jeremiah 1:10. This destructive work had to precede the constructive work.

Daniel crossed the line when he wouldn't stop praying to Jehovah, in spite of the commandment of King Darius. The presidents and princes said, 'Daniel regardeth not thee O King, nor the decree which thou hast signed, Daniel 6:13. Daniel was cast into the lions den, because he crossed the line.

These are not the only people during the Old Testament era who crossed the line. There were many more.

Does the history in the New Testament contain accounts of those who crossed the line? It certainly does.

John the Baptist vehemently crossed the line when he said to the religious leaders of the Jews, 'O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?' Matt 3:7. Jesus, the one whom many professing Christians claim to follow, crossed the line many times. In addressing the same people that John the Baptist had addressed, he called them, 'hypocrites, blind guides, dirty-cups, whited sepulchres full of dead men's bones' Matthew 23:33. On another occasion, when he saw merchants, using the Temple as a market place, he made a whip and drove them out. This was really crossing the Line, John 2:14-16.

Jesus was invited to a dinner-party by a Pharisee, and while there, he started remonstrating with the guests. He called them fools, and again hypocrites, Luke 11:37-44. Peter, one of the chief spokesmen amongst the Apostles, also crossed the line by pinning on the Jews the responsibility of the greatest sin that ever was committed, the crucifixion of Jesus, Acts 3:13-15.

Stephen did likewise. He called them 'stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears.' He charged them with 'always resisting the Holy Spirit,' Acts 7:51. He crossed the line.

What shall we say of the Apostle Paul? Did he cross, the Line?

Indeed, many times in his preaching and

writing:

He was in Athens in the midst of a hostile environment. Athens was so given over to idolatry that it has been said that there was an idol to some god at every street-corner. Paul in preaching to them said, 'we ought not to think that the God-Head is like unto gold, silver or stone graven by art and man's device.' He calls them ignorant, Acts 17:29,30. All of this was completely contrary to their philosophy and behaviour. Paul had crossed the line.

In writing to the Celts, many of whom lived in the Roman province of Galatia, he warned them, in the strongest of terms, not to fall prey to the false idea that circumcision was a necessity for salvation. Paul crossed the line in an endeavour to interrupt their intention. He said, 'though we or an angel from heaven, preach another gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.' He repeats this warning to drive home the point, Galatians 1:8, 9. He calls such teaching a 'perversion', Galatians 1:7.

There are many other examples in Scripture of those who abandoned the fear of man and crossed the line.

There is a listing of people who crossed the line in Hebrews 11:32–40. They are called a 'great cloud of witnesses,' Hebrews 12:1. Jesus gave a command to his disciples, 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature,' Mark 16:15.

The people nicknamed Calvinists put it plainly when they gathered at the Synod of Dort, 1618–1619. 'This promise of the gospel, together with the command to repent and believe, ought to be declared and published to all nations, and to all persons, promiscuously and without distinction, to whom God out of his good pleasure sends the gospel' —Canons of Dort, Main Point of Doctrine,

Article 5. This is what evangelism is all about. It is about crossing the line. We must cross the line into the natural man's spiritual death. Because of this death, the natural man cannot understand the gospel in a saving sense, but we must cross the line anyway. This spiritual death also means that the natural man's heart is as hard as stone, as far as a true love for God is concerned. He loves himself more, but we must cross the line.

This spiritual death also means that the natural an's will is shackled. He cannot come to Jesus in his own strength. Luther called this 'the bondage of the will.' Yet we must cross the line and bid the sinner repent and believe the gospel. In spite of his natural unwillingness, we must cross the line and say, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved' (Acts 16:31).

We can cross the line with faith and hope, for we know that it is the sovereign God who does the saving work. It is not ours to give spiritual life. This ability belongs to God alone.

As God gives physical life in the womb, so he gives spiritual life to the soul. The Apostle Paul talks about this in his own experience, Gal 1:15–15.

The word written is applied by the Holy Spirit like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces, Jeremiah 23:29. The Lord opened Lydia's heart, Acts 16:14–15.

We must act like Ezekiel after he was placed by the Lord in a valley of dry bones. He was told to preach to them. The Lord said to him, 'Son of man, can these bones live?' Ezekiel wisely answered, 'O Lord, thou knowest.' Ezekiel crossed the line, and did what he was told, and God put breath in to the bones, Ezek 37:1–11. This is a picture of the work of the Holy Spirit in applying the word to the soul. It is exactly the same as Jesus said to Nicodemus, John 3.

God's method has always been the same. He changes not.

True gospel preaching has never been popular, and never will be, but we must cross the line.

The Reformation took place through those who were empowered by God to cross the Line.

There was 'much rubbish', to borrow a phrase from Judah as recorded in Nehemiah 4:10, in the Roman Catholic religion, as there still is today. Men like Luther, Calvin, Knox, and many others crossed the Line to try and remove it.

Many lost their lives in this endeavour, and sometimes under the most cruel and horrible circumstances, such as being burned at the stake.

Jesus was crucified for crossing the line. The fickle crowd cried 'Crucify him, crucify him,' Luke 23:21.

Here is a challenging poem written by Philip P. Bliss in 1875. It has been set to music to use as a hymn. I quote part of it.

Dare to be a Daniel!
Dare to stand alone!
Dare to have a purpose firm!

Dare to make it known!

Many giants, great and tall,
Stalking through the land,
Headlong to the earth would fall,
If met by Daniel's band.

Hold the Gospel Banner high;
On to victory grand;
Satan and his hosts defy,
And shout for Daniel's band.

We must ask ourselves, 'Will I, like Daniel, dare to cross the line?' It is tough to enter Satan's territory, but we must do it if we are to obey what is called the Great Commission, Matt. 28:19–20. The Apostle Paul actually asked for prayer that he might do so, Eph 6:18–20, 'Praying always for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel ... that therein [my bonds] I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.'

May all of us who profess to be followers of Jesus, have the same desire to cross the line. ¶

FORMER DAYS

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

250 years ago: November & December 1771
Omicron addresses a newly-ordained minister of the gospel with honest and wise counsel. The doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints is examined at length, and the case of King Saul is brought forward as an example of that type of election which does not persevere. In short, God's choosing of

Saul to be king of Israel was a choosing that was not election, but satisfied certain temporary requirements. Saul could be chosen and then rejected, and the evidence of his spiritual state shows that he was never one of the saints. The previous month's *Magazine* contained a query from a reader concerning the nature of the believer's afflictions,

and asking if these are always sanctified to us—that is, if these always produce spiritual advantages. A footnote by the Editors argues that, since the Lord never afflicts his people for his pleasure, it can only ever be for our good. Since that good is not to be found in this present, passing world, the benefit must always be spiritual. See Lam 3:33. The writer then goes on to make some practical application of the truth of this doctrine. Another writer contributes what may be the first of a lengthy series on types. The first types are people—Adam, Abel and Enoch. Another writer takes up a common objection to those doctrines often called Calvinism, that the system of scheme of salvation taught therein is nothing more than an appeal to human reasoning. The writer points out that, if this were indeed true, why do not the Deists adopt Calvinism, since their whole argument is an appeal to reason? Much of the subsequent argument concerns the real nature of conversion. It is a sad truth that many in the church today are ignorant of the real meaning of Christian conversion, and therefore they preach and practice unscriptural things, teaching others to do the same. The Poetry section includes of a eulogy to the late Dr John Gill, who died on 14 October, 1771, which is worth reading. This is followed by a poetic setting of Psalm 23 by W.M. (William Mason), and the final piece is an acrostic on the Fall of Man.

F irst of our race accomplished Adam
stood;
A dorn'd by grace, with ev'ry gift and
good:
L ight in his head, to know his Maker's
will;
L ove in his heart, that knowledge to fulfil.

O bedience back'd with life; revolt he
could:

F ree in his choice, th'unbiased Balance
stood.

M an, thus equipt, alarm'd (no hostile
stroke)
A llur'd by satan, burst the gentle yoke;
N ull'd the compact; commenc'd a killing
stock.

The *December Magazine* opens with a piece on what Paul meant when he said, 'be not conformed to this world.' The writer begins by pointing out that such a command does not alleviate us of our common obligations to friends and family, and to society at large. It does not require us to take up a life devoid of every comfort. Rather, we are to beware conforming to the spirit and to the maxims of the world, and of having our hope set on passing things. This is followed by the testimony from one who had come to faith and who had been baptized in a Baptist congregation. John Ryland supplies some thoughts on the immortality of the soul, showing both the benefit of this doctrine, and the dangers arising from its not being true. He concludes with twenty-five Scripture references that illustrate the immortality of the soul. Another writer supplies his thoughts on the Levitical cities of refuge as types of Jesus Christ. This arises from his own sermon on Hebrews 6:18–20, 'That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.' Junia writes on the people of God, taking Israel and her history

as being a means of teaching the church, 1 Cor 10:6. The overall theme is that the love of God, and our love to him, keep us from following Israel into that sin for which they suffered so grievously. The attention of readers is next drawn to a petition got up by some disaffected clergy against the requirement to subscribe to the formularies of the Church of England. The essence of their position may be gathered from one thing: 'Justification by faith destroys morality.' The author further asserts the commitment of these gentlemen to the reintroduction of the confessional. Given that this took place long before the notorious sermon preached at Oxford in 1833, which is often taken for the beginning of the Tractarian Movement, one can only conclude that the root of the problem is older than often supposed. John Ryland supplies evidence for the foreknowledge of the Holy Spirit—fulfilled prophecies—in twenty-two points. The second of these, concerning Ham's descendants being found in Africa 'servants of servants', cannot be sustained: the identification of Ham as the father of the African nations because of the supposed meaning of his name (Dark) is extremely weak. It has, however, been permitted for too long to stand as an excuse to demean black people. It was Canaan who was cursed, not Ham. An old minister writes to a young one, urging him against the temptation to put confidence in the number of his congregation, since that opens the door to pleasing men rather than God. John Ryland then provides twenty-four ways in which Jesus Christ unites wonderful extremes in himself. A reader asks, 'Wherein consists true evangelical repentance?' and poetry concludes the issue. Another eulogy, this time on a Mr Booth, is followed by a second acrostic from the same pen as the former—this time on the State of Innocency. A few other poems are

followed by another acrostic, again from the same author, this time on Redemption.

200 years ago: November & December 1821

The **November** issue opens with a heartfelt plea to believers to make Christ the subject in all our doings now, as he shall be the subject of our wonder in heaven. Various arguments in favour of this are advanced. The assertion by an earlier writer, that the Hebrew word 'Mincha' is always translated 'meat offering' is challenged. Three examples of other renderings are supplied. A Stripling writes to say that the assertion by Research (another contributor) that Ananias and Sapphira are to be accounted believers cannot be sustained: if so, they are the only example in the whole Bible of Christians who suffered death at God's hands for their sins. Even David, who added murder to adultery, was forgiven. The words of 1 Peter 4:6 are examined in answer to an query from a reader. The writer argues that the preaching of the gospel to them that are dead refers to that effectual evangelical witness among citizens of both Rome and Jerusalem prior to severe persecutions. In each place many professing believers perished, being judged fit for death by sinful people. That they came to faith through the preaching of the word shows that the judgment to come is not to be of the same order as their earthly judgment: the Lord knows his people, and will receive to himself all for whom he died. This verse is intended to comfort those who suffer, and who mourn for those who have shed their blood for the Lord Jesus' sake. Two letters follow, one from Ann Dutton, the other from John Careless, one of the Smithfield martyrs. A short meditation is followed by a question on duty-faith: is there such a thing as a command to all men to believe? Myra offers a very different answer to the query concerning 1 Peter

4:6, suggesting that the Apostle refers to the Gentiles, to whom the gospel had not been preached before Pentecost. Appealing as this interpretation may be, one feels it tends towards dispensationalism. Three questions follow, one on what is meant by Christ taking on the seed of Abraham and not the nature of angels, the others relating to aspects of predestination: were the elect were chosen by God out of the mass of creatureship, or out of the sinful mass; and did Christ atone for the original and actual sins of the elect but only for the original sin of the reprobate as taught in Romans 5:18. Of course, the answer to the second question will depend in part on whether one interprets Romans 5:18 in this way. That walking in gospel liberty is not presumption is shown by a writer, and another person raises a problem familiar to many today: in congregations where there is no settled ministry and the lack of preaching is made up in reading sermons, which are the best sermons to read? The Church of England answered this question during the sixteenth century, setting forth the First and Second Books of Homilies, and then advocating the use of Henry Bullinger's *Decades*. These latter have recently been reissued by Reformation Heritage Books, and are highly recommended. Much of the remainder of the issue is taken up with the continuation of series: Tomlinson's rescuing of Scripture from ridicule, and sermon skeletons. A poem concludes the month.

Psalms 103:13 provides the text for the opening sermon of the **December** issue. The outward means available to believers are considered, including prayer, baptism and the Lord's Supper, and hearing sermons, are brought forward for our consideration. The question relating to 1 Peter 4:6 is given yet another answer. The question of whether the Lord punishes sin in his children is

explored further, and the true extent of our blessing in Christ is set forth in a continuation of correspondence dating back to an article in the June issue. An interesting and useful piece argues that those who deny the importance of the Thirty-nine Articles for the Established Church thereby justify departure from her. Among the later pieces in the issue is a letter on the antiquity of the Hebrew vowel points. The author asserts his opinion that Dr Gill was mistaken in arguing for their originality, but he points out that, were they as modern as some claim, Christ's words on the cross (Matthew 27:46) could not have been written in the form we have. A correspondence complains of the decision by the editors of the *Evangelical Magazine* to refuse advertise any of Dr Hawker's works. Poetry concludes the issue.

100 years ago: November & December 1921

The **November** opens with a sermon on Isaiah 12:2, our divine Saviour. The creation of man is dealt with at some length, and Abraham's behaviour even in wealth provides wise counsel for believers in this life. Christ as the root and offspring of David focuses our attention on our Lord Jesus. Hebrews 9:14 provides the tenth of the Questions propounded in Holy Writ. A paper from the 1920 SGU annual conference, on the Person of God the Father, is reprinted. Christ being made unto us wisdom is treated, as is the precious ointment of Psalm 133:2. The dishonest use of certain phrases by Sceptical Critics to mean something other than they have always meant is challenged. The challenge of evolutionary and old-earth theory is addressed by a reader. The Protestant Beacon draws attention to Rome's false teaching on auricular confession and priestly absolution. Among the Reviews is a recommendation of the diary

published by the Protestant Truth Society, 'My Pocket Companion'. It is still being produced, now in its 107th year.

For **December** we begin with a sermon on Psalm 90:1, God as our dwelling place. The nearness of the Lord's coming, James 5:8, supplied the subject and text for another sermon. John the Baptist is the subject of a third. The spiritual paradox of nothing and all from 1 Cor 6:10, being a sermon by James Ormiston, is continued. The relationship of law to love is explored helpfully, and the sequence found in Luke 24:19, John 15:15 and Revelation 14:5 is considered. Man's ability to forget is contrasted with the Lord's

promise not to forget his people. The Editor's answer to a correspondent's question about James 5:14–15 is reproduced. Faith-healing, it is argued, belonged to a time of miracles and cannot be taken as being applicable to the church now. Paul did not heal all sick people miraculously, showing that it was an unusual matter. Labouring together with God is the subject of another encouraging piece, and warnings of the times, including evidence of changing attitudes towards Romanism are supplied. Evidence of the downgrade is supplied, and Protestant Points deals with Purgatory. Reviews conclude the issue.

TO BE CONTINUED

THE BURNING BUSH

by EDWARD MALCOLM

When Moses was drawn to approach the burning bush he soon discovered that he was in the presence of the Lord God. This is stated very plainly in Exodus 3:1–6. A little later, the Lord told Moses that 'this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain' (v. 12). Most modern commentators are sure that the sign, or token, would be the coming of Moses and the Israelites to worship the Lord. Older commentators, however, take a different view. To them, the burning bush was the token. The words that follow in the verse, concerning the nation serving God after their exit, or exodus, from Egypt, were intended to declare to Moses what would be the result of his obedience to

the heavenly calling, of which the token of the burning bush was a confirmation.

Scripturally, both views are legitimate. The modern view is found in, for instance, 1 Sa 2:34, 10:7–9; 2 Ki 19:29; Isa 7:11–14. In each instance a future sign will demonstrate the truth of a present statement. The older view is found in, for instance, Ezek 4:3, where a present sign shows forth the truth of a future fact: the sign is given to confirm belief in the prophecy. Which, we may ask, is more suited to Moses at the burning bush? Is the burning bush the sign, or will it be the future gathering of the people at that place in worship? Given that Moses had very strong reservations about obeying the Lord at this point, it is hard to think that he was being given a sign that would only confirm the

matter after he had obeyed. Such was the weakness of his faith, or perhaps better his reluctance to accept so great a responsibility, that the Lord gave him two signs, the rod that became a serpent and the hand that was leprous and then healed as it was placed inside his clothing. Either the Lord God gave him three signs to strengthen him for the work for which he was called, or he gave him one sign that Moses could not accept, and then two that he could. Our knowledge of the sovereignty of God moves us to declare that the Lord did not mistake Moses's faith the first time, but he knew the weakness of his faith, and gave him three signs to confirm the calling.

Taking this to be so, we are left to ask how that sight could serve as a token to Moses. How does a bush that burns with fire but is not consumed stand as a token of the divine presence and of his commission?

Notice, first, what the burning bush was. 'And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush' (v. 2). Moses did not see a bush that was on fire—although that is what he first thought it was, v. 3—but he saw the angel of the Lord as a flame of fire. It ought not to be needed to prove that the angel of the Lord is the second person of the Trinity in his pre-incarnation form. This is Jesus Christ himself. The one who stood before Moses, who called on him to remove his shoes since he was on holy ground, and who commissioned him to lead the nation out of Egypt, was none other than the hope of Israel. The first promise of our Lord Jesus Christ is given in Gen 3:15, as we well know, and the patriarchs lived in the faith of that promise. The whole hope of sinners rested on the giving and fulfilling of that promise. Of course, whether Moses would have been able to draw the line from Gen 3:15 to the sight before him

is another matter: we have the benefit of the full record. However, by the time the Lord told him that the burning bush itself was the sign, Moses had already been told who the Lord was who spoke with him, vv. 6–9. That the God of the covenant was speaking with him ought to have been token enough.

Notice, secondly, how the Lord appeared to Moses. He did so 'in a flame of fire.' This was a great and terrible sight. That the Lord should appear in this way is surely a manifestation of his glory, since it was the brightness of the flame that first drew Moses to the bush. Fire is also a symbol of purity, in that it burns up the dross and leaves only the purified silver or gold behind. Fire is a symbol of judgment, for what can withstand the flame but that which is built to endure? The time will come when all things will be judged by fire, 1 Cor 3:13, and all that is unworthy will be consumed. That the Lord should appear as a flame of fire shows that he is the righteous Judge, the pure and holy one, whose word none may lawfully doubt.

Notice, thirdly, that the bush itself did not burn up. We may say that since the flame of fire was the Lord Jesus Christ, the bush itself was not on fire. However, the example of the soldiers who threw Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego into the fiery furnace teaches us that fire does not discriminate: it takes whoever gets within reach, unless they are somehow spared its effects. That the bush did not burn teaches the power of the Lord, to protect and spare whom he will. Moses was called to do a great and difficult thing, to go before the most powerful ruler on earth and demand the release of his slave population. He had to do so as a member of the despised slave nation. He had to do so as a man whose years of shepherding in the wilderness would have left their mark on him. This was no courtier, no diplomat, and no magician;

this was just a poor, rough shepherd from the countryside. When Moses was shown that the power of the Lord extended to sparing his chosen instrument—in this case the bush—he was being shown the power of God to protect his servant in the midst of this difficult task

For these reasons the burning bush itself stands as the token, or sign, to Moses. A right understanding of what he was seeing was meant to give him assurance of the Lord's power to keep him as he returned to Egypt, and to provide him with that deep sense of his calling. Just as Paul was able to look back on the events that took place on the road to Damascus, so Moses would have before him that extraordinary event to remind him of the power of the Lord who called him. This is true of others as well. We know about the experience of Isaiah, who saw the Lord high and lifted up, his train filling the temple, and the seraphim crying out his praises. This vision confirmed to the prophet the truth of his calling, as well as the power and holiness of the Lord who had called him. He faced much opposition during his long ministry, but he never wavered in his faith or obedience. Think also about Jacob, Samuel, David and many others, in both the Old and the New Testaments.

In each case, the central aspect of the calling was not the phenomena associated with it—in the case of Samuel, for instance, there were none—but the one who called the chosen instrument. It was the Lord's revelation of himself to his servant that was the centre and ground of their experience.

Mankind has long had a desire for experiences. The fascination with 'Charismatic' phenomena is nothing new. When Moses stood before the Pharaoh he performed signs and wonders as the Lord commanded. The magicians of the Egyptian court replicated

those signs and wonders, at least the first three: after that they confessed that it was nothing other than the finger of God that worked the signs. That they could perform such signs shows that the Pharaohs expected to see them. Consequently the Pharaoh failed to weigh adequately the enormous significance of the words spoken by Moses and Aaron, for these men were merely the mouthpieces of the true and living God, the holy one and the just. The same was true during the earthly ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ: many followed him for the signs and wonders, but he sought out the people in order to teach them, Mark 6:34. It is the teaching that matters, for the words are not the words of men but of God: as the disciples correctly discerned, Christ has the words of eternal life, John 6:68.

Let us be sure that we pay heed to words. The Scripture of truth is the word of the Lord, which the same Lord has preserved down the ages, whole and entire. The word speaks life to us, for it has been given for that purpose. Those who have the light in them speak according to this word, Isa 8:20, and those who have the light in them hear the word as such. Obedience to the Scriptures is a mark of the child of God. So too is attendance on preaching. Sound preaching is not, in the end, that which holds the attention of the hearer because it is eloquent or interesting, but because it has a power that exceeds the ability of the preacher to possess. True preaching is the heaven-inspired declaration of God's eternal truth, in the power of the Holy Spirit. It is that word which penetrates into the darkest reaches of the heart and conscience, bringing light to hidden parts and showing us things we could otherwise never know. This is the work of the Lord, not of man. And in this we have our true experience of the Lord, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. ¶

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We wish all our readers a blessed and peaceful New Year

‘God is my strength and power: and he maketh my way perfect.’

2 Samuel 22:33

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theological liberalism
and secularism, multi-
faithism and the Romeward
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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 07477 704921.

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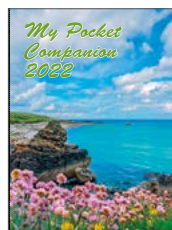
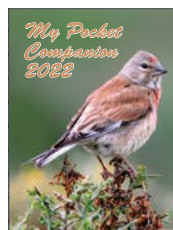
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