

MAY-JUNE 2022

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The Gospel Magazine

Jubilee • 'Show me thyself' • The Lord, the Shepherd of his people

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1766–2022

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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JUBILEE

*‘When ye hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people
shall shout with a great shout’ (Joshua 6:5).*

IN June we celebrate the Platinum Jubilee, marking seventy years since the coronation of Her Majesty the Queen. She is the first British monarch to attain to such a lengthy reign, and we offer our loyal congratulations to her on this magnificent achievement, giving God all the glory for upholding her thus far.

The word ‘jubilee’ is from the Bible. It is a Hebrew word that is transliterated in the Authorised Version as ‘jubile’. It is the word used to for the instruments blown by the priests as the Israelites circumnavigated Jericho, the rams’ horns, Joshua 6:5. How does a ram’s horn come to be a jubilee or celebration?

The answer is found in Leviticus 25:9, where it is commanded that, at the day of atonement in the forty-ninth year (seven sabbaths of years, vv. 1–8), the trumpet of the jubilee was to be blown. The jubilee is the instrument sounded on the day of atonement,

which was to be a day in which the people afflicted themselves, Leviticus 23:27. The law of the atonement had already been given, Leviticus 16:1–28, after which it was commanded as a statute for ever, vv. 29–34. On that day the high priest would make an offering for his own sins, and then bring the blood of a young bull and sprinkle it on the mercy seat, the lid or covering over the ark of the covenant. Within the ark were, among other things, the two tables of the law. These were the stone tablets on which were written the ten commandments, the second set after the first set were broken by Moses at the sight of Israel’s sin with the golden calf. In sprinkling the blood of atonement (at-one-ment) the priest made a propitiatory sacrifice that turned away God’s wrath. In effect this caused him to look upon the victim, the young bull, in place of the sins of the people. The thundering of the law against the nation’s disobedience was viewed as answered

in the shed blood of the sacrifice. As Hebrews 9:13–14 teaches, this was a pointer to the great and effectual sacrifice of Jesus Christ, which actually purges the conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

The day of atonement that marked the beginning of the jubilee year, Leviticus 25:8ff, was to usher in a time of restoration. People who had sold their inheritances during the previous period were permitted to buy them back. These inheritances were the residue of what God had given to the generation that conquered the promised land, and were therefore very precious to anyone who honoured the Lord. This was why Naboth refused to sell his vineyard to King Ahab. Since the jubilee year was also a sabbath year, this was a time when no agriculture took place. People were spared having to labour for their food. The Lord promised that the sixth year would yield three years' worth of produce, so the people could enjoy the year of rest, and the land could enjoy its rest from being worked. During that year the people would eat both what remained from the excess of the sixth year, and from what grew naturally: but not what grew from the gleanings left in the fields, or from the uncultivated vines. This was to be a proper year of rest and of restoration. Slaves (Israelite bondservants) were to be released in that year: if they chose to remain with their masters, a rite was decreed whereby this decision was made public. Families that had been broken up through poverty, parents selling their children and then themselves to avoid death by starvation, would be reunited in their own possessions.

This is why the jubilee is a celebration. It is a time when the curse was lifted, at least as far as physical labour was concerned. The word of God to Adam, that he would eat his food in the sweat of his brow, was rescinded

for a period. This was a time when the reality of living in a fallen world, with all its attendant evils, was lessened to a degree. It is a pointer to the rest we have in our Lord Jesus Christ, who said, 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light' (Matthew 11:28–30).

'There remaineth therefore a rest for the people of God' (Hebrews 4:9). This is premised on the fact that Joshua ('Jesus', v. 8) had not given Israel the true rest of God, but only a type of it. As entry into the promised land prefigured our entry into heaven, so the sabbath and the jubilee year point us to the eternal and true rest of heaven.

Our entry into heaven is through the blood of a better sacrifice than the young bull offered once a year by the high priest. Our entry into heaven is through following a surer guide than Joshua, who led the nation across Jordan, conquered Jericho, and defeated armies. Israel came into a degree of rest under their great king, David. We enter into that glorious and eternal rest through the 'KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS', Revelation 19:16, who is King Jesus, our Christ, our Righteousness. This is the best reason to rejoice, that we are his saved people. Salvation is of the Lord. Let this be a true jubilee for many as-yet unsaved souls. ¶

(First published in the Newsletter of St Mary's Castle Street, Reading, where the Editor is Minister.)

THE QUIETING OF CONSCIENCE

A SERMON by The Editor

'For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?' Hebrews 9:13-14.

IN the former part of this chapter the apostle has dealt with those aspects of the Mosaic law that were given to Israel. There was a tabernacle containing certain items, vv. 1-2, and an inner sanctuary containing certain other items, vv. 3-5. The sacrifices offered by the priests were made in the tabernacle, but the sanctuary was only entered once a year by the high priest, when he made atonement for the whole nation, vv. 6-7. This was done to teach the nation that a better way would one day be opened into the sanctuary, and that those ordinances then in place could not make the worshipper perfect as far as the conscience was concerned, vv. 8-10. The whole is introduced by the word 'Then', v. 1, which requires a following 'now' to complete the sense.

The 'now' comes in v. 11, where it is expressly stated that 'But Christ being come...' The one who comes in the office of Messiah far exceeds all who came before in the office of high priest. Christ is high priest of the new covenant whose tabernacle is his perfect human nature, v. 11. In that nature he performed special services, offering himself in atonement so that his people would obtain eternal redemption, v. 12. This the apostle proves by comparing the effect of the old sacrifices with the new. The old brought the worshipper into a ritually clean standing, able to offer sacrifice, to worship, and to come before the Lord without fear, v. 13. The blood of Christ, however, cleanses the

conscience from dead works to serve the living God, v. 14. Thus is Christ the mediator of the new covenant, in whom all the faithful obtain remission of sin and eternal life, v. 15.

Doctrine: without the purging of the conscience there is no hope of eternal life.

1. What do we understand by the conscience?

The word translated 'conscience' has as its root the meaning 'to see completely', 'to become conscious of.' The form found here means the inward faculty of distinguishing right from wrong, or moral consciousness: the conscience, as we understand it. The very word itself teaches that man is able to distinguish right from wrong, even if his fallen nature means he is incapable of choosing the right, at least for the right reasons. A person may choose 'right' because he hopes to avoid punishment or to receive praise: he cannot choose right because he loves the Lord and his holiness, nor is it natural for him to be so.

The conscience is the seat of the *guilt* of sin, the accuser within, as Satan is without, Rev 12:10. This is because we have not always chosen right, and we call to mind, are conscious of, our sins and wickedness. The operation of the conscience is as our accuser, reminding us over and over that we are not as we ought to be. The devil does this from time to time, but our consciences do this all the time. The unbeliever, who is dead in

trespasses and sins, may be untroubled by the accusations of conscience, since continual and habitual sin sears the conscience. Then, there is no calling to mind past sins with any sense of guilt: where there is guilt, however, there is evidence of a tender conscience and of the operation of grace. A troubled conscience, though an uncomfortable thing to live with, is nevertheless a blessing, for it shows that the Lord is dealing with us.

While the conscience accuses, we are prevented from communion with God, as Adam discovered, Gen 3:7f. Having broken God's command his eyes were opened—he became aware of his condition—and he saw his nakedness as something shameful. Before he sinned his nakedness was not shameful because there was no element of sin in his self-perception. Once he had fallen in sin that changed, and he could not look at himself as once he did. The outward nakedness of the body was a manifestation of the inward nakedness of the soul. He was exposed to the searching eye of conscience, and his conscience found him wanting. The effect of this sense of guilt was that he hid himself from the presence of the Lord, hoping thereby to avoid the obvious next step, the accusation from God that he had sinned. An accusing conscience separates us from our Lord, and we are taught by this to view sin as sinful: anything that keeps us from the good God who made us and who sustains us cannot be from him. Whatever is not from him is of sin, and whatever is of sin is necessarily deserving of punishment.

What could any person do to alleviate the accusations of a troubled conscience? We are thrown onto either of two things. We can either seek peace with God or we can seek peace with ourselves through our own actions. This is the religion of the whole world, that it hopes to buy peace through works.

Every religion that has ever been used is a religion of works. Every aspect of the atheist's life is a religion of works. People struggle to do good as they judge good, wanting to feed the poor and help the weak—both of which are to be lauded in their place, but neither of which can achieve that quietening of the conscience that most desire. But what did the chosen nation find? What did God do for Israel, that he did not do for any other nation? He gave them the system of sacrifices, so that atonement could be made. The Levitical law lists a large number of sacrifices that were to be offered in a wide variety of situations. Every case of a troubled conscience was addressed by one sacrifice or another, so that each individual could find in the law the means by which to be reconciled to God. And yet, according to the apostle here, these accusation the old sacrifices could not remove, as he declares in Hebrews 10:1–3. It was for this reason that they must be repeated yearly, for at best each day of atonement obtained a year's grace for the nation. And this, not because the blood offered actually satisfied the wrath of God, but because the Lord graciously forgave the people on account of the great sacrifice yet to come.

The accusation of the conscience is common to all mankind, the law being written within each of us, Rom 2:15. It is no wonder the world has invented so many religions: devoid of the word of life, man must seek his own means to obtain peace. The plethora of religions speaks to the ineffectiveness of such means, yet the common features of them, as religions of works, speaks to the only human response when there is no knowledge of the truth. The concept of the balances of justice is easily understood, and people live and die in the hope that at last their good deeds will outweigh their bad deeds. Only the unregenerate think that their good deeds are

counters to their bad deeds, but the child of God knows that there are no good deeds in and of themselves. It is only what is done to Christ, in faith, through grace, that is pleasing to God. Even then, it is not pleasing because it is perfect, but because it is done to Christ, in faith, through grace.

Thus all confess that they have sinned, and come short of the glory of God, Romans 3:23, else they would not bother with works to quieten their consciences. To be sure, in our generation it is more common to meet with professing atheists than with practitioners of any religious system. Yet both are aiming at the same thing, to quieten their consciences either by denying the existence of God or by trying to appease a deity by works. Our consciences are against us, unless they have been purged.

2. What is this purging of which the apostle speaks?

It is what Christ alone can do, and has done, 1:3, which is why he is our high priest. This is the cleansing spoken of in Isaiah 1:16–18, where it has reference to the putting away of disobedience and the return to God's holy law and commandment. Later on, in 43:25, the same prophet writes, 'I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.' This blotting out is declared in Col 2:14, with reference to the handwriting of ordinance that was against us. The only copy of the charge sheet against us has been covered with spilt ink. The wax tablet on which the charges have been recorded has been so smudged that it is no longer legible. No accusation can be brought against us because no record of our sins remains!

The purging of the church is the reason Christ came, Ephesians 5:26. There is no bride suitable for this King, but he must take

one who is unworthy and make her worthy. He has chosen a poor, defiled, diseased and dishonourable woman and has enriched her, cleansed her, healed her and granted her the unspeakable honour of being his beloved. He will have none other than a perfect bride, but for that he must be the one to make her perfect. To this end he purges her sins, washing her in his own blood. Whereas the old system given to Israel provided a ritual purification, so that the people were put into a state whereby the Lord would accept them in his tabernacle, and receive at their hands the offerings he commanded, the blood of Christ makes us altogether clean. It washes within and without. No stain of sin can adhere to the one who is washed in the blood of the Lamb. This is the fountain opened in the house of David, the atonement and sacrifice that actually takes away sin.

It is connected to faith, Acts 15:9, where believing in Christ purifies Jew and Gentile. The saints of the Old Testament looked in faith to the coming of the perfect sacrifice, to that offering that would actually answer for their sins. They looked to the seed of the woman whose heel should be bruised as he bruised the serpent's head. This would be a fight to the death, in which it would seem that the serpent would be victorious, but out of which would come such a victory for the woman's seed that his people would be saved from their sins. When we see how the promise of the seed was maintained through the times of the patriarchs, and how it was revived and enlarged in the covenant made with David, we confess that it was always the hope of the faithful. The Old Testament church was truly a Christian church, since the object of their faith was none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. And in that both Jews and Gentiles are purified by faith, we see that true purging has nothing to do in the end

with the sacrifice of lambs and kids under the Mosaic law, but only to do with the offering of Christ upon the cross. The Gentiles were given no command to offer sacrifices to God for redemption, yet when the word of the gospel came, they believed and were saved, even as we.

Adam's conscience accused him when he sinned, and his efforts to soothe it failed. He sought to cover his nakedness with fig leaves, but their very presence would only have reminded him that he was naked beneath. When the Lord confronted Adam's sin he revealed that only in Christ can the accusation of conscience be resolved. This is why he declared the coming of the woman's seed, not to assure man that he would not die there and then (else there could have been no seed to the woman), but that the Lord would provide the one in whom and through whom Adam could obtain peace. It is for this reason that we can say with confidence that the righteous have always looked to Christ, and that every sacrifice offered by the patriarchs, and by the faithful in Israel, has been offered in the sure and certain hope that the seed of the woman would indeed bruise the serpent's head and restore man to his right relationship with his Maker.

Only the blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin, 1 John 1:7; only he can purge us. He came into this world to save sinners, and there is no salvation without our being purged by him. Yet the world at large is determined to find a way. It believes there is an alternative to Christ, a way more in keeping with human nature—that is, with the pride and folly of fallen human nature. The words of our text indicate to us the true nature of this alternative.

3. What is our alternative?

The alternative is given in the words of our

text, and is called dead works. That is, it is anything that lacks the vital principle of holiness. Holiness is not natural to anyone, but is only a consequence of our union with Christ. We are holy because we are in Christ. It is he who makes us holy, so that what we do in faith to Christ is characterised as holy. Everything that stems from our being in Christ has its life from Christ, that vital quality without which whatever we do would be dead. Two people could stand next to each other at the altar and offer their sacrifices. Outwardly there may be nothing to choose between them. Both sacrificial victims are lawful, being without spot or blemish, from the sheep or the goats, and of the first year. Both the people bringing their offerings have come in an outward semblance of humility, properly dressed and ritually clean. Yet one is offering dead works, because his heart is far from the Lord. The other offers according to the vital principle of holiness because he trusts in the Lord and offers his sacrifice in faith.

Such works are dead because *they lack the life that is from above*. The subject of works is one that requires our particular attention. We know we cannot be justified by works, however defined. We do know, on the other hand, that 'we are created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them' (Eph 2:10). Works follow after justification as the train follows after the bride. Such 'works' as precede conversion are only another form of sin, for before we were regenerate we were dead in trespasses and sins, Eph 2:1, 5. The dead works spoken of in our text are those performed prior to regeneration, and they cannot bring us into favour with God, nor put away our sins. Works performed after regeneration do not bring us into favour with God, nor do they put away our sins. They are

acceptable only in so far as they are evidences of faith in Christ, and spring from faith and love. They are accounted holy for the sake of the one to whom and for whom they are done. All works prior to regeneration are not so accounted.

They are *useless and fruitless*, as the talent hidden in the earth, Matt 25:24ff. Useless, because they are put to no good use, nor do they have any worthwhile use. Fruitless because they are the fruits of unbelief and unrighteousness, and therefore may be likened to the wild gourds shredded into the pot by that well-meaning but unwise son of the prophets, 2 Kings 4:38–41. The talent hidden in the earth could produce no fruit because it was isolated from any means of improvement, just as dead works, being isolated from the life-giving root of faith through regeneration, can produce nothing living. Indeed, they work the exact opposite of what is supposed, like the those wild gourds, producing death and not life. Yet it is not only that they produce death as an unintended effect, but—

They *deserve death and lead to it*, as the rebellion of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, Numbers 16:1. The fine language employed by those men, declaring that all the congregation are holy, v. 3, was but a cover for their pride. Their readiness to offer incense before the altar may have appeared to some to be an act of faith, even of spiritual maturity; in reality it was blatant rebellion against the Lord and his word. For this action they were consumed by the fire that came out from the Lord. So it is with all so-called good works. They all deserve the judgment of God, and that judgment will come.

All that is not of faith is of the flesh, dead and under judgment. Works cannot save, not even those that are done by sinners saved by grace. Our works deserve the punishment of God because they are not perfect. Our

only hope is Christ, whose blood atones for all our sins, even those that are attached to the best efforts we make in worship and in serving the Lord our God. Those who have no Redeemer have no atonement for their sins, however committed.

Thus there is no alternative: if we would obtain life, we must have it in Christ, and in Christ alone.

Conclusion

The problem with trusting in our works for salvation—apart from the insurmountable problem that they cannot save—is that we cannot quieten our consciences by them. It is not in their power to do this, and such is the state of the natural man that he doubts whether he has done enough to balance out his misdeeds. The reason the unbeliever thinks his works might outweigh his sins is that he has far too low a view of sin. For one act of disobedience Moses was denied entry into the promised land. The weight and glory of his multitude of good works were not sufficient to atone for that one sin. How much harder is it for those whose consciences tell them that they have sinned many times to find peace through good works?

When we by grace are brought to Christ we cease to look within ourselves for the means of quieting our consciences. Instead, we look to the one who atoned for sin on the cross, who shed his blood to make the only satisfaction acceptable to God for sin. We also cease to look outside ourselves for any other hope. We learn that there is indeed none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

The more we contemplate this matter, the more are led to see and confess that Jesus Christ is the only Saviour, and rejoice that we have such a Redeemer, and peace in our hearts and minds. Amen. ¶

‘SHOW ME THYSELF’

by CARINE MACKENZIE

After the dark cold days of winter, what a treat it is to experience some bright sunny spring weather.

The sun was shining brilliantly through the window the other day, showing up dust on the top of the sideboard which I had thought was quite clean. I had not noticed the dust before, but the light of the sun revealed it.

This reminds us of the work of the Holy Spirit, revealing our sin to us—sin that perhaps we had not noticed before and were not bothered about. As the sunlight reveals the dust, the Holy Spirit reveals our sin. Jesus told us that when the Comforter or Holy Spirit comes, ‘he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness and of judgement’ (John 16:8).

Conviction of sin will show us something of our state in God’s sight that could lead us to despair and feelings of guilt. What is the cure for that?

Remember what happened to David. At one stage in his life he fell into grave sin. He committed adultery with Uriah’s wife Bathsheba and tried to cover up his sin and even had Uriah killed in battle to get him out of the way.

One day Nathan the prophet came to David and told him the story of a rich man who owned lots of sheep and cattle. A poor man in the city owned only one little ewe lamb which was very dear to him and his children. When the rich man had a visitor, instead of using one of his own flock, he took the poor man’s lamb, killed it and prepared it for the visitor’s dinner.

When David heard this account, he was very angry with the rich man in the story. ‘He shall surely die’ exclaimed David. ‘He shall restore the lamb fourfold because he did this thing and because he had no pity’ (2 Sam 12:8–9).

Imagine David’s shock when Nathan announced ‘Thou art the man.’ Nathan then elaborated. God had given David so much including wives and children and yet he had Uriah killed and took his wife for himself.

God revealed David’s sin to him and he had to say, ‘I have sinned against the Lord’ (2 Sam 12:13). David repented of his sin and wrote Psalm 51 to express his sorrow and ask for forgiveness.

‘Have mercy upon me,’ he pleaded. (v 1).

‘Wash me throughly from mine iniquity.’ (v 2).

‘Wash me and I shall be whiter than the snow.’ (v 7).

We can use these prayers too when we are convicted of our sins. We cannot sort our life out ourselves. We can decide to do better but even if we were able, that is inadequate to deal with what we have done. We fail in our own resolve and strength. We need to take our sins to the Lord Jesus Christ. He dealt with sin at the cross. Christ died for the ungodly. He forgave all the trespasses of his people. All the law that was against us, he ‘took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross’ (Col. 2:14).

Many years ago a godly minister from the highlands of Scotland, Hector McPhail, travelled from his home to Edinburgh. He stopped off on route at an inn at Dalmagarry. After

his evening meal he asked for everyone, including the servants, to gather for family worship. He insisted that even the little kitchen maid joined the company as he read God's word and prayed. Mr McPhail chatted to the young girl afterwards and found out that she knew nothing about her soul, or eternity, or about God. He wanted to encourage her interest in the things that matter. 'I am going to Edinburgh for meetings,' he told her. 'I will be back here in two weeks time. If you promise to do something for me I will bring you a gift from Edinburgh.' The girl readily agreed.

'I would like you to pray this little prayer every day, "LORD SHOW ME MYSELF."'

When Hector MacPhail arrived back at Dalmagarry two weeks later, he asked for the little kitchen maid as she did not appear at family worship.

'She is in bed,' they told him. 'Since you left she has hardly been able to do anything. All she does is cry and pray. Something is troubling her mind.'

'Take me to her!' ordered the minister. When he saw her he offered the gift that he had promised her. 'You have earned it,' he said.

'God has answered my prayer,' the girl told him, 'I see myself as a wretched sinner. I can hardly eat or do my work. I am afraid of the wrath of God and I don't know how to escape.'

'Now I must teach you another prayer,' said Mr McPhail. "'LORD SHOW ME THYSELF.'" As he answered your first prayer, so he will in time reveal himself to you as your merciful Saviour.'

We can ask God, the Sun of righteousness, to reveal our sins to us, knowing that we need to go to him for washing and cleansing. We can pray like David that God would create a new heart and renew a right spirit (Psalm 51:10.). The Lord's tender mercies are greater than all our sins. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin (1 John 1:7).

The warmth and comfort of this peace is like the warmth of the sun after the dark cold days of winter.

Bible Search

Find the words missing from the verses. The initials of the correct answers will spell out the subject of the story.

1. And they which heard it, being convicted by their own _____, went out one by one. (John 8:9)
2. Ye have gone away from mine _____ and have not kept them Return unto me and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts. (Malachi 3:7)
3. Repent and be baptised every one of you in the _____ of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. (Acts 2:38)
4. This is the _____ that overcometh the world, even our faith. (1 John 5:4)

5. Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his _____. (Acts 3:26)
6. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be _____ unto thee. (Psalm 51:13)
7. I thought on my ways, and turned my feet into thy _____ (Psalm 119:59)
8. And the times of this _____ God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent. (Acts 17:30)
9. To _____ their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins. (Acts 26:18)
10. Ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in _____. For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of. (2 Corinthians 7:9–10)

SARAH

by the REV. P. LOS (1815–1888)

A miracle of God’s grace

Chapter 4 – *The full day*

After the preacher had left the sick one, Sarah lay a long time without saying anything. The Mother saw that she sometimes moved her lips. A movement that was interchanged by painful looks on her face. According to the minister’s advice her Mother let her lay still. His words spoken when he went: ‘The Lord can do this work alone’ were fallen in her heart.

When the doctor came the next morning and asked how the sick one was, she said: ‘Doctor, I am going to die and I am still unconverted. I must appear before God, whom

I provoked to anger.’

‘Sarah, you should not speak about those things. It would only make your sickness worse and you know it: God is love.’

‘Yes doctor, I know that, but I also know that God is holy and righteous and shall not leave one sin unpunished.’

‘Well child, why are you talking about sin? You always have been a impeccable girl.’

‘Yes, probably before the world, but not before God.’

‘Well child, put all this unpleasant thought away from you. We shall try to cure you.’

‘No doctor, I do not believe that, but if my soul is hidden in Christ, then I would have no problem with dying.’

‘Sarah, we only come for the body. You have speak to other people about those things. But above all we advise you to be as still and calm as possible.’

When the doctor left the room and Mother ask what he thought about the sick one, he said that so long as there is life, there is hope. Mother replied to this: ‘Doctor, please be so good not to conceal anything before me. I am prepared for the worst, so please do not speak about a recovery if you think that death will be the end of this, although I know that all thing are possible with God.’

‘Madam, if you desire this, I shall say it, but do not tell it to the sick one. It would not do her any good. There is no hope for your child, although it could take some weeks or even months. I expect that soon internal cramps will come, especially into the lungs. But it should not give up all hope. We have prescribed strong medicines and I hope that they shall work well.’

‘Doctor, you are contradicting yourself. No hope and is there still hope?’

‘Well, we shall do what we can do.’

The doctor then left the house of mourning, because it definitely was a house of mourning.

Father could, because of his grief, not do his work, because Sarah was his idol. Mother sighed and prayed and was more encumbered about the soul than the body of her child. And Sarah? She was in a sad state, because she suffered terrible pains and her soul was yet unsaved. She was encumbered about her sins, and cried that it would be just if she would be lost eternally.

But there are people who agree with Solomon, that it is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting.

Our minister also thought this. He frequently visited the young sick one. In his first visit he thought that he saw dawn and it became clear that he had not deceived himself and that the dawn made place for the full day.

For days Sarah’s soul was tremendously afraid, called continuously for grace and not for justice. But when the minister came to her, it seemed as she felt herself relieved and poured out her whole heart to the minister and did not conceal anything that was in her. From her communications it was clear that she was not seeking to be freed from hell, but to be hidden in the Lord Jesus.

Often there were words that restored her, but when told this, she always added: ‘But I still do not have the Lord Jesus.’

On a certain morning, when her Mother came to her bed, she said, more loudly than she usually spoke: ‘O Mother, I had such a good night!’

‘Have you slept well, child?’

‘No. I have not; I was awake the whole night, but was thinking about my life, how I for twenty four years did nothing else than sinning and how I deserved temporal and eternal punishments. Then I was reminded of suffering and dying of the Lord Jesus. How he was sent by the Father, to offer himself as Ransom, a Mediator for sinful debtors as the Lamb who taketh away the sin of the world. And when my petitions went up to that precious Person, it seemed that a clear light shone around me and a friendly voice, such as I never heard before, said to me: “I have trod the press alone, and did this for you.” It was as if I was in another world and I was afraid to fall asleep, because I feared to lose this. Now I have slept a quarter of an hour and it is still just as alive.’

‘Well my dear child, did you have such a friendly visitation? Hath the Lord answered my prayers?’

‘But could I not have imagined this? But no, I was no imagination, I was the voice of the Lord Jesus himself.’

It this spoken while she suffered tremendous pains, but while she was sick for four months, she did not complain.

When her soul friend came to her bed in the afternoon, she could communicate what happened lively and added no less forcefully the words which were spoken to her soul: I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins. ‘But,’ she said, ‘it seemed that there stood near me who said in a hard voice: “Do not imagine anything. This is not in the Bible.”’

‘Is it in the Bible? I will let you hear it.’ And the preacher read loudly the forty fourth chapter of prophet Isaiah and Sarah did not cease calling: ‘Yes, that is for me—to pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground.’ And in a loud voice she praised and blessed the Lord, Who wrought a great wonder in her.

We cannot tell all the lovely words which came during her illness from her mouth and the blessed moments which the minister had at her bed. Her sleeping place was a pulpit. Every one of her earlier had to come to her everybody was warned faithfully for eternity. She spoke not the least to her father, who often feared to come to her.

Her breathlessness and pains her terrible to see for those around her, but no complaint came over her lips. When others bemoaned her, she said: ‘You should not bemoan me, it are just the remnants. My Saviour hath born the greatest for me.’

When her end seemed to draw near and the minister visited her again, her right arm was bent fully by a tremendous cramp. Then she said: ‘I cannot use this arm to praise God, but I still can do it with it this arm.’ She lifted her left arm on high, calling: ‘Thou,

Lord Jesus, thou hast done it alone. Thou hast born all my sin in thine body and soul on the cross.’

Eight days before her death she was shaken by a great fear in her soul. Yet a last arrow of the great archenemy: ‘You have just imagined it all, because you are not elected.’ For hours she was tortured so heavily that neither friendly talking and rebukes, nor the letter of the word could redeem the soul from these great snares, bad that he alone was mighty to establish his word: Without me thou canst do nothing. The change came at the evening. The great Teacher of righteousness spoke to her one word: and the snare was broken and she escaped. ‘I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.’ At these words the prince of darkness let her loose and he was rebuked forever.

She lay after that moment waiting peacefully and quietly and let know that she desired that the Lord come, because she thirsted to be with him.

During the last evening that the preacher sat at her bed, she held his hand and said: ‘We shall now part. Tomorrow morning at nine o’ clock the eternal day will break for me, but we shall see each other again. I know, the Lord hath done it, but I also bring thanks that you were the instrument in his hand unto my conversion and for the lovely visits I received. May the Lord reciprocate you ... and may your wages be ...’

More she could not say. She fell backwards in her cushion and got into an unconscious state, which remained the whole night. At seven o’ clock in the morning she woke up again and bid a moving farewell to her parents. She folded her hands calling out: ‘Amen, yea come Lord Jesus!’ And when the clock stroke the ninth hour, she gave up her last breath and Sarah was no more.

The day when her dust would be buried in the earth, the preacher stood with the surviving relatives at her cold remains. Those who would not have known her age would have thought that a seventy-year-old woman lay in the coffin. The illness had demolished this young body tremendously.

It is amazing at such a dead person. Gladness and sadness are mingled. When they stood at the open coffin, the preacher said:

‘One mourns when a ship sinks,
But not when it, fully loaded

Comes from a wild ocean
Safely in the harbour.

One mourns when the balm is spilled
And the good savour is spoiled,
But not when the glass is broken
But the precious liquid is saved.

It also applies to this. Only the shell remains. The pearl is out. A pearl in the crown of King Jesus.’

To him alone be the glory. ¶

COVENANT COMMUNION WITH GOD

by JOHN HOOPER (Saltash)

10. UNION AND COMMUNION

WHAT, then, do we know of this relationship? We are not talking about some cold, barren and academic point of theology here but something that takes us to the very heart of true religion—our relationship with God. What, I wonder, is our experience of it? Henry Scougal, a Scottish Episcopalian minister of the seventeenth century, lamented the fact that so few in his day understood the meaning of true religion. He wrote:

true religion is a union of the soul with God, a real participation of the Divine nature, the very image of God drawn upon the soul, or, in the apostle’s phrase, ‘it is Christ formed within us.’¹

Does that describe your ‘religion?’ While we need to be very careful and wary of an unhealthy mysticism, there is surely a challenge here that every one of us needs to face. In Reformed circles the greater danger is of an intellectual Christianity, a religion of the head but not of the heart, in which even the doctrine of the covenant itself becomes little more than a theological football.

As I have already said, there can be no communion with God without first there being union with him. A.W Pink comments that ‘fellowship or communion with Christ is entirely dependent upon our union with him,’² and Sedgwick emphasised the same

¹ Henry Scougal, *The Life of God in the Soul of Man* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, repr. 2012), p.37.

² A.W. Pink, *Spiritual Union and Communion* (Lafayette, IN: Sovereign Grace Publishers, repr.

point:

Our union with Christ draws in with it our union with God, so that we and God himself are no longer enemies by way of difference, nor strangers by way of distance, but we are made nigh by Christ, not only nigh *in a way of pacification*, by removal of enmity (God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself), but which is more, we are by Christ made nigh to God *in a way of relation*, so that he is now become our God. As by reason of this union Christ is not ashamed to call us brethren (Heb. 2:11), so God is not ashamed to be called our God (Heb. 11:16).³

What is being described here by these two writers, separated by three hundred years of history but united in their love for God and His truth, is the vital connection that exists between union with Christ and the covenant of grace. According to the covenant formula there is a people who become ‘God’s people,’ but that relationship will be true of them only insofar as they are united by faith to Christ, or as the inspired apostle puts it, as they are ‘*in Christ*.’ It is only union with Christ that makes possible the covenant bond with God. Robert Letham sums it up perfectly when he says, ‘it is in union with [Christ] that [God] is our God and we are his people.’⁴

Furthermore, the covenant broken in Eden was a covenant of friendship with God as a trinity of persons, a friendship with Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Now the fellowship that is restored by our union with Christ is that very same fellowship with the

triune Godhead, only now it is elevated far above anything that our first parents knew, or ever could have known outside of Christ. To quote Sedgwick again,

Beloved, this is a truth, that you never have union with one Person of the Trinity alone. As the union of those persons is common and mutual between themselves (the Father hath union with the Son and the Holy Ghost, and the Son hath union with the Father and the Holy Ghost, and the Holy Ghost hath union with them both) so is our union with them.⁵

All the people of God have a fellowship and communion with every person of the Trinity; and so high is that fellowship that every person of the Trinity doth, as it were, take up his mansion, and make his abode and dwelling in them. They have a fellowship with every person of the Trinity (I John 1:3; Phil. 2:1); every person of the Trinity dwells and abides in them (John 14:23; 14:16; 2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 3:17; Rom. 8:11).⁶

Having shown from Scripture that this union is a union with each of the three persons of the Godhead, Sedgwick’s heart bursts open wide with exclamation, and who can blame him: ‘O Christians! these are glorious things indeed, who would not strive after union with Christ, which brings such an union with it? And who cannot but rejoice

5 Obadiah Sedgwick, *The Bowels of Tender Mercy*, p.208.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 587. While John Owen, in his work *Communion with God*, does not make direct reference to God’s covenant, the whole book may be regarded as a beautiful text-book on the believer’s covenant life as he finds communion with each of the three persons of the Godhead—Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

2002), p.9–10.

3 Obadiah Sedgwick, *The Bowels of Tender Mercy*, p.209.

4 Robert Letham, *Union with Christ*, p.37.

and triumph in Christ by union with whom he is thus united to the whole Trinity?' The covenant of grace is a gloriously Trinitarian covenant and whenever Obadiah Sedgwick touches on this subject he cannot contain himself. At another point he writes,

O happy soul, who art made such a temple wherein God the Father and God the Son and God the Holy Ghost dwells! What canst thou want? What dost thou enjoy? How great is thy excellency? How perfect is thy beauty? How full is thy glory.⁷

Surely the inspired words of the psalmist cannot have been far from the old Puritan's mind: 'Happy is that people, whose God is the LORD' (Psalm 144:15). Do we know what it is to enter into that pure joy, that unadulterated happiness? Is it part of our experience?

Just as there cannot be communion with Christ without union with him, so neither can there be union with Christ without communion. In other words, the communion that flows from union is a communion that is known. How true is that of us, I wonder? How close is our walk with God? We have been called by God 'unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord' (1 Corinthians 1:9), but what is our experience of that fellowship? What do we know on a daily basis of heart-felt devotion and service to Christ, of close communion with him and of the sweet joy that that communion brings? Or to put it another way, what is our experience of the covenant? After all, to live and walk *with* the Lord is to live and walk *in* His covenant. The apostle John wrote, 'truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full' (1 John 1:3,4).

⁷ *Ibid.*, p.69.

Do we find the fullness of joy in our fellowship with God and his Son, Jesus Christ? Or are we taken up with the fading joys of this world?

We said earlier that the word 'mine' is a distinctly covenantal word, and the same can be said of 'with.' Many times in the Old Testament we are told that the Lord was *with* a certain individual. Examples include Joseph (Genesis 39:2,3,21,23); Joshua (Joshua 6:27); Judah (Judges 1:19); Samuel (1 Samuel 3:19); David (1 Samuel 18:12,14,28); and Jehoshaphat (2 Chronicles 17:3). In each case, faithfulness to God is reciprocated with the Divine presence, favour and blessing.

When we walk with the Lord,
In the light of His Word,
What a glory He sheds on our way!
When we do His good will,
He abides with us still,
And with all who will trust and obey!⁸

In our personal devotions, in our meditation on the Scriptures and in heartfelt prayer before the throne of grace we discover this covenant communion and fellowship with our God at its most intimate. God bids us come to seek his face and our heart's response should be that of the Psalmist: 'When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek' (Psalm 27:8). At such times we are overwhelmed by the incomparable privilege that is ours as unworthy, undeserving sinners to come into the presence of the all-holy triune God by way of Jesus Christ, and to hear His voice speaking to us in the Scriptures with words of everlasting love and kindness. There in the closet he shares with us his secret (Psalm 25:14) and assures us of his abiding presence and keeping power, with certain promises of everlasting righteousness and heavenly joy.

⁸ Hymn by John Henry Sammis (1846–1919).

Only by the mercy and grace of our God may such a rich provision be ours.

In our private prayers we seek the face of God and we find him. We approach him through Christ in reverent adoration and bring to him our humble petitions. He delights to hear the cries of our hearts as we pour out before him our cares and our burdens, expressing our total dependence upon him and sharing with him our own innermost secrets and earnest desires. His ear is ever open to our prayers. David tells us of his own experience: 'I cried unto God with my voice, even unto God with my voice; and he gave ear unto me' (Psalm 77:1).

But we can go further because prayer is so much more than bringing to God our needs, or even our thanks. In essence it is covenant communion with God, and what blessed communion that is!

Whatsoever privileges belong to the friends of God, they do belong unto you ... Friends, as friends, have free access, courteous welcome and entertainment, liberty of speaking, familiarity of converse, delightful communion, confident imparting and openings of their hearts one to another, cheerful counsel, and helps of one another; these in a spiritual way do you enjoy with your God, and from your God, who because you are the people of God, are therefore the friends of God.⁹

To pray is to engage in a private conversation with God our Friend, and what a delight that is to our souls! It is the greatest privilege we have on earth and it should be our chief joy. But what a slight it is to him and his gracious covenant when sinfully we neglect this holy privilege and attempt to go through life with little prayer and only a cursory

acknowledgement of his goodness and grace to our hearts. Do we not yearn for and look forward to time spent with our eternal Friend who has given his Son for our salvation? Do we not yearn with David not just to make occasional visits to God's tabernacle but to dwell in it, to take up our residence in it like the sparrows (Psalm 27:4; Psalm 84)? What kind of friend are we to him when we choose the friendship of this world above the companionship of the Friend of sinners? Faith has been given to us not only to admit us into the covenant but also 'for participation in all the good of the covenant.'¹⁰ And what greater good is there than to participate in fellowship with the God of the covenant:

In sweet communion, Lord, with thee
I constantly abide;
My hand Thou holdest in Thine own
To keep me near Thy side.

Thy counsel through my earthly way
Shall guide me and control,
And then to glory afterward
Thou wilt receive my soul.

Whom have I, Lord, in heaven but Thee,
To whom my thoughts aspire?
And, having Thee, on earth is nought
That I can yet desire.

Though flesh and heart should faint and fail,
The Lord will ever be
The strength and portion of my heart,
My God eternally.

To live apart from God is death,
'Tis good His face to seek;
My refuge is the living God,
His praise I long to speak.¹¹

9 Obadiah Sedgwick, *The Bowels of Tender Mercy*, p.83.

10 *Ibid*, p.216.

11 *The Psalter*, No. 203, (Grand Rapids, MI: William

But as I have mentioned already it is in the *corporate* worship of God's people that the covenant of grace finds its highest expression and comes to life, if I may put it like that, as at no other time. Some professing Christians claim to feel closer to God when at home alone or to be more able to worship him on a walk in the countryside than in a gathering for corporate worship. Certainly, one would not deny that communion with God can be found in the privacy of our own bedroom or in any other environment, for God is omnipresent and we are called to private devotion, but that is not all that we are called to do. We are called also to worship him *together* in corporate worship and that is a higher privilege still, not to mention an even greater blessing to our souls as with one heart and one voice we worship God with one another 'in the beauty of holiness' (Psalm 29:2) and 'in spirit and in truth' (John 4:24).

The children of Israel were to go together to God's 'habitation,' that is to the typical tabernacle, and take with them their burnt offerings, sacrifices, tithes, heave offerings, vows and freewill offerings (Deuteronomy 12:4–7). It brought gladness to David's heart to hear the people say, 'Let *us* go into the house of the LORD' (Psalm 122:1).

In these new covenant times the tabernacle and the temple find their fulfilment in the local church, which is described by New Testament writers as 'an holy temple in the Lord' and 'an habitation of God through the Spirit' (Ephesians 2:21–22; cf. 1 Corinthians 3:16–17; 2 Corinthians 6:16). There, together as a company of God's covenant people in union with Christ our Lord, we go to meet and commune with our God in worship that gladdens his heart and refreshes our

souls. There God meets with his people upon whom he has eternally set his love and who are united in this one thing: they are bonded to him in his holy covenant. They have been redeemed, delivered from the bondage of this world and brought into fellowship with him and with one another. Here now in the place of corporate worship God speaks to them in the public reading of the Scriptures, in the preaching of the gospel and in the pronouncement of his loving benediction. Here too they respond to him in corporate confession, supplication and thanksgiving, and in the singing of his praises in worship. Their prayers and their praises ascend to him in concert as one voice—the voice of his covenant people. True worship is covenantal.

It is little wonder that the people of God are expressly forbidden to forsake the assembling of themselves together. It is a privilege that the apostle traces back to the typical worship of the old covenant in the tabernacle and temple but which is now elevated to something so much higher. We now have 'boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus' and we have 'an high priest over the house of God.' We are not to go off to our own individual little corners.¹² Rather 'Let us draw near ... let us hold fast ... let us consider ... Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is' (Hebrews 10:19–25). In so doing we give clear and public expression to God's holy covenant, as well as experiencing on earth a rich foretaste of heaven where 'the tabernacle of God shall be with men' (Revelation 21:3).

Of course, in heaven there will be no temple (Revelation 21:22), there will be no special place to which we must go for the

¹² The Dutch have a saying '*met een boekje in een hoekje*' [with a little book in a little corner], apparently in critical reference to the monasticism of Thomas à Kempis.

B. Eerdmans, (repr. 1984), p.171. The words are based on Psalm 73:23–28.

worship of God. Then simply being in the New Jerusalem will be to be with God. The whole city will be his dwelling place, his

tabernacle, his temple and the anticipation of that glorious consummation should thrill our souls.

TO BE CONCLUDED

THE IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES OF DECISIONS: HUMAN AND DIVINE AUTHORITY

by WILLIAM TIMOTHY FOLEY

LET us try and explain what was going on in the background of Christ's encounter with the religious leaders of his day, as he was walking in the Temple, in Jerusalem. They questioned Jesus' authority, arguing among themselves! This is outlined in one incident that is recorded in Mark's Gospel, Chapter 11:27–33. (Mark's Gospel is the shortest of the four Gospels in the New Testament, yet of Christ's 37 miracles, in the Gospels, the majority are recorded by Mark.)

Note the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders, challenged Jesus' authority to teach in the Temple. Jesus did not ask for nor require leave to teach from the authorities. It was his Father's house, and it was a place of prayer, teaching and worship. As a prophet himself he freely could teach in the Temple.

It was, in another sense, reasonable to ask Jesus a question, as these leaders were responsible for the Temple in terms of its operations, organisation, management and administration. Their motive or decision is seriously in question, however, despite agreeing among themselves and arguing

about the aspect of Christ's authority.

The leaders said to Christ, 'By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority to do these things?' (Mark 11:28).

These leaders had their own agenda. They were not interested in the truth, or in submission to Jesus Christ. They viewed Jesus as a subversive, and throughout Christ's ministry they sought to entrap him in his words. The leaders of the temple asked two questions, within one statement, which showed they were afraid of Christ undermining their authority. But, more than that, if Christ answered their questions, as they schemed, they would have accused him of blasphemy or something that would assist in building up their dossier, or book of evidence, to condemn him to death. They were hypocritical and full of double standards, seeking to control the situation to their advantage. They were spiritually blind!

Jesus said: 'The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men? answer me. And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we

shall say, From heaven; he will say, Why then did ye not believe him? But if we shall say, Of men; they feared the people: for all men counted John, that he was a prophet indeed. And they answered and said unto Jesus, We cannot tell. And Jesus answering saith unto them, Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things' (Mark 11:30–33).

This question by Christ of the leaders illustrates the complexity in situations we find ourselves in, in life, or in encounters with people, sometimes.

Twice Christ said, 'Answer me' to the one question. See Mark 11:28–29.

'And Jesus answered and said unto them, I will also ask of you one question, and answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men? answer me.'

The respondents were given two choices by Christ, and they reasoned very carefully of the consequences of their answer. They were caught with their own reasonings, and they did not know which decision to make. They were in a type of 'religious' or theological situation, in their own minds.

If the leaders agreed the baptism of John was from heaven, that would result in a difficult situation throughout Israel. Why, as leaders, they were denying the ministry of John the Baptist and so forth? They were caught in the consequences of one situation. For John the Baptist was the forerunner of Christ—and Christ was standing before them, responding to a question from them; and, this in turn, generated another question. They were reasoning in their conscience, in their fallen will, of the implications, and consequences.

If the leaders replied, to Christ, that the baptism of John was from men, then they were afraid of the seemingly grave consequences by men—they might have been

attacked, so they feared! The leaders of the people correctly reasoned out the implications and consequences of their decision. To paraphrase: why did we not believe John the Baptist? His ministry lasted two years and we witnessed it! All the ordinary people of Jesus day believed that John the Baptist was from God!

The leaders of the people tried to be clever with their answer, but Christ was infinitely more intelligent than them; and, therefore, Christ wouldn't tell them, for he knew exactly their thoughts, as he is both God and man, and he knows all our secret thoughts.

This overall situation illustrates an important issue.

Sometimes we do not know how to answer a question, as we are caught in a situation—maybe we do not know how to think wisely or reply to a letter, or a family situation, etc., in life.

Life, in whatever profession, or career or family situation, is full of these aspects; aspects that require us to make difficult decisions. And sometimes no decision is a decision in itself, and it can have major implications and consequences.

This actual encounter with Christ posed a situation or a dilemma for the leaders that revealed the 'true state of their heart'—toward spiritual things, and the person of Christ.

Being asked a question, and pretending not to know the answer, when in fact they knew, is an avoidance technique that is used frequently by politicians, leaders, and church ministers, and family members. It is a tactical device used by all society, in dialogue. Answering a question with asking another question is a valid technique, for clarification!

The issue that will catch these religious leaders is: when they appear at the Final

Judgment, they will be asked questions by our Lord, and the penetrating eyes of the Lord, will immediately strike fear and terror into their hearts. They will be exposed!

Unfortunately, in their lifetime, they did not work out the situation of eternity, or implications or consequences of their decisions or actions, or pay heed to their soul's future, and the implications or consequences of their rejection of Christ, in this life.

A fearful eternity awaits for all those who refuse to think of their stupid unbelief and inexcusable approach: they foolishly reason—maybe there is a God, a heaven, a hell and so forth? Anyway, if God exists, they reason, he is all love, not a God of wrath, and he won't be uncharitable, and send anyone to hell. Their approach is wrong, and unscriptural, as they will discover to their eternal peril.

Sinners have two choices: the broad road that leads to destruction or the narrow road that leads to life. The vast majority of the population see more favourable terms and rewards now in following the broad road to destruction. This is a foolish policy! Sin is played down, and righteousness is marginalised, in our postmodern society, which has rejected truth and Christ. Pluralism and no absolutes reigns! People do not believe in a Creator, a Judge and Sustainer of the Universe. Humans have created their own identity and their own gods, following their own truth.

Live today in sin, and die tomorrow without a belief in the final judgment, is the policy of the modern mind. The Bible has the answers from God—but, although it is the best seller, yet, for the most part, it is not even read or believed or obeyed.

The majority of academics reject the Bible and undermine the message of the Bible, propounding evolutionary theory; and, though evolution is a theory, yet it is

widely believed, as a fact, because people do not want to face up to the implications and consequences of the existence of God, and the authority and truth of Christ, being the Eternal Son of God, the Only Saviour, and the Judge of humanity.

Some people are trying to sit on the fence, in regards to whether they should follow Christ, or go their own way. They prefer the pleasures of sin, rather than the pursuit of immortality, and the joys of the knowledge of Christ.

We are responsible to 'answer to the Christ of God'. He is the Lord and Saviour of sinners. God is sovereign in all his authority and actions, in dealing with humans, and God is not obliged to fulfil the terms and conditions set by any human being. Christ was not obliged to answer these crafty leaders. He saw right through their questions. But, Christ did indicate he would answer the religious leaders, if they answered his question.

We know that Christ has all authority committed to him, and all his works, his miracles, his death, his resurrection, his ascension, his session in glory, his coming again, is of the Father.

Jesus clearly was given this authority by the Father. See John 17:2, 'As thou [Father] hast given him [Christ] power over all flesh, that he [Christ] should give eternal life to as many as thou [Father] hast given him [Christ].'

Jesus can give one eternal life, he said so, in his great high priestly prayer, in John 17.

And again, see Matthew 28:18, Jesus claimed this power or authority, 'All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.'

We know the answer that we should give all humanity, in our lifetime, in our preaching and in our witnessing. Surrender to Christ. Follow Christ. Obey Christ. Love

Christ, for one day, all of humanity will encounter Christ, in judgement, for God's justice requires it.

But, Christian believers have the imputed righteousness of Christ, credited to their account, because Christ paid the penalty of their sins, transgressions, and iniquities, on the Cross. Christ took our guilt and all our wickedness, in his own body on the tree, and shed his blood for his people.

Thank God for the decision to save us by his blood. It was love that took Christ to Calvary. We are naturally in our faculties given over to the corruption of sin, and under the wrath of God. Our decisions are faulty, because of our Adamic nature, but God's decisions are always perfect.

What a great Saviour! He completed his work, perfectly, on Calvary. We cannot help ourselves. We are helpless, vile and guilty before a Holy God. But Calvary was God's perfect decision for our salvation!

Imagine the implications and consequences of Christ not suffering on our behalf on Calvary? We could not stand forgiven or be forgiven for our dreadful sins by a Holy God.

Imagine, too, the implications and consequences, for us, if Christ made the decision not to go to Calvary, especially for his elect people? There would be a major breach of covenant in the Trinity. We would be all bound for hell, and permanently under the wrath of Almighty God, suffering the pains of everlasting torment.

What a glorious redemption that Christ purchased for his elect people!

Thank God for Christ's fulfilment of the eternal decree of the Father by the power of the Holy Spirit. O what joy to think that God made the final and irrevocable decision, and fully carried out the decision, to the full accomplishment of our so great salvation, in Christ. We are safe in the arms of Jesus, forever!

The elect are justified by God and have the assurance, the certainty and reconciliation, in Jesus alone, for God sees us, in Christ alone! No condemnation now! No separation now! To God be the glory, for his inscrutable and unassailable decision to save his people from their sins.

THE LORD, THE SHEPHERD OF HIS PEOPLE

by JAMES NORTH (LANDFORD WOOD)

'The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.' Psalm 23:1

THE Book of the Psalms is one of the most wonderful of the Books of the Bible. The Scriptures of Truth contains books which relate the history of the People of God both in the Old Testament and the New. There are

books of prophecy which both forthtell and foretell of the works of God, and there are books of poetry of which the Book of Psalms is one of the more prominent and which has been of great blessing to the people of God.

Among the Psalms there are many which are the particular favourites of many of the Lord's people. Some speak specifically of the Lord Jesus Christ—Psalm 22 speaks of his sufferings and the glory which followed; Psalm 45 speaks of the mystical union Christ has with his, and this psalm, Psalm 23 speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ in his care for his people.

I would like, with the Lord's help to consider the opening verse of this psalm. But first, let us quickly consider the outline of the whole of this psalm. It is *multitum in parvo*.

Verse 1. 'The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.' It speaks of the CONDITION of the child of God. Because the Lord is his Shepherd, he wants for nothing.

Verse 2. 'He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.' It speaks of the COMFORT of the child of God. Because the Lord is his Shepherd he has comfort in his heart and soul so much so he is able to lie down in peace.

Verse 3. 'He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.' Here is the contentment of the child of God. Because the Lord is his Shepherd he is content no matter what happens because Christ restores, and leads his people.

Verse 4. 'Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.' Here is the CONSOLATION of the child of God. Because the Lord is his Shepherd, he has the consolation that no matter how dark the way is that he is walking, even though it be the valley of the valley of the shadow of death, he has the presence of the Lord God with him and he receives the comfort of the Shepherd's instruments, the rod and staff.

Verse 5. 'Thou preparest a table before

me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.' This verse speaks of the COMMUNION and union the child of God has with his Shepherd. Because he has spiritual communion and union with the Lord Jesus Christ he has sweet fellowship in his presence at his table which has been prepared from the foundation of the world for all his flock/church.

Verse 6. 'Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.' This speaks of the CONFIDENCE of the child of God. No 'ifs', 'maybes', or 'peradventures'. It is certain that the child of God will dwell in the House of the Lord forever because the Shepherd laid down his life for the flock.

It is, however on the first verse of this psalm that I would like to pen a few thoughts, looking at each facet, each clause of the verse. There are three things to consider in this verse:

1. THE SOVEREIGN
2. THE SHEPHERD
3. THE SUPPLIER AND THE SUPPLY

1. THE SOVEREIGN

We are told that it is the LORD who is the Shepherd; 'The LORD is my shepherd.' The Psalmist, the King of Israel is here pointing to greater Sovereign than himself. We notice in the first place that David writing under the direct inspiration of the Spirit of God notes that the Name of the LORD as it appears in our version of Holy Scripture given in capital letter which signifies two things (a) The Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, and (b) the Covenant God of Israel and the Church of God. So David is here saying that the Sovereign is the Triune God, Father Son and Holy Ghost each person working in unison in the Holy Trinity, each one is co-equal

and co-eternal. The Father did not exist as Almighty God and create the other persons of the Holy Trinity. If the Father had created the other persons they we would not have the Holy Trinity as the Godhead, but we would have three gods in the godhead. This idea, latched on to by non-Trinitarian sects and groups is completely contrary to the teaching of the Word of God. 'Hear, O Israel; The LORD our God is one LORD' (Mk. 12:29). And the second use of capital letters in the name of LORD indicates that David is referring to the Covenant God of Israel. When he was to come to his death-bed, David was to utter his refinance upon that same Covenant God: 'Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow' (2 Sam. 23:5). It is a mercy that we are saved in that same covenant of grace for, as Paul says, 'Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham' (Gal. 3:7). In the covenant of grace our God is the

Sovereign Rule of the skies
Ever faithful ever wise

and the child of God responds:
All my times are in Thy hands
All events at His command.

What a mercy it is to be brought under the teaching of the Spirit of God to flee from self to be under this Sovereign's watchful eye and care. So then what can we can we consider about this Sovereign? There are some sovereigns who are nothing but the puppet monarch of another state. There are and have been those sovereigns who are not capable of ruling their nation, but our Sovereign God both reigns and rules in the armies of heaven 'and none can stay his hand, or say unto him,

What doest thou?' (Dan. 4:35). What is it, then, that makes this Sovereign more than other sovereigns? Such is the immensity of our God that we can but scratch the surface.

1. The first thing to notice is that our Sovereign God is MERCIFUL.

'And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation' (Ex. 34:6,7). There is within the list of the attributes of Almighty God the property of Mercy. The gods of this world, the pagan gods, the ancient gods know nothing of mercy. They are like the horseleach's daughter which cries 'give, give' (Prov. 30:15). But with our God there is mercy. The law has no mercy; it makes its demands and cannot show mercy. But there is mercy with the Lord.

Adam and Eve disobeyed the command of God whilst in the Garden of Eden. The curse was 'in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die' or 'dying thou shalt die' (Gen. 2:17). They died spiritually and eventually physically. Was there any hope for them? O yes! In the mercy of God. He clothed them with animal skins; not just to cover their nakedness, but those animals also to provide an atonement for sin. They had to give their lives in order that Adam and Eve should be clothed. A blood sacrifice was made, and their sins were covered. This happening took place in the Garden of Eden as the first pre-figuring of the atonement made by the Lord Jesus Christ. It was a display of the mercy of God.

Psalm 136 is a constant reminder that the mercy of God endures for ever. In each of its verses we are reminded by the words, 'For his mercy endureth for ever.' God, the Lord is consistent at all times for he is merciful. And where is that mercy to be found?

See where it shines in Jesus face,
The brightest image of His grace.
God in the person of his Son,
Has all his mightiest works outdone.

2. We notice, secondly, that the LORD is a PARDONING God

'Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea' (Micah 7:18, 19).

What other Lord, what other Shepherd,
What other God is like unto the Triune God?
Who is a pard'ning God like Thee
Or who has grace so rich and free?

He is a God of love who loves his people. He has loved them with an everlasting love. He will continue to love them into the eternity which is before us. Even the god of Rome doesn't believe in a pardoning god. The doctrine of the church of Rome tells its devotees that they must do penance after they have sought the forgiveness of sin, and after death they still have to be cleansed in the fires of purgatory. There is no final pardon for the poor Romanist. But what a mercy that 'there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared' (Ps. 130:4).

3. In the third place, we notice that the LORD is a LONGSUFFERING God.

'And the LORD passed by before him, and

proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth' (Ex. 34:6).

Moses had been up the mount to receive the law of God but whilst he was up in the mount, the children of Israel committed gross idolatry by worshiping the golden calf. The tablets of the law written by the finger of God were broken and the idolater were punished. Moses returned up the of the mountain where he hewed another two tablets of stone upon which the Lord rewrote the law (Ex. 34:1). The Lord told Moses that he would no longer lead the children of Israel into the promised land and that he would make a great nation from the descendants of Moses but he prayed that the Lord would continue his blessing and presence upon his original covenant people. All through the pilgrimage from Egypt to the Promised land, the children of Israel were a gainsaying and rebellious people. All down their history they were a rebellious people, and yet the Lord was longsuffering to his people. It is no less the same with his people of God today. They are no less rebellious and self-willed, but he deals with them as a loving Father and is longsuffering in his dealings with them. What a mercy! We commit sin continually and the Lord suffers long with our own self-will and sinfulness; our fallen nature. He chastens them and brings the back to himself; and this happens not just once, but continually because the Lord loves his people.

Whilst we could continue considering the various attributes of our LORD, there is bit one more I would like us to consider:

4. We finally notice that the LORD is an UNCHANGING God

'For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed' (Mal. 3:6)

'Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to

day, and for ever' (Heb. 13:8)

In a changing world what a mercy it is to have One who is unchanging. The LORD the Shepherd is one who is not subject to the variable passions of human nature. No! He is beyond that. His very nature as Almighty God means that he cannot change. The Church of Rome makes its boast of always being the same, and takes to itself the motto 'Semper Eadem' yet there have been

numerous changes in its doctrine and outlook. Queen Elizabeth I also took that same motto, but she was subject to the ravages of time and had to face the great change, as we all must. None of us is without change. But Almighty God being God knows no change whatsoever. So when the LORD says by Jeremiah that his love is an everlasting love (Jer. 31:3), we know it will continue to all his people throughout all ages.

TO BE CONTINUED

FORMER DAYS

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

250 years ago: May & June 1772

The opening entry in the *Magazine* for May is On Reprobation. This is defined as 'God's passing by men, leaving them unelected. Neither unbelief, nor any other sin, but the sovereign will of God, is the cause of this.' Much Scripture is referred to in support of the various strands of the writer's argument. Possible objections are dealt with, such as would be expected from Arminians, Socinians and others of that ilk.

Next is a Meditation upon Christ being made of God to us sanctification. Among the matters covered is the consequence of Christ being made under the law (Gal. 4:4).

God made his Son in our own nature, under the law, the immutable standard of holiness in heart or life. He exacted of him the whole requirements thereof, as it is a broken covenant; and held him under it, till by enduring its whole penalty, and fulfilling its precepts, he had magnified it and made it honourable. This law was in his heart; he took delight

to do thy will, O God! It became him to fulfil all righteousness; and to suffer ere he entered into glory. Thrice noble and efficacious foundation of true holiness in us! (1) Hereby the curse of the law, which is the strength of sin, which, as with almighty force, consigns over the subjected transgressor to spiritual death in trespasses and sins; to the dominion of sin, as a leading part of just punishment. Thus the gulf fixed between God and us is rendered passable. Being redeemed from the curse, dead to the law by the body of Christ, sin cannot have dominion over us; but being made free from the law of sin and death, we bring forth fruit unto God. (2) Hereby the legal favour of God was procured, his real favour vented, and established upon a legal footing. God being well pleased for his righteousness sake, which magnified the law and made it honourable, we are reconciled unto God by his death, that we may be saved by his life; though

once we were without God, and without hope, and far off, we are brought nigh by his blood, that our enmity may be slain. God reconciling the world to himself, must be the Lord our God that sanctifieth us. Being our Friend, our God of peace, he must rid us of sin, our principal plague, and bestow upon us holiness, our chief happiness; must sanctify us wholly, soul, body and spirit. Being our reconciled God of peace, his wisdom must devise how to keep and deliver us from temptation; his power must be perfected in our weakness; must subdue our iniquities and work in us to will and to do of his good pleasure; his holiness must make us in its own image, its own likeness; his justice must bestow upon us the spiritual life purchased for us by Christ our surety: his goodness must do good; make all things in us very good, must supply all our wants; his truth must fulfil every exceeding great and precious promise, whereby we are made partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. If this reconciled God of peace be our Father, we must be begotten again into a conformity with him, and be made to perfect holiness in his fear. If he is our Husband, he must adorn us for the eternal feast. If he is our Portion, he must fill all things. If he is our Master, he must command us of his household to walk in the way of the Lord; he must provide for, and rule well his family. If he is our Physician, he must heal our diseases; see our froward ways and heal them. (3) Hereby enough of communicable grace was purchased; redemption from all iniquity; zeal of good works; redemption from a vain conversation; cleansing till one become

without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; possession of life, and that more abundantly; sanctification of the people. (4) Hereby the broken law which gendereth to bondage, the galling yoke, which neither we nor our fathers could bear, is deprived of all its wrathful sanction, all the fearful looking for of fiery indignation; and nothing is left for those under the law to Christ, but kind chastisements for their profit, to make them partakers of God's holiness. It is transformed into a perfect law of liberty, obedience to which founds no proper title to eternal happiness. It saith not, The man that doth these things shall live in them; but being delivered out of the hands of your enemies, serve him in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of your life. Having these promises, dearly beloved, cleanse yourselves from all filthiness of soul and spirit. Having these hopes of the heavenly kingdom, as heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, purify yourselves as God is pure. Since he is the Lord your God, have no other gods before him, &c. Walk in Jove, as Christ hath loved you. Be perfect, as your Father, who is in heaven is perfect.. In this new form, it doth not revive sin, nor is the strength of it; but inlaid in the promise, and impressed on the heart, it enstamps holiness on the soul, and creates purity and truth in the inward part. (5) In Jesus' fulfilment of the law, is exhibited the most suitable, the most perfect and engaging pattern of universal holiness. He therein left us an example, that we should walk in his steps; that we might learn of him and follow him. How honourable! being in the form of God, he took upon him the form of a servant, and was obedient unto death.

How perfect! He did always the things that pleased his Father. How suitable! He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. How engaging! We love him because he first loved us! We walk in love, as Christ hath loved us, and given himself for us. It is at once the pattern of our Brother, our Husband, our Saviour, and our God. (6) In his fulfilment of the law, the motives of holiness are rendered infinitely numerous; plain, and determining; the inexpressible importance of holiness is marked in the service, the death of God: the purity and authority of the moral law is manifested in his magnifying and making it honourable. In his being made sin for us, the horrid nature of sin, as the murder of a God of infinite grace, the murder of a God in our nature, is displayed more than is done in either law, hell, or human heart. How constraining to gratitude is the giving, the dying love of God! In it we have strength and reward secured: We shall be strengthened in the Lord, and walk up and down in his name. 'Our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.'

A contributor provides thoughts on 1 John 3:10, on the inward witness to the ground and reality of faith. A letter on the troubles and afflictions of life comes next, then the article on the full assurance of faith is continued from the previous issue. The account of the triumphant death of John C. Scadens (d. July 25, 1698) is offered in a translation from the original German. Reflections on 1 Peter 2:7 are followed by an extract from the Journal of John Wesley. It was sent in to answer a query, 'May we not say of Mr Wesley, As it was in the beginning, so it is now? As he was in the year 1738, is he

not the same in the year 1772?' The lack of a date for the Journal entry reduces the value of the quotation, though not necessarily permanently.

Then we have a letter. 'Several persons with whom I am connected have lately drunk into that dreadful heresy, That the law is totally abolished with respect to believers; so that they are not to attend to it even as a rule of life: Which position is certainly very dangerous. If any of your ingenious correspondents would favour us with their thoughts on the subject in answer to the under-written query, I trust it might be useful for reclaiming some who have been led astray by the error of the wicked, and preventing others from falling into the same dreadful delusion. The query is 'In what sense may the moral law be said to be abolished?'

The issue ends with several pages of poems.

For **June** we are treated to an address on the Gospel act of grace for the relief of insolvent debtors. It is a most uplifting piece. Next comes the continuation of Chapter 3 of the Ecclesiastical History, dealing with Enemies and Persecutors. The first part relates the post-New Testament history of the Jews, but the main part records the sufferings of the Christians in various places and at various times. It will be continued.

A lengthy section now begins, in which a previously unpublished letter from James Hervey is reproduced in full, in relation to a question. Did the Jewish believer of old know that Jesus Christ would be their better sacrifice, or only that he would offer the better sacrifice? Hervey had been persuaded that they did know that Christ would be the better sacrifice, but it would appear that he came to reject this in favour of the view that they expected him only to offer the better.

The modesty, Calvinism and learning of

Dr Robert Leighton are mentioned in connection with the posthumous publication of his works. James 4:8 is the subject of the next article. Another letter to a friend in troubles and afflictions is followed by poetry. The issue continues with letters, the first from Paris recording the royal response to insurrection (this would of course lead to the French Revolution). The remainder take topical news reports of all manner of wrong-doing, and occasionally of more uplifting matter, to draw the reader's attention to the corruption of the human condition and to our hope in Christ. The concluding material includes announcements of recent book publications with recommendations, and two sections with lists of names and addresses. Since the second of these is headed 'Days appointed for making dividends' it seems that the first—'B—k R—ts'— might be a list of financial contributors ('Bank receipts'). If any reader can shed light, please get in touch!

200 years ago: May & June 1822

The **May** issue begins with thoughts on the authenticity of the Bible, an evergreen subject. A contributor seeks to answer an earlier query on the distinction between regeneration and faith. 'Regeneration is a substance, and faith is a production, but separate and distinct from each other, although the one cannot exist without the other'. This rather compact statement is explained over several pages.

An address to a meeting is reprinted, in which the author, having shown on a previous occasion that the false religion prior to the Flood was Deism, now endeavours to show that it became Polytheism in Egypt, and from there spread across the world. The effects of this are given in some detail. An earlier article on God's knowledge of his

people in the wilderness is continued. The subject of God punishing sins in believers is taken up once more. A previous contributor had asserted that Ananias and Sapphira were believers, and were punished for a sin, thus proving that God does indeed punish sin in believers. The current contributor shows very reasonably from the context that, whatever else Ananias and Sapphira may have been, they were not believers, and thus are of no help in this matter. The writer then goes on to argue that God does not punish sin in his children, having already done so for us in Christ. We are then treated to a few thoughts on 2 Corinthians 12:6.

The Theological Review begins with a lengthy review of a book about the travels of its learned author to Palestine. In particular, he had visited the region east of Jordan, including two towns of Decapolis. Such works are of abiding interest since they date from a time before much of the present conflict and development. The next review is of a work that purports to teach the blessedness of gradually allowing Christian principles into the understanding and life. The reviewer expresses his deep disappointment in the work, which is an effectual denial of the necessity and blessing of the new birth. The same author is also reviewed in a work in defence of the doctrine of the Trinity against Unitarians and Socinians. The reviewer points out that there are other serious errors in this respect, which the author fails to treat. Three more works are reviews far more briefly, two positively and one dismissively.

The first entry for **June** takes up much the same subject as it did in the previous month. It concerns itself with the word of God. 'If we are ignorant of the Bible we are ignorant of God.' The piece is headed Spiritual Discernment, and its author aims to show that spiritual light and truth are to

be sought in Scripture alone. An intriguingly titled piece is headed 'The divine interference towards the saints in Christ Jesus.' This is presented as continuing something from the previous volume, but the indexing does not make it immediately clear which earlier piece is being continued. Questions from an earlier issue are answered. Another writer involved in the controversy over whether God punishes his people for their sins (or whether their present afflictions are to be understood differently) questions the claim that Ananias and Sapphira were believers. The offending contributor adds what he hopes will be his final word on the matter, pointing out God's judgment on David and his heirs, 2 Sam 12:10.

A writer provides summaries of two of his recent sermons, in which he attempted to show the biblical doctrine of election against Arminian errors. Another contributor outlines the fundamental differences between the operation of grace in the heart and a theoretical knowledge of the truth. The same writer includes another piece in which he replies to an earlier writer on whether believers can sin: he argues that we can, but that we cannot sin the sin unto death.

The section on Theological Reviews begins with a book trying to prove that the then-expected war between Russia and the Turks meant that the seventh vial of Revelation was about to be opened. The reviewer is unconvinced. A pamphlet from the pen of William Gadsby is reviewed with great approval and equal length, and a volume of letters to young Christians from Joseph Irons is recommended. In particular, his writing on the subject of baptism is quoted in full, because he seeks to offer counsel to people of differing and frequently dividing views on the subject, in a spirit of pastoral care.

100 years ago: May and June 1922

The sermon for the May issue takes Revelation 21:1 and speaks to the new heaven and the new earth, while seeking to avoid some of the arguments then taking place on the subject. The preacher shows what God teaches us about the first earth and heaven, and then what he teaches about the second. This is followed by an extract from John Berridge on 'It is not of him that willeth.' This is followed by Wayside Notes, which begins with a summary of the Protestant position regarding the inspiration and authority of Scripture. The writer then shows that the cancer of Higher Criticism has spread to missionary societies. Some are commended for recognising the problem and taking a stand against. The main societies (Church Missionary Society, London MS, Baptist MS, Wesleyan MS) do not take a stand, says the author. Attempts by some in CMS to publicly stand against Higher Criticism were rebuffed by her own supporters. If the missionary societies do not have confidence in the word of God, what are they going to preach to those people to whom they are sent? The same may be said of any church and ministry that takes the same low view.

Wellsprings is a sermon on Joshua 14:12–14, and is followed by notes on a sermon from Exodus 3:2–6. The skill of the craftsman who can repair something so that it appears to be as good as new is contrasted with the power of God to make us new creatures. The subject of darkness and light is returned to after the February issue. The Rev F. Harold Peacock supplies a sermon on three appearances of Christ from Hebrews 9:24–28. Another writer speaks to our losing all for Christ, from Philippians 3:7–8. A writer takes clouds as a subject from Scripture, with profit. Another notes the condition of those who gather much or little. A sermon on the necessity of redemption is followed

by a report of correspondence between the Lord's Day Observance Society and a bishop over whether Christians should play games (sport) on Sunday: the bishop sees no difficulty. Among the shorter pieces that end the issue is Protestant Points, on the Head of the Church: Christ, not the pope.

In **June**, the sermon is on Philippians 3:17, on being imitators of an apostle. The reviving power of the Holy Spirit, from Acts 1:8, and a sermon on Hebrews 3:6 & 14 are followed by the conclusion of a sermon on the Peace of God. Strength, song and salvation are shown to be divine blessings, Ps 118:14.

Thoughts on the Passover lead to another question, on hoping in the Lord, Ps 39:7. The sons of Korah are taken as examples of complainers becoming people of praise. The kindness of the Lord and his truth are set forth from 2 Samuel 2:5. Two obituaries, and a long extract from Dr Adolph Saphir on the Reformation, plus shorter items of correspondence, fill up the remainder of the month, and notice is given that the articles from earlier issues on the subject of dancing have been published separately. They have been much in demand from various quarters.

OBSERVATIONS ON 1 CORINTHIANS 15:28

by AUGUSTUS TOPLADY

'And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all'

THOSE words are of unspeakable importance. Much, very much indeed, depends on a right understanding of them. Here let it be observed,

1. That the Son of God, as such, is and must be God, or a person in the divine nature. 'Unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God...' (Heb 1:8)—'The Son of God was manifested;' is the same with 'God was manifested in the flesh;' (1 John 3:8, 1 Tim 3:16)—Certain it is, that the eternal Deity of the second person in the Trinity results necessarily and solely from his eternal Sonship, or from his having been everlastingly begotten of the Father in the same infinite and undivided essence.

2. The Son of God, as such, cannot possibly be inferior to the Father. There can be no difference, and consequently no inequality of nature, between them. Even among men, a son is as much a human being as his father: and, surely, the uncreated and eternally begotten Son of the Father Almighty is and must be as truly a divine being as the Father who begat him.

3. We are expressly assured that the throne of God the Son is for ever and ever (Heb 1:8). And that, even considering him, not in his divine and essential character, as Son of the Father, but viewing him in his human, economical, and assumed character, as man and Mediator, he shall reign over the

house of Jacob [or the elect Church of God] for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end: Isa 9:7, Luke 1:33.

4. It follows, from the above premises, that, when we read of a future period, in which the Son also himself shall be subject [*upotagesētai*, shall be subordinate, or shall act in subserviency] to the Father, it cannot be understood of him as man and Mediator: for, in those capacities he did from the first, and to this moment does, act ‘subjectively, subordinately, and subserviently,’ to the Father’s will and designs. John 4:30, and 6:38.

5. Consequently the future subordination or subserviency, spoken of in this text, must be some voluntary act of surrender and acknowledgment which (not the man Christ Jesus, but which) the co-eternal and co-eternal Son of God will make to the Father, when the whole number of the elect shall be gathered in.

6. What act of subserviency, or of acknowledgement and surrender, will the Son then make? The apostle tells us: ‘He shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even to the Father.’ What kingdom? Not his essential royalty, as God with God: for that is inseparable from each of the three divine

persons. Nor his presidency over the church as her Head and Mediator: for that relation is indissoluble, and he will ever shine as the first-born among many brethren. But I take the kingdom to consist of that innumerable company whose names were written in heaven; and which, when their numerical fulness is completed, the Son of God, who graciously consented to become the Son of man for their sakes, will present in one entire and glorified body to the Father. Thus God will then be all in all: ie. the Son will say to the Father, and to the Holy Spirit, ‘Our covenant-designs are now completely fulfilled. I undertook to redeem the elect, and redeem them I did. Thy predestination, O Sovereign Father of mercies, has now its full accomplishment. Thy gracious operations, likewise, O Spirit of holiness, have had their entire effect: who didst engage to renew, sanctify, and preserve the people of my Father’s choice, and of my redemption. Here they all stand, washed and clothed by me, and sealed and purified by thee. Not one of them is absent, and not one of our purposes has miscarried in a single instance. Grace reigns, through my righteousness, unto eternal life: and we, the triune God, are all in all!’—Amen. Amen. ¶

An explication of Romans 9:3

This seemingly difficult text is rendered perfectly easy and clear, 1. by inclosing part of it in a parenthesis; and, 2, by attending to the tense of the verb *nuxomēn*, mistakenly translated, I could wish.

I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart (for I myself, *nuxomēn*, did wish to be in a state of separation from Christ), on account of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh. That is to say, ‘I am deeply concerned for my unbelieving countrymen: and I the more pity and lament their enmity against Jesus, because I myself was, once, exactly in their situation; and know, by my own past experience, the bitterness and danger of their infidel state.’ Something like the speech of Dido, in Virgil: *Haud ignara mali, miseris succurrere disco.*

Augustus Toplady

BOOK REVIEW

‘Behold me, behold me’

John M. Brentnall

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‘This booklet about our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ consists of adapted selections from the writings of Christians. Each page contains a different aspect of his person and work, in the form of a text, a thought, a poem and a prayer.’

So wrote the compiler of this work, in the summer of 2021. He went to be with the Lord at the end of November that year.

The review copy of this booklet arrived with a letter from the author’s widow, informing us that he had been able to send this to the printers before he died. His family decided to proceed with the printing as a tribute to John, as now beholding him whom we are invited here to behold.

Attractively produced, readers who have purchased other recent titles by John Brentnall will know what to expect. Dividing the aspects of Christ’s person and work under fifteen headings, each page provides two, mostly three, short extracts from a variety of writers, that illustrate the point. This is not deep theology, but it holds Jesus Christ up on high, so that we may indeed behold him, worship him and glorify him.

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