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The Gospel Magazine

Charity • Christ all in all • Godly counsel for all

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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’.

Editor

The Rt Rev Edward J Malcolm
**1 Downshire Square,
Reading, Berkshire RG1 6NJ**
Telephone: 0118 9595131
edward.malcolm@btinternet.com
*Only matters to do with
articles and book reviews
should be sent to the Editor*

The Secretary

Mr Philip Lievesley
1 Chaplins, Kirby Cross
Frinton-on-Sea, CO13 0RU
philip.lievesley@sky.com
*Only subscriptions and
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EDITORIAL

READERS may or may not know that the Lambeth Conference has just drawn to a close. This is the once-a-decade (or thereabouts) gathering of the archbishops and bishops of the global Anglican communion, if those Anglican bodies are in communion with Canterbury. The Conference has no power to legislate, only to meet, discuss and propose. As some will know, the Conference has been marked by divisions over the acceptance or rejection of the scriptural lawfulness of homosexuality. As ever, the global South rejects, while the global North usually accepts.

At the same time we are enduring the media circus of the leadership contest in the Conservative Party. Among the lesser items of news emanating from this event has been a report about the merchandise being offered: tee-shirts, mugs, pens and so on, supporting one or other candidate.

What, one wonders, might have been on offer at Lambeth? Let me suggest the re-emergence of an old staple, the Classic Anglican Fudge.

This tempting morsel lists as its main ingredients, fear of the world and disregard for the authority of Scripture, with large amounts of compromise as the binding agent. It is guaranteed to please nobody, and every mouthful leaves a bitter aftertaste. It is manufactured verily rapidly, even on the hoof; and the packaging will not bear close scrutiny. And it can be yours for the low price of your integrity. Who could resist such an offer?

Prior to the meeting of Conference (ironically described as ‘one of the Instruments of Unity’), a statement was put out reiterating the 1998 Section I.10 – Human Sexuality. The original statement reads,

This Conference:

- commends to the Church the subsection report on human sexuality;
- in view of the teaching of Scripture, upholds faithfulness in marriage between a man and a woman in lifelong union, and believes that abstinence is right for those who are not called to marriage;

- recognises that there are among us persons who experience themselves as having a homosexual orientation. Many of these are members of the Church and are seeking the pastoral care, moral direction of the Church, and God's transforming power for the living of their lives and the ordering of relationships. We commit ourselves to listen to the experience of homosexual persons and we wish to assure them that they are loved by God and that all baptised, believing and faithful persons, regardless of sexual orientation, are full members of the Body of Christ;
- while rejecting homosexual practice as incompatible with Scripture, calls on all our people to minister pastorally and sensitively to all irrespective of sexual orientation and to condemn irrational fear of homosexuals, violence within marriage and any trivialisation and commercialisation of sex;
- cannot advise the legitimising or blessing of same sex unions nor ordaining those involved in same gender unions;
- requests the Primates and the ACC to establish a means of monitoring the work done on the subject of human sexuality in the Communion and to share statements and resources among us;
- notes the significance of the Kuala Lumpur Statement on Human Sexuality and the concerns expressed in resolutions IV.26, V.1, V.10, V.23 and V.35 on the authority of Scripture in matters of marriage and sexuality and asks the Primates and the ACC to include them in their monitoring process.

(*anglicancommunion.org*)

There were anguished cries in response to the republication of this statement. The cries are not altogether unjustified in that at least one bishop who was on the Committee that reissued it was completely unaware that this was going to happen. It seems to have been either a unilateral decision, or one that was badly handled.

The Conference chose instead to cheer the Archbishop of Canterbury when he declared that the original position, namely that homosexuality is incompatible with Scripture, stands, and that any province, Church or congregation that permits the blessing of homosexual unions will go undisciplined. In other words, homosexuality is wrong, but if you think otherwise, that is fine with us. Classic Anglican Fudge.

The affirmation of the 1998 I.10 Statement has been met with fury in some circles. The business of the Church is, we are told, to promote love, but the Statement does the opposite, say critics.

But is it the business of the Church to promote a carnal view of love? Is it not the business of the Church to bear witness to the truth as it is in Christ Jesus, to point sinners to the Saviour, and to nurture and support believers? Is it not the business of the Church to worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness, and to stand against the flood of iniquity that is all around us? But if the Church opens the floodgates, and seeks to set its own standard of holiness, what witness will it set before the world?

Our heavenly Father has his own witness. He has given us his word, which is settled forever in the heavens. He has put his Spirit within each of his children, bearing witness to our spirits that we are the sons of God. Let us hold fast the word and testimony, being satisfied with the old paths. Let us walk in them, seeking no other. ¶

CHARITY

A sermon by THOMAS MANTON on I Corinthians 13:4–8

I HAVE a long time had a desire to open the nature of this divine and heavenly grace of charity. I know not how the argument will relish with you, but my aim is rather to profit than to please. We are defective in our duties to God, the Lord knoweth; but what and if I show that we are as defective in our duties to man, wherein we think natural conscience is a sufficient guide to us. A little serious reflection upon this scripture will discover it. In the context observe,

1. The excellency and necessity of charity above all other gifts.
2. The nature and properties of it.

1. For the excellency and necessity of charity. Gifts are of several sorts, as on the same tree grow leaves, flowers, fruit. None *ad pompam*, for show, but all *ad usum*, for use. But in the gifts for use, some make us profitable, others acceptable. Though they have their use, yet they profit not to salvation. 'Though I speak with the tongue of men and angels, and have not charity, I am become as a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have no charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burnt, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.' A man may sacrifice a stout body to a stubborn mind, yet if it be not for God's glory, and to edify others, it availeth not.

2. The nature and properties of it, in the text; where the properties of this excellent grace of charity are reckoned up. 'Charity

suffereth long, and is kind, and envieth not, vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly,' etc.

In all these predications there is a metonymy, either of the subject or of the effect. Of the subject; charity doth thus, that is, the man endowed with this heavenly gift or grace. If of the effect, then the meaning is, that where this habit is impressed and rooted, it is the cause that these effects ensue; that a man is long-suffering, kind, etc. It is all one in which sense we expound the apostle, for all cometh to the same issue. This premised, let us next explain the several clauses.

1. '*Charity suffereth long*,' that is, maketh a man long-suffering. This being the first and principal act of charity, it concerneth us to state it aright; and so it meaneth that where Christian love prevaieth in the heart of any, he doth not presently break out into anger when he is injured by another, but patiently expecteth his repentance, and his own deliverance by the Lord. This long-suffering signifieth a slowness to anger: James 1:19, 'Be slow to wrath.' This agreeth with the pattern: Rom. 9:22, 'What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction?' And it agreeth with the nature of love; for we are not easily offended by those whom we love. Love and anger are contrary; love would profit, anger would hurt and offend others; therefore love will not easily give place to its contrary. Charity doth pass by and wink at causes of offence; and therefore a quick resentment of injuries is quite opposite to Christian love. Paul requireth of the servant

of the Lord, that he be patient, 2 Tim. 2:24, 'The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient;' to which he adds, v. 25, 'In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves.' And in the context here he speaketh of using gifts in an edifying manner, but to all Christians he saith, 'Charity suffereth long.' It is meant that they should be long-suffering, not easily drawn to a fury or revenge of injuries. So that this first property of charity is, that it restraineth wrath and a desire of revenge, notwithstanding reproaches and injuries: Rom. 12:19, 'Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath' that is, bear with it; leave it to God, who will in time convince the party of his wrong, or recompense it unto him; which is according to the example of the Lord Jesus: 1 Peter 2:23, 'Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.' When foul crimes were laid to his charge, he did not give the least ill word for the worst usage, but only resigned himself to his righteous Father, to deal with him and his persecutors as he saw fitting. Now therefore we should be patient, and long patient. Alas! how many injuries doth God put up at our hands! Whence is it that he hath not long since dissolved the world, and put an end to the wickedness of man? We can only render the reason of the text, 'Love suffereth long.' If we cannot suffer long, we are like that naughty servant that, when his Lord had forgiven ten thousand talents, and his fellow-servant, to whom he owed an hundred pence, said, 'Have patience with me;' that is, setting aside thy present anger, bear a little, and see what I can do to pacify thee. An instance of this rash anger, which is contrary to this suffering long, we have in David: 1 Sam. 25:22, 'God do so to me, and more

also, if I leave off all that pertains to him by the morning light any that pisseth against the wall.' But he behaved himself better towards Saul, whom he spared when he had him in his power; which was not the manner of men in those times, as Saul confesseth: 1 Sam. 24:18, 'For if a man find his enemy, will he let him go well away?'

2. *'And is kind,'* that is, tender and compassionate, ready to do good. We have a pattern of both in God, not only of forbearance, but of goodness. Therefore it is said, Rom. 2:4, 'Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? Now, charity, that is of divine original, infuseth into man's nature a benignity which moveth a man to consider others as well as himself, that he may do good to them. It is a godlike quality: 1 Peter 2:3, 'If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious,' that he is kind. This is a quality by which they are inclined and ready to do good to every one, even to enemies. Well, then, it is not enough to bear long, and not to hurt, but it disposeth us to do good. This is fitly coupled to the former. The perfection and strength of Christianity lieth in these two things, to suffer evil, and do good for it. To return good for good, and evil for evil, the heathens knew this, and publicans will do this. To render evil for good is the property of the devils, and men inspired by them; but to do good for evil, and to overcome evil with good, this is proper to Christians. And therefore by these two properties doth heavenly charity bewray itself, by long-suffering and kindness. Therefore if you would know whether the love of God doth dwell in your hearts, are you made ready to suffer, and to do anything for the glory of God, and the salvation of your neighbour? If so, then you are sincere with God. He that loveth,

suffereth long; he that loveth, is kind, and doth all the good he can to others, delights in doing good; and that not only to friends, in which there is nothing eximious [eminent]; they do nothing but what the carnal world would do: Matt. 5:46f, 'For if you love them that love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if you salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not the publicans so?' But to those that deal frowardly with us, as Joseph to his brethren, Gen. 45.

3. '*Charity envieth not.*' Nothing is more adverse to the goodness commended to us than envy, which cannot bear the good of another, and therefore is very far from procuring it and promoting it. Such was the envy of Cain, who taking notice that his brother's offerings pleased God more than his own, he could not bear it, and at length slew him: 1 John 3:12, 'Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother: and wherefore slew he him? because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.' Emulation and malignity at those that are better than ourselves is the very poison and venom which the devil hath infused into human nature the affection which put Cain upon killing his brother, and puts the world upon persecuting serious Christians, when at the bottom they have no other quarrel against them, but because they excel in the simplicity of the Christian faith, and holiness, and obedience. Such were Joseph's brethren, whose virtue was an eyesore to them, and therefore endeavoured his destruction, Gen. 37. Such were the Jews in the time of the apostles, who, despising the gospel, could not endure it should be preached unto the gentiles: Acts 13:45, 'But when the Jews saw the multitude, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and

blaspheming.' Therefore well doth the apostle James call this 'Bitter envying,' James 3:14. It is like gall which corrupts good food, and maketh it unprofitable. So doth this bitter zeal corrupt all their actions whom it doth possess. Well, then, 'Charity envieth not.' Those whom we love sincerely, we will rejoice in their gifts and graces as in our own, their success and prosperity as in our own, and be well pleased with their happiness. But where envy prevaieth, charity hath no place; their praises are our disgrace, their success is our lessening; and few there be that can say, with John the Baptist, 'He must increase, but I must decrease,' John 3:30; that is, in splendour and fame. Alas! as placid and well-contented as many seem without, envy burneth within, and if it be not checked, will soon produce mischievous effects.

4. '*Charity vaunteth not itself,*' that is, it doth nothing pragmatically and foolish in word or deed; where it possesseth the hearts of men, they do not arrogantly speak of themselves, or what they have done or can do. Hesychius [the lexicographer of Alexandria] telleth us the meaning of the word is one that is lifted up with folly, as giddy proud fools are wont to vaunt or strut themselves, so that their own pride rendereth them ridiculous. And so it forbids arrogancy and external ostentation, as internal pride and self-conceit is touched in the next property. Now charity is contrary to more vices than one; to pride, as it manifests itself by contemptuous and scornful carriage, which irritateth others rather than edifieth them.

5. '*Is not puffed up.*' He had told us, 1 Cor. 8:1, that 'Charity edifieth, but knowledge puffeth up; that is, with a vain conceit of our own worth, despising others. Now though knowledge may beget this through the fault of him that receiveth that gift, yet charity serveth all, despiseth none; therefore pride

and insolency showed in despising others or overvaluing ourselves is far from the temper of this heavenly grace. Poor empty bubbles are soon blown up, contemning those that are beneath them in honours, favours, riches, knowledge, and some external services which look like grace: Luke 18:11, 'God, I thank thee I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or as this publican.' This condemneth that pride, whereby we thus conceit of our own good estate above others. Whereas brotherly love would persuade us in honour to prefer one another, Rom. 12:10; and in humility to think others better than ourselves, Phil. 2:3; not with our lips only, setting on a show of humility, but with our hearts; for there is no man so great that is not in some things beneath those whom he despiseth. And we are conscious to our own infirmities, and should have a modest esteem of our own graces and virtues; for the true excellency of a Christian lieth in a mean esteem of himself. For the great business of his religion is to represent to him his own sinfulness, and the undeserved goodness of God; and therefore he seeketh no other esteem with others than God fairly alloweth him, and dareth not set too high a price upon himself, nor is troubled if others come not up to his price.

6. *'It doth not behave itself unseemly.'* This followeth well on the former; for men puffed up transgress the rules of all decency in setting out themselves, not giving others the respect due to them. Therefore it must needs be one of the properties of charity to make men do that which will become meekness, modesty, and godliness, and to abstain from all things that may be an offence and scandal to others in words, deeds, gesture, clothing, generally in all parts of conversation. Whatever may expose us to the contempt of others, or may argue a contempt of them, or

may be a just offence, charity will mind us to forbear it: Phil. 4:8, 'Whatsoever things are lovely, think on these things.'

7. *'Seeketh not her own.'* Self-love prompteth us merely to seek our own things, but charity seeketh the profit of others. It doth not drive on a self-seeking trade, or mind these things which make for our own advantage, but the welfare of others, and is as sensible and zealous for other men's good as of its own. To take care of their safety, Phil. 2:4, 'Look every man to the things of others.' To maintain our neighbour's good estate in his profit, honour, fame. Spiritual blessings should be aimed at by us by the same accuracy and diligence that we use in reference to ourselves. The law of charity here is, that we study not our own private profit so as to neglect others, or that any damage should thereby arise to others. Paul often presseth this: 1 Cor. 10:24, 'Let no man mind his own, but every man another's wealth.' Not so seek his private profit as to neglect the public. A man must mind his own affairs, but not with the neglect and damage of others; first, in the use of his Christian liberty; secondly, in his calling; wherein they sin greatly who seek to draw all to themselves.

8. *'It is not easily provoked.'* If differences arise, it handleth them peaceably. It doth not draw on things to fervour, and acerbity of contention. A paroxysm is the sharp fit of a fever, and signifieth when anger is boiled to a height. But charity is not exasperated, or highly provoked to anger, or embittered into wrath and passion. This property is to show that it tempereth just anger, that men fall not into immoderate violent distempers of passion upon whatever provocation. It is hard to abstain from all anger when we meet with so many occasions of it in the course of our lives, but the violence is corrected by love. There was a hot fit between Paul and

Barnabas: Acts 15:39, 'And the contention was so sharp between them, that they parted asunder one from the other.' Paul's cause was more just. Those that love one another may find a temptation, but love should allay these bitter gusts, for we should always remember that, 'Be angry and sin not;' that is, if ye be angry, beware of sin, Eph. 4:26.

9. *'Thinketh no evil.'* The word signifieth two things—to think or design, to impute or reckon. In the first acceptation the sense is that a charitable person plotteth not in his mind how he shall do his neighbour any evil. Now designing evil is so vile a thing, and so abhorred by heathens, that the apostle would not mention the forbearing of that as an effect of divine charity; therefore most probably we must pitch upon the latter sense; not for not contriving hurt to others, but not to reckon or impute it to them. And so it is the property of charity not rashly to impute evil to any man. It suspects no evil in others, as long as their actions are capable of a good interpretation, or while other good is mingled with it. Envy and detraction, like a fly, pitcheth on the sore place; but charity doth not easily think evil of its neighbour, but interpreteth doubtful things in the better part. If wronged by others, they rather impute it to their inconsideration than their malice; and if it cannot be excused, they do not impute, charge, or upbraid them with it, as brawling people do.

10. *'It rejoiceth not in evil.'* Nothing is more abhorrent from the nature of charity than rejoicing in the hurt of another. Now this may happen on two occasions—(1) When any one doth that which is unjust; (2) When injustice is done to any one. In the first case, charity rejoiceth not that others fall into sin, which indeed is a pleasure to them that hate them, but charity will make a man heartily mourn and grieve for any

sin that is committed by another. It is a joy to see others discharge their duty, but a grief that they offend God. The second case is, if our enemy be injured by others, we boastingly say, Oh, how well is this man served! Now thus to rejoice in or applaud the misery of others will not stand with charity, which seeketh the reformation of others, not their ruin and disgrace. David, when he heard of the death of Saul, he rent his clothes and wept and fasted: 2 Sam. 1:11f, 'And David took hold of his clothes and rent them, and all the men that were with him; and they mourned and wept, and fasted until evening for Saul, and for Jonathan his son, and for the people of the Lord, and for the house of Israel, because they were fallen by the edge of the sword.' And Job saith, chap. 31:39, 'If I rejoiced at the destruction of him that hated me, or lifted up myself when evil found him; neither have I suffered my mouth to sin by wishing a curse to his soul.' Revenge is sweet to a carnal nature, but divine love checketh it, and purgeth out this old leaven of malice more and more.

11. *'But rejoiceth in the truth.'* Truth is taken for sincerity of goodness. Charity wisheth those that displease us were better than they are, and that they did nothing but what is right, just, and good; rejoices at any good that befalleth others, especially at the holy and virtuous actions performed by them, and their integrity and sincerity. This is a good note; for what a man really is, he desireth others should be.

12. *'It beareth all things.'* The word is *panta stegei*, covereth all things, which the Greek word also signifieth; and so there is a tautology avoided for the last clause of this verse is 'endureth all things.' Now the meaning of this clause is, that charity doth not divulge the crimes of others: Prov. 10:12, 'Hatred stirreth up strife, but love covereth all sins.'

None of us can expect to live in the world but we shall meet with many failings and wrongs in the best of God's children. These will need the cover of love, that we may neither shame our brethren nor disgrace our religion. Therefore one property of this grace is to hide and conceal the evil we know by another, as far as it is for his good, and not contrary to the greater good of others; for then a greater charity obligeth us to reveal it. As if a man be a seducer, or if one profess to do religion a mischief, it is our duty to reveal it; but otherwise it is an offence to speak all we know of others, though it be true; for all evil must not be divulged, but sometimes covered with the cloak of love. There may be malice in reporting truth; for an eager desire to spread a fault wanteth not sin: Jer. 20:10, 'Report say they, and we will report it.' Nay; if there be no ill intent, such prattle will come under the charge of idle words, unless it be for discovering a hypocrite, that others may not be deceived nor ensnared.

13. '*It believeth all things,*' not such things as are apparently false, but hath no prejudice against that which others profess, if not prevalently contradicted. It desireth others should be good, and therefore easily believeth them according to the profession which they make, and whilst things are any way credible, and not manifestly false. It dareth not harbour an ill conceit of others, interpreting all things to the best as long as the contrary appeareth not, and whatever can be said for the mitigation of a fault. It is easily persuaded, James 3:17. It doth not indulge unwarrantable suspicions, and as long as it can taketh all things in good part that are said or done by others; for till it hath an idoneous [fit] proof, it had rather be deceived in thinking well of others than suspecting evil. It is a malignity to fasten an evil sense on a speech or action that may bear a good one.

14. '*Hopeth all things.*' This is added because what charity cannot believe it hopeth for. When nothing is said by way of defence and excuse, it hopeth the best the matter is capable of; if not for the present, it despaireth not that, being fallen, they will rise again; they despair not of their repentance, nor give over the use of all probable means to reclaim them.

15. '*It endureth all things,*' that is, suffereth injuries done to itself, for peace's sake, without revenging itself. They can endure much pain, and trouble, and loss to procure a greater good to others; that is, greater than the pain we suffer ourselves; and therefore it meditateth not revenge.

16. And lastly, '*Charity never faileth,*' never ceaseth in this life to bring forth these fruits; neither shall it cease in the life to come. There the love of God and our brethren abideth and is perfect. Men die, but charity liveth, and is exercised by us in another world. It is not a grace out of date in heaven. Here it is not weary, Gal. 6:9; there it shall not cease, 1 Cor. 13:13. The duties are other, but the grace is the same.

Use 1. Let me beseech you, as Chrysostom did his hearers, often to ruminate on this description of charity. Remember it is a discriminating grace, not an arbitrary thing, that we are speaking of. The business is whether you are something in religion or nothing. They that cannot bridle their passions, but live in enmity, malice, pride, and covetousness, and have not charity, are nothing.

2. What reason we have to deprecate God's strict judgment, and clear up the business of our sincerity. Alas! without an evangelical interpretation what would become of us? It is true we break not into gross enormities, but how many infirmities stick to us!

Though a Christian cannot wholly subdue them, he must in some measure overcome them. Anger will stir when we are provoked, but by the ordinary assistance of God's grace we may keep off from running out into furious words and actions, or cursing or swearing, or striking or reviling. An envious thought may arise against our brother because he is preferred before us, but we hate it, labour to keep it under, chide ourselves for it, do not let our envy break out into a malignant detraction from their worth, or blemishing their gifts and graces. A child of God may feel the ticklings of pride, yet he will not suffer it to break cut into boasting language; some motions of revenge, but they do not break out into mischievous contradiction.

3. What need there is of constant mortification. How else can we exercise this love, we being so covetous, proud, passionate, and self-seeking? the affections and lusts must

be both broken: Gal. 5:24, 'They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts thereof.'

4. What a friend Christianity is to human society; for how peaceable might we live together if this love did more rule in our hearts!

5. How perverse man is, who accounts this duty irksome, when he will do much more for his lusts and ambition: v. 7, 'Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.' Easily will men bear this task for their worldly ends.

6. How much love in the Spirit differeth from ordinary love. This is a fruit of love to God: 1 John 5:1, 'Everyone that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him;' and of faith in Christ: John 15:12, 'This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you;' and hopes of eternal life, in the text.

BACK TO SCHOOL

by CARINE MACKENZIE

After the long summer holiday, are you longing to get back to school or do you dread the prospect? I have a young friend who has just left school to start work as an apprentice plumber. He is delighted to be finished with the restrictions of the classroom and tests and exams. But he will still be learning and challenged with new experiences which will require time and discipline.

The fact is that we never stop learning. We always need teaching. David, the Psalmist knew this well. He prayed to God, the great teacher, 'Teach me thy way, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path' (Psalm 27:11). Even when we are not in school, we still have many lessons to learn.

Moses prayed in Psalm 90 that the Lord would 'teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom' (v. 12). We are being taught every day about our frailty and the fragility of life. We are not to be in this world always and we need to be ready for eternity. The only way to be ready is by trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ. He went to the cross at Calvary to bear the punishment for our sins. The most important thing we will ever learn is that 'Christ died for the ungodly.'

One day Jesus disciple's asked him to teach them to pray. And he did. He gave them a pattern to use—which is the prayer we call the Lord's Prayer, which perhaps you know and can repeat from memory.

This prayer teaches us to glorify God, to seek his will, to ask for our daily needs to be supplied, to confess our sin and ask for forgiveness and protection from evil.

Jesus is the wonderful, loving, understanding teacher. He tells us to learn from him for 'he is meek and lowly in heart' (Matt 11:29). If we learn from him we will find rest for our souls.

God the Holy Ghost (also known as the Holy Spirit) is a teacher too. Jesus warned his followers that they might get into trouble with the authorities because of their commitment to him. Don't worry about what to say when they cross question you for 'the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say' (Luke 12:12).

The Holy Ghost still teaches his people. 'He shall teach you all things,' Jesus said, 'and shall bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you' (John 14:26). When a verse of Scripture comes to your mind to help you in a difficult situation, it is because the Holy Spirit has brought it to your mind. So it is a good idea to read as much of the Bible as you can and to memorise verses, so that God the Holy Spirit will remind you of them.

During his earthly ministry Jesus went about teaching in the synagogues and out in the open air. Many people flocked to hear his wise words and parables. When he was a youngster he was also taught. When he was twelve years old he went to Jerusalem with his parents for the feast of the Passover. On the way home his parents missed him and hurried back to Jerusalem to look for him. After three days they found him in the temple listening to the doctors and teachers, and asking them questions. All who heard Jesus then were astonished at his understanding and answers.

Paul was a great teacher too. He travelled to many countries around the Mediterranean teaching and preaching about Jesus. Paul and his colleague Silas taught one time in Berea. The people there received Paul's teaching readily but they were specially commended because they 'searched the Scriptures daily' to see if what Paul was teaching was correct. We should be wise like the Bereans, and check what we are being taught with the truth of Scripture. Sadly not everything that is taught in school, university or in the media is in accordance with God's word. Peter warns about false teachers in his letter to the churches. So we should be aware of this and pray to God 'Lead me in thy truth and teach me' (Psalm 25:5).

Bible Search

Look up the verses and find the missing words. The initials of the correct answers will spell out two words from the story.

1. The Lord said unto Moses, Come up to me into the mount, and be there, and I will give thee _____ of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written; that thou mayday teach them. (Exodus 24:12)
2. I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine _____. (Psalm 32:8)

3. Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an _____ and a teacher of the Gentiles. (2 Timothy 1:11)
4. The Lord said unto me, Gather me the people together, and I will make them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me all the days that they shall live upon the earth and that they may teach their _____. (Deuteronomy 4:10)
5. Teach me and I will _____ my tongue: and cause me to understand wherein I have erred. (Job 6:24)
6. Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God: thy spirit is good; _____ me into the land of uprightness. (Psalm 143:10)
7. Rabbi we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, _____ God be with him. (John 3:2)
8. A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall _____ unto wise counsels. (Proverbs 1:5)
9. So they _____ in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading. (Nehemiah 8:8)
10. And they shall not teach every man his _____, and every man his brother, saying Know the Lord : for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. (Hebrew 8:11)

SERIOUSNESS IN RELIGION

by THE REV. WILLIAM ROMAINE (1714–1795)

'Blessed are they, which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled' (Matt 5:6)

(Cont. from p. 127) Nay though we should wish to grow better in all respects, yet wishing it faintly, and attending to it slightly, will never effect it. If we make riches, or power, or pleasure, or anything else of this world,

our great aim; and look upon the religious and moral government of ourselves as an inferior matter; not to be overlooked indeed, but requiring only so much regard, as these more important affairs will admit; our

improvement in it will be very little, if any at all: For we cannot serve two masters (Matt 6:24). But did we once see, and will keep in mind, that piety and virtue are our business here; that forming our hearts to a practical esteem of reason and truth, to a temper of justice and goodness towards men, of reverence and obedience to God, of love to Christ, of joy in the Holy Ghost, is our main concern, compared with which everything else is nothing: it would make a wonderful difference, both in our diligence and our success.

But still the greatest diligence may fail, unless we proceed in a proper method. If we resolve against sin; and will not resolve to be on our guard against the things that lead us into it: If we desire to grow in grace (2 Peter 3:18); and will not use the means which God hath appointed for our growth in it: yet if, after a while, we become wearied, and faint in our minds (Heb 12:3), and leave off; all our past labour will be in vain. We cannot indeed keep the same pitch constantly: but whenever the want of it hath betrayed us into a fault, we can recover and raise ourselves up to it again. And though a fresh repetition of the same fault were to succeed often; yet, recollection and fresh resolution may be repeated as often, till through the grace of God they become effectual.

But here it is usually objected; they cannot resolve against sin more strongly than they have done, yet their former resolutions have stood them in no stead; and to what purpose is it to make more! Now every one sees how absurd this way of thinking would be in the affairs of common life. Scarce any one succeeds at the first trial, usually not till after many trials, in almost anything they go about to learn. And yet what do they do? They endeavour on, and though perhaps they cannot possibly be more in earnest at last than they were at first, yet insensibly,

themselves know not how, they overcome the difficulty so entirely that very often neither any feeling, nor a notion of it remains.

Let us therefore imitate their perseverance, and not be impatient and out of hopes because of a few failures. Always think lowly of what we have done, but highly of what through God's help we may do. Being uneasy at our past miscarriages is indeed a duty, so far as it teaches us to be humble, to ask pardon, and to strive to do better. But if we do nothing but dwell upon and aggravate our fault to our own minds; till we have so little opinion of, and so little liking to, ourselves that we have no heart to set about amendment; a sensibility, thus excessive, defeats its own end and becomes a new sin, added to all the former. We must therefore never despair and give up our case as incurable, and our souls lost, for they are not. God is our physician, and no disease is too inveterate for him. We have only to study and follow his directions faithfully, and the final event is infallible. If we fail in our duty, we may, if we will, from that very failure get more strength and skill for the future, by observing through what wrongness of weakness in our temper, what rashness or negligence in our conduct, the advantage against us was gained—and thinking what precaution will be most effectual against another trial. A moderate share of time and pains, honestly spent thus, would give us happy earnestness of obtaining at length an entire conquest, which, however, though always possible, will be much easier and surer the earlier we prepare for and engage in the conflict, before we give the enemy leisure to strengthen himself by further weakening and corrupting us. 'My son, gather instruction from thy youth up: so shalt thou find wisdom till thine old age. Come unto her as one that ploweth and soweth, and wait for her good fruits: for thou

shalt not toil much in labouring about her, but thou shalt eat of her fruits right soon.—My son, if thou wilt, thou shalt be taught: and if thou wilt apply thy mind, thou shalt be prudent.—Let thy mind be upon the ordinances of the Lord and meditate continually in his commandments: he shall establish thine heart, and give thee wisdom at thine own desire' (Ecclus. 6:8, 19, 32, 37).

But supposing the worst, that we have been negligent or even grossly sinful in time past; yet not only reason and the promises of Scripture, but experience proves the possibility of our recovery. Did not David recover from adultery and murder, Mannaseh from idolatry, Zacchaeus the publican from covetousness and injustice, Peter from denying Christ, Paul from blaspheming and persecuting? Have not multitudes in all ages, many in our own, some perhaps known to us, recovered from the vilest acts, from the longest habits of sin? Why then cannot we do what they have done?

It must be confessed indeed that some have natural dispositions much more favourable both to innocence and repentance than others. But God hath made none of his creatures incapable of what he made them for. And since he condescends to help us, we may be sure he will help us, as much as we really want. The weakness of man, the force of temptation, the difficulty of duty, are of small account where the Almighty is ready to interpose. Our own strength indeed cannot increase in proportion as our trials do, but that which proceeds from him can. And this is the great felicity of our dependence upon him, that while our sense of continually needing his aid is fitted, beyond all things, to keep us humble; our assurance of having it, if we ask and use it, gives us a comfort and a spirit that nothing else can equal.

God will certainly enable us to do

everything which is necessary to be done. And though he may possibly suffer us to strive against some of our smaller faults much longer and more ineffectually than we would wish, yet we may be assured he hath wise and good reasons for exercising us with such difficulties. And provided we continue the good fight with patience and courage, whatever labour and pain it may cause us now, it shall not hinder but increase our reward hereafter; and the prospect of that is abundantly sufficient to make us happy in the mean while. Not that we can ever fit ourselves to appear before God, and be justified in his sight, on the footing of a covenant of works. Far be from us the haughty imagination. We desire to be accepted, not for what we have done, but for what our blessed Redeemer hath done on our account, 'And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith' (Phil 3:9). After this we are to hunger and thirst both as the means of personal righteousness, and the ground of God's accepting it. In this alone we are to hope first, and rejoice afterwards.

Yet still if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we might sometimes be of all men most miserable. Not but that, even then, a steady course of virtue and religion would in general be evidently for the interest of mankind and almost of every individual. But after all, there would be cases too often happening in which the trouble of combating evil inclinations and habits would be so great, the progress in goodness so imperfect, and the enjoyment of it so precarious and short-lived, that human resolution must be supposed to stagger and faint under such trials. But since we are assured of enjoying to eternity in perfection whatever graces we have cultivated here with sincerity, the

toilsomeness of the work, and the slowness of the success, ought not to deter us in the least. Let the watchfulness over our conduct, the restraint of our passions and wrong desires, be ever so uneasy; let this uneasiness last ever so long; let our advancement, after doing our best, be mixed with ever such mortifying failures and frailties: yet if we be faithful unto the end, everyone of these seemingly discouraging circumstances will have full allowance made for it, and be most equitably considered to our advantage. We have only to take care of our duty; and the goodness of our Maker will be sure to take care of our happiness. Nor is it indeed, could we but think aright, of very great consequence whether we begin to taste that

happiness in any considerable degree during our momentary life on earth—which however truly good persons, almost of not absolutely without exceptions do—or whether it be reserved for that approaching time, when all they that have hungered and thirsted after righteousness here, ‘shall be abundantly filled with the plenteousness of God’s house, and made to drink of the river of his pleasures’ (Psalm 36:8f). ‘For with him is fulness of joy, and at his right hand are pleasures for evermore’ (Psalm 16:11). ‘Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.’ (1 Cor 15:58). ¶

CHRIST ALL IN ALL

REV EDUARD MEINDERS (1691–1752)

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

‘But Christ is all, and in all’ (Colossians 3:11)

Introduction

The speech of Jacob and Esau, when Jacob wanted to honour his brother Esau with presents is remarkable. Esau said: I have much;¹ and Jacob: I have everything,² as we find penned down by Moses (Gen 32:9, 11). Esau and Jacob were sons of Isaac, and God had given them richly temporal goods. But they differed from each other, Esau being ungodly, but Jacob believing and godly. In this manner Esau could say that he had much, namely those riches, which Jacob offered him as a present; but being an

unbeliever and ungodly, he lacked the one thing needed; God’s blessed communion in Christ Jesus, which only can give satisfaction, fill the hollow desires of a man’s soul, and make him happy for time and eternity. Therefore he could not say, I have everything: this was Jacob’s privilege, who could declare as a believer that he had everything. The riches he possessed, God had given him by his fatherly providence, as from his right hand; while Esau and all the ungodly possess their riches in God’s wrath. Moreover he was fully content with his share, resting in God’s wise bestowment, and thus he had everything, because contentment is the greatest

¹ Dutch rendering

² Dutch rendering

and most sure wealth. But especially would Jacob, when he said this, have cast his eye on his spiritual possession, whereof Esau was fully undone. He was a believer, united by faith to the Lord Jesus, he waited on him and his salvation, according to Gen 49:18. God was thus his atoned God the Father, Christ his Saviour and Redeemer, and therefor he rightly could boast in humility that he had everything, namely Christ; Which was needed for the temporal, spiritual and eternal life.

And this is the great privilege of all believers, as Paul claims in our verse, saying: But Christ is all, and in all.

Cohesion

Paul having armoured the believers in the first two chapters against the Gnostics and Jewish Christians, exhorts them then to the duty of heavenly-mindedness (vv. 1–4) and to advancement in sanctification, to kill on the one side sin, and on the other side to continue the renewing of the mind (vv. 5–10). This renewing is not bound to a distinction of persons, outward privileges of states, because Christ is all, and in all.

These words, short, but full of meaning, show us:

1. Christ's fullness, as it is said of him to be all.
2. The expanse thereof, to the object, because it is said of Christ that he is all and in all.

I. The first part

Although man is by nature undone of everything, yet he does not thereof have to desperately give up all courage; because in and with Christ all is found, what he needs for the spiritual, temporal and eternal life, as Paul testifies here of Christ, saying about him, that he is all.

I. The Person, whereof Paul speaks, is Christ, the Second Person in the blessed

Trinity, and the only and eternal Son of God, the Anointed of the Father, being set apart from eternity for the office of Mediator, and in time made capable for it by the imputation of the Holy Ghost; having three saving offices as Prophet, High Priest and King. We shall not speak more about these names; but refer the reader to our Commentary of the East Frisian Catechism.

II. Paul ascribes Christ an all sufficiency, saying of him that he is everything. By these words he commonly makes understood, that in Christ an abundant fullness of everything which the poor man need in time and eternity in order to be happy and blessed, is found, and from where the elect believers receive everything what they need for the spiritual, temporal and eternal life. Thus David boasted: 'The LORD, the Messiah, is my Shepherd, I shall not want' (Ps 23:1). And Paul, wanting to exhort the believers of Corinth not to put their trust in men, displays the eminent riches which they possessed in Christ in these words: 'Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours: whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; are all yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's' (1 Cor 3:21–23). If anybody desires to view more closely Christ's all sufficiency for a poor sinner worthy of damnation, we shall display him to him.

A. Christ is all sufficient for a sinner, to bring him from the natural state to a state of grace.

1. He is the Surety of the elect, according to Ps 199:122, where the Psalmist requests him to be his Surety for good. And Heb 7:22. By so much was Jesus made a Surety of a better testament.

- a. The elect were debtors to God. They had many and heavy debts, and above

- this were not able to pay (Matt 18:34).
- b. Christ agreed to be in the eternal Council of Peace the Surety for them (Job 33:24; Ps 49:9).
 - c. The faithful who lived before his coming were saved by strength of his Surety. Rom 3:25: 'whom (namely Christ) God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are passed, through the forbearance of God.'
 - d. In the fulness of time Christ executed the surety by his passive and active obedience. He bore and carried away the curse of the law (Gal 3:13), acquiring a right unto eternal life (Rom 5:19).
 - e. The fruit of Jesus' payment is dismissal of guilt and the punishment of sin (Rom 8:1) imputation and acquisition of the right unto eternal life. (2 Cor 5:21; Titus 3:7).

2. He is the Mediator of the elect; in Gen 49:10 he is called the Shiloh, that is the Peacemaker. And in 1 Tim 2:5 Paul emphasizes: There is one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. He hath all the required abilities of a Mediator, because he is a true and holy man, truly God; God and Man in one Person, willing to take up the office of Mediator, being ordained unto this by God.

- a. He hath set himself from eternity as a Mediator between God and man, who because of sin are at war with each other (1 Tim 2:5; Isa 27:4b)
- b. He hath executed his office of Mediator in the time by his passive and active obedience (Rom 5:10) and displayeth the will of the Father, to have atonement, to the sinner (Eph 2:17).
- c. He hath accomplished as a Mediator the atonement and peace with God (2 Cor 5:19; Heb 9:15).

TO BE CONTINUED

THE LORD, THE SHEPHERD OF HIS PEOPLE

by JAMES NORTH (Landford Wood)

'He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters' (Psalm 23:2)

Having concluded our studies on the first verse of this wonderful psalm, we now turn our attention to the second verse: 'He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.' In the first verse of this Psalm we considered THE SOVEREIGN, THE SHEPHERD AND THE SUPPLIER, we now move on to consider

in this second verse the happy situation in which the sheep are found. They are brought into green pastures and besides the still waters. The sheep, the child of God is in a most happy situation. Toplady asks the question

Happiness, thou lovely name,
Where's thy seat, O tell me, where?

He then answers his question:
Learning, pleasure, wealth, and fame,
All cry out, 'It is not here.'

Not the wisdom of the wise
Can inform me where it lies;
Not the grandeur of the great
Can the bliss I seek create.

He then goes on to speak of the source of
all true happiness:

Object of my first desire,
Jesus, crucified for me;
All to happiness aspire,
Only to be found in thee.

Happiness for the literal sheep is to be able to have pasture and water, and the care of the shepherd. It is no less with the child of God. He has the pasture and the streams of living waters provided by the Lord himself for his church and he has the care of the Shepherd, the Good Shepherd who gives his life for the sheep. We can notice there are at least seven particulars concerning the green pastures and the still waters:

- (a) It is a place of rest
- (b) It is a place of dependence
- (c) It is a place of provision
- (d) It is a place of plenty
- (e) It is a place of presentation
- (f) It is a place of contentment
- (g) It is a place of communion

No doubt some will consider other descriptions and characteristics which could be given to these pastures and still waters, for the gifts and treasures given to and provided for the children of God are infinite and cannot fully measured; but we confine ourselves to considering the blessings listed above.

Now, we have to say that though these aspects of the comforts belong to the sheep

of Christ's flock, the child of God does not always enjoyed by them. Sometimes we are in such a spiritual state that we lack the REST promised; sometimes we feel a lack of DEPENDENCE upon our Lord Jesus Christ etc., but these inward feelings do not take away the objective reality of the blessings which are bestowed upon the child of God. Though we cannot feel the warmth of the sun on us on a winter's day when it is hidden behind the clouds, it does not mean that the sun is no longer shining. So likewise, though we do not always feel the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ and the comforts of the covenant; though we do not have the immediate felt sense of our resting in the Lord does not mean that they are not there. The fault lies with us and our walk with the Lord Jesus Christ!

So then, let us take a look at some of these comforts which are bestowed up his people, the sheep of his pasture and fold, the church.

(a) *The Place of Rest.* 'He maketh me to lie down in green pastures.' The implication of these words is that the sheep is weary, it is tired and the shepherd has brought it to a place where it can rest; rest in the shade from the heat of the sun.

In the parable of the lost sheep, recorded in Luke 15:4-7, the lost sheep was weary because of its wandering away from the rest of the flock. He had left the fold, he had left the flock in search of green pastures. He was weary of being alone for sheep are not solitary animals, they long for the fellowship of the flock. He was weary and having felt the loneliness of being separated from the remaining sheep he started to bleat in fear of his situation and he was lost.

There were ninety and nine that safely lay
In the shelter of the fold,
But one was out on the hills away,
Far off from the gates of gold—

Away on the mountains wild and bare,
Away from the tender Shepherd's care.

But, the shepherd goes to find his lost sheep, and that sheep was so weary that he was unable to walk back to the fold, so much so that the Shepherd 'layeth it on his shoulders' (Lk. 15:5).

The Lord Jesus Christ was using this parable to illustrate those who are lost; lost in sin; lost in their state of declension and backsliding; weary of their sinful lives and conduct. But the Lord Jesus Christ finds all his sheep. All the flock will be gathered unto him.

But none of the ransomed ever knew
How deep were the waters crossed;
Nor how dark was the night that the
Lord passed through
Ere He found His sheep that was lost
Out in the desert, He heard its cry—
Sick and weary and ready to die.

Now, do we know anything of being weary? Weary of sin, weary of our waywardness? Well, says the Lord Jesus, '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' (Matt. 11:28–30). Do you know what it is to labour under a burden of sin? To labour under the curse of the broken law? To labour under conviction of sin? Well, here is the gracious invitation of the Lord Jesus Christ—he will give to his people, those given in covenant bond to him by the Father before the beginning of time—he will give them sweet rest, and those who are wounded by their sinfulness, he applies to them the balm of the covenant.

Are we weary of our declension, weary of our backslidings? Do we enter into the

feelings of the hymn-writer:

Where is the blessedness I knew,
When first I saw the Lord.
Where is the soul refreshing view
Of Jesus and His word.

And, do we cry out to him:
Return O Holy Dove, return;
Sweet Messenger of rest.
I hate the sins that made thee mourn
And drove thee from my breast?

By the work of the Holy Spirit in their hearts he will bring them into the green pastures of sweet fellowship with him and there they will rest.

(b) *The Place of Dependence.* Oh, the poor lost sheep has been brought back from his wanderings; he has been brought from the desert to a place of rest and now he sees that he has a total dependence upon his shepherd who will keep him safely in the fold and provide all things necessary for him

And it is no less the same with the child of God, the sheep of his pasture. He knows what it is to have been lost; to have been in a place of barrenness, confusion and despair. He knows what it is to have been in a 'desert land' where he has lost the feelings of true fellowship with his Lord. And being away from his Lord, he is brought by the Lord the Spirit to see his true spiritual state and condition. He also knows that he is unable to rescue himself from such a state. He is totally and utterly dependent upon the Lord Jesus Christ working in his heart and 'is drawing him back to himself! It is so with the lost sinner and with the child of God in a state of declension and backsliding.

The Psalmist speaks of his own experience: 'I waited patiently for the LORD; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out

of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD' (Ps. 40:1-3). He was in the pit; the pit of sin besmired with all the filth of the miry clay. He was unable to rescue himself from that hopeless situation. The more he tried to get out of the pit, the more he became besmired with the clay of the pit. He was totally dependent upon another!

John Cennick speaks of his own experience:

This is the way I long have sought,
And mourned because I found it not;
My grief, my burden long has been,
Because I could not cease from sin.

The more I strove against its power,
I sinned and stumbled but the more;
Till late I heard my Saviour say,
'Come hither, soul, I AM THE WAY.'

The sheep, the child of God, is totally dependent on the Lord Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd of his sheep, for their rescue and redemption from their lost estate. He is totally dependent on his provision. 'But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus' (Phil. 4:19). And he is totally dependent on the Lord Jesus Christ to provide his safety. 'I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety' (Ps. 4:8).

Oh, would we be saved from sin, death and hell? See it only in Christ Jesus our Lord!

Would we be raised from and drawn away from our backslidings of heart? See the remedy only in the Lord Jesus Christ. 'For Israel slideth back as a backsliding heifer: now the LORD will feed them as a lamb in a large place... I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him' (Hosea 4:16; 14:4).

When he walked upon the water Peter was totally dependent upon the Lord Jesus Christ. The dying thief upon the cross was totally dependent upon Christ. And so must every one who is to be saved by the grace of God and walk in fellowship with him. They must and are totally dependent upon the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end of our salvation. Those are true words of Augustus Montague Toplady, former editor of this *Magazine*, and which we sing:

Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling
Naked come to Thee for dress,
Helpless look to Thee for grace,
Foul I to the fountain fly.
Wash me Saviour or I die.

(c) *The place of Provision.* 'Green pastures'—'Still waters'. What more do we need? What a mercy these things are provided by the Good Shepherd for his sheep! And what is more, the sheep will follow the Shepherd. 'And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice' (Jno. 10:4). If we look at the marginal references we can see the bountiful and beautiful provision the Good Shepherd makes for his sheep. The green pastures are fresh. Fresh tender grass! The waters provided are quiet waters, still waters, waters which have issued out of the earth and have hollowed out a pool from which the sheep and the little lambs can take all the refreshment they require.

It is no less the same with the Lord's people; the sheep of his pasture. Looking back at John 10 we read, 'I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.' The sheep go in and out and find pasture, which I take to mean that the child of God enjoys the

blessings of the gospel, the blessing of sins forgiven, of hell subdued and peace with heaven. But there is a fulness in the Lord Jesus Christ!

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

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

Do we know anything of the spiritual blessings, and the spiritual provisions which are in the Lord Jesus Christ? Paul writes of the fulness of the Lord Jesus Christ in the 1 Corinthians: 'But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption' (1 Cor. 1:30). Do we know anything of the wisdom of Christ Jesus in our hearts? Do we know anything of the righteousness of the Lord Jesus and being our spiritual clothing? Do we know anything of the sanctification, the setting apart of his people in himself being imparted to us? Do we know anything about the redemption price which has been paid by the Lord Jesus Christ? For he is our redemption.

What sacred Fountain yonder springs
Up from the throne of God,
And all new covenant blessings brings?
'Tis Jesus' precious blood.
What mighty sum paid all my debt,
When I a bondman stood,
And has my soul at freedom set?
'Tis Jesus' precious blood.

(Joseph Irons)

Can we say that we have come to the Lord Jesus Christ; that we have been brought

by the Holy Spirit's sovereign work in our hearts to see the fulness that is in the Lord Jesus Christ, and that fulness is all the provision we need?

The woman with the issue of blood had spent her all on the physicians and was not one whit better. But when she came to the Lord Jesus Christ and touched just the hem of his garment, she was made whole instantly. What a mercy! If you feel your need of the Lord Jesus Christ, just touch, as it were, the hem of his garment and you will be made whole from the burden of sin.

(d) The place of plenty.

Plenteous grace with thee is found;
Grace to pardon all my sin.

'He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away' (Lk. 1:53). There is a fulness and plenteousness in the Lord Jesus Christ. 'The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy them' (Deut. 33:27).

In the book of Ruth we read that the family of Naomi went out in a time of famine, from Bethlehem full, but she returned having lost everything, her husband, her children, one of her daughters-in-law and all her possessions. 'I went out full,' she said, 'and the LORD hath brought me home again empty' (1:21). But she was brought back to the right place: BETHLEHEM. She came back to the House of Bread! She came back in the beginning of the harvest. It was a time of plenty and when her daughter-in-law gleaned in the fields, she was instructed to stay on the land of Boaz whose men dropped handfuls of purpose for her and Naomi. No longer at risk of starvation, there was a plenitude of food for her and her daughter-in-law. In the time of harvest there was plenty.

In a time of famine in Egypt the Egyptians were instructed, 'Go unto Joseph' (Gen. 41:55) to find relief from the famine. There was plenty of sustenance for the people.

In a time of need, when the prodigal son would have fain filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat, he came to see his need and returned home for his father's servants had bread enough and to spare. And when he returned home his father killed the fatted calf and they all made merry. There was a plenitude for the prodigal son.

Oh, there is a fulness in the gospel of the grace of God. 'But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus' (Phil. 4:19). Everything we need is in Christ Jesus our Lord, and those things we need are in plentiful supply.

(e) *It is a place of Preservation.* 'He maketh me to lie down in green pastures.'

When animals, domesticated or wild, are frightened by some external noise, they will not settle down, but become restless. The sheep will only settle in the fold if they know that the shepherd is with them.

Now, says the Psalmist, 'I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety' (Ps. 4:8). And the child of God will rest in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and he is preserved in Christ Jesus.

Jesus protects; my fears, begone!
What can the Rock of Ages move?
Safe in thy arms I lay me down,
Thy everlasting arms of love.

I rest beneath the Almighty's shade
My griefs expire, my troubles cease;
Thou, Lord, on whom my soul is stayed,
Wilt keep me still in perfect peace.

What a mercy!

(f) *It is a place of contentment.* Listen to the words of the Apostle Paul, 'I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content' (Phil. 4:11). Just as the sheep is dependent upon the Shepherd, and very rarely wanders away from him and the fold because he knows the tender care of the Shepherd, so the child of God in sweet fellowship with his Lord, is happy to remain at the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ.

(g) *It is a place of communion.* You see, the sheep that belonged to the Shepherd was not a commercial commodity, it was part of the family. He had nurtured it, looked after it, cared for it, provided all things necessary for its daily life, so much so that the sheep was one of the pets of the family.

The lost sheep who had wandered away from the flock would no doubt remember how he had become lost, and from then onwards, he would have kept as close to the Shepherd as possible.

The hymn-writer Robert Robinson spoke of his experiences of wandering away from the fold.

Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,
Prone to leave the God I love;
Take my heart, O take and seal it,
Seal it from Thy courts above.

It is a place of sweet communion, the same communion that Mary enjoyed as she sat at the feet of Jesus. O that we could keep in that position! The promise and exhortation of the Scriptures is 'Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you' (Jas. 4:8).

God grant that we, as the Lord's sheep and flock, will know something and the enjoyment of the covenant blessings of the Lord Jesus Christ as they are bestowed upon us.

TO BE CONTINUED

GODLY COUNSEL FOR ALL

By THE EDITOR

An exposition of Psalm 37

IT is always a great help to have a guide through any difficult or new matter. The best guide is one who has been that way before, who has come through the same experience triumphant, or who is already able to do what we are attempting to do. There comes a time for every believer when he is troubled by the apparent prosperity of the wicked, and by their seeming lack of any concern for their spiritual state. It can lead some to question their Christian faith: why should I suffer in this life, when it is obvious that those who do not know God seem also not to suffer? David provides wise counsel and genuine encouragement, as he both points out what we might not otherwise see, and reminds us of things we might be in danger of forgetting. The whole psalm is taken by some to be the explanation of Psalm 36:12.

The psalm falls into three parts:

1. Opening Counsel

‘Fret not thyself because of the evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity.’ Why might we fret ourselves or become envious?

The root of the word ‘fret’ means to become angry, to burn. Such anger might be expressed towards the Lord for permitting the wicked to continue: let us never forget that, but for the grace of God, we would be these same wicked ones. Such anger might be expressed towards ourselves, that we have denied ourselves the pleasures and comforts enjoyed by the wicked, apparently to no purpose: let us never forget that the wicked do

not think beyond this life whereas we look to the resurrection of the dead and the world to come. Such anger might be expressed against the wicked, that they brazenly do the things condemned by the Lord in his word, blaspheme the holy name of Jesus, and deride the righteous in their righteousness. Let us never forget that it is not our place to judge the wicked—yet, 1 Cor 6:2.

The context shows that the fretting or anger spoken of is against the wicked, for we are exhorted not to be envious against them. The reason why we are not to envy them nor be angry at them is declared in v. 2: ‘For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb.’ When the grass is mowed it seen withers and turns brown. It has no life in itself that it can live once it has been cut down. How different this is from the righteous, in whom is eternal life by the gift of God through Jesus Christ! When we die we do not cease, but we know that at the latter day we shall see our Redeemer, and our eyes shall behold him. The wicked shall rise again only to the final judgment: we shall rise again to the eternal blessing.

Therefore there is no reason why we should fret ourselves because of the wicked: their present joys cannot last, and their present security will prove false. Their momentary triumph will prove short-lived, for the Lord is their judge.

Of course, some might suppose that to not fret against the wicked is to show ourselves to approve their actions. Others might suppose that the alternative is some form of

stoicism or lack of concern about the wicked and their ways. None of these things can be true of the child of God. We are moved at the sight of the wicked, and we detest the blasphemy of their words. However, we do not fret, we do not become angry against them, for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God, James 1:20. Rather, 'Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord' (Rom 12:19). Let our cry come unto the throne of grace, where there is a prayer-hearing and a prayer-answering God and Father of mercies.

2. Trust in the Lord, vv. 3–26

Trust in the Lord is the exact opposite of that fretting of v. 1. When we trust we show that we are secure in the Lord. We commit all to him, and we leave it there. We show that we trust in the Lord in doing good, for trust that is not shown by action is not trust at all. The doing of good is the consequence of trust, the result of being secure. We have seen a plain example of this recently. How many churches ceased from many of their usual activities out of fear of Covid? Only when people began to be confident again did they begin to resume their meetings and other activities again. When we do not trust we remain inactive, paralysed by fear. When we trust in the Lord we are able to go about our business for him, as Daniel, knowing the king's law, made his prayers three times as day as he was used to doing.

We are also to delight ourselves in the Lord, and we show this by seeking nothing but in prayer. The desires of the heart, v. 4, are our petitions, and these are granted by our heavenly Father for Christ's sake. There is no spiritual blessing promised to any but in Christ: if we are not in Christ, and if we do not seek blessing by Christ and for Christ, we have no ground to think that we shall

obtain our petitions.

We commit our ways unto the Lord. This is to roll our ways onto the Lord, as one passes a heavy burden onto another who is able and willing to bear it for us. So 1 Pe 5:7. An example is found in Psalm 22:8, where our version reads, 'He trusted on the Lord, that he should deliver him.' That is, he rolled himself onto the Lord, placing himself entirely in the Father's hands to save him. It is our heavenly Father alone who can bring his will to pass, and if we commit ourselves to him he will never fail us, nor forsake us. Indeed, such faith will be declared to all, as our righteousness shall be brought forth as the light, and our judgment as the noon-day. That is, we will be vindicated. When our Lord Jesus Christ commended his spirit into the hands of his Father in heaven, many considered him to be accursed of God: why should the Lord receive the soul of this blasphemer, they thought? Yet on the third day Jesus Christ rose from the dead, and his faith in the Father was vindicated, and his own righteousness was declared. We have no righteousness of our own: we trust in Christ and we are accounted righteous, which righteousness is demonstrated when the Lord keeps us in the face of immense obstacles.

We rest in the Lord, waiting patiently for him. The thought here is of one who ceases from his complaint, and who falls silent in the confidence that his cry has been heard, and that the Lord shall shortly appear for his defence. Our Saviour Christ did not defend himself against the false accusations of the wicked, but waited for the Lord to answer for him in his resurrection. The wicked may prosper now, but we know that the day of judgment is fast approaching. We wait for that day, when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed.

Finally in this section we are exhorted to cease from anger, and to forsake wrath. In the manner of Hebrew poetry we have a chiasmic construction, where the first thought is repeated in slightly different terms. Just as we have been counselled not to fret ourselves, so now we are to cease from anger. There is recognition here that some do become angry, in spite of the counsel against anger. Such anger is not to be sustained, but we are to cease from it. We are given good reasons why we should in the subsequent verses. The wicked shall be cut off, vv. 9–10, but the meek shall inherit the earth, v. 11. The wicked plot against the just, v. 12, but the Lord has set his own counsel in motion, v. 13. The wicked prepare to destroy the just, v. 14, but their plans will turn against them, v. 15. The state of the righteous is better than that of the wicked, in spite of appearances to the contrary, v. 16, because one is upheld, and the other overcome by the same Lord, v. 17. Eternal life is granted to the righteous, but destruction awaits the wicked, vv. 18–20. The wicked are selfish, the righteous are liberal, v. 21, knowing that all things are theirs, v. 22. The Lord keeps his people in spite of their frailties, and never abandons them in their troubles, vv. 23–26.

3. Pursue righteousness, vv. 27–40

The blessings of the righteous have been listed, vv. 9–26, for two reasons. First, these are given to encourage the righteous not to despair at the sight of the wicked prospering in their wickedness, secondly, to encourage the wicked to turn to the Lord.

Departure from evil may be obvious for the righteous, for we know that evil is the antithesis of good. The exhortation is not out of place, however, for both besetting and occasional sins can ensnare us. That we must be urged to depart from sin shows how

easily we fall when tempted. Given all that has been said about the blessings of the Lord on the righteous and the judgment of the Lord against the wicked, we ought to need no encouragement in this matter. The plain fact is we do, for if we were free from sin we should be perfect, and there is none good by God. Our heavenly Father is faithful to us, v. 28, and we should always be faithful to him.

Departure from evil may not be obvious to the wicked, both because they rarely recognise evil as evil, and because they will not give up the passing pleasures of sin. Yet the same ground applies: the Lord is faithful to his people, and therefore will be faithful to all who come to him in repentance and faith. The wicked shall perish, but eternal life is the inheritance of the saints. All that the wicked have now will be lost, but the righteous will inherit the earth. All that the righteous profess is true, even though the wicked discount it as false. The righteous live by the word of the Lord, and though the wicked seek the life of the righteous, v. 32, the Lord will deliver his own, v. 33. The lack of actual power shows the true condition of the wicked, that they have a false understanding of the world and of themselves, and of the righteous. Let them therefore depart from evil and do good, that they may inherit the earth with the righteous. There is no inheriting the earth but in Christ, and so this is an exhortation to the wicked to come to Christ, as well as an encouragement to the righteous to remain in Christ in all things and at all times.

So too with our waiting on the Lord, and remaining obedient to him, v. 34. For the righteous this is a great encouragement to keep trusting, even if our nature tends to run out of patience and to begin to despair. Although the time when we will enter into the fulness of the blessing may be far off, it is not uncertain. We will live to see the wicked

being cut off, and his strength will simply vanish. The righteous, for all their apparent weakness, will endure for ever, enjoying all the blessings of the Father in the Son.

These words are also an encouragement as well as a warning to the wicked. They trust in their own strength, but at the last it shall prove to be no strength, vv. 35–36. The fate of the wicked is already known, v. 34, but the mercy of God towards all who come to him is also already known. It is the height of folly to think that one wicked person will prosper more than another, when the word of the Lord had already pronounced sentence against all the ungodly. For any to think that they can ignore this would be madness, since it is to deny the voice of the living God and call him a liar. What a blessing it is to see that the word of God is true, and that Jesus Christ is indeed the way, the truth and the life, and that none come to the Father but by him.

Believers are greatly helped when they mark the perfect man, taking him for their example. They see that this one knows peace, not the peace of the world, but the peace the world cannot give. Daniel knew this peace in the lions' den, and his friends knew it in the fiery furnace. The perfect man is of course our Lord Jesus Christ, who as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so opened he not his mouth. The smiters smited him, and they spit

on him and mocked him. He was not unduly troubled, and in the end his righteousness shone forth as the noon day in the resurrection from the dead. As the Lord in whom he trusted delivered him, Ps 22:8, so the righteous trust in the Lord to deliver them, and not in vain. The wicked shall fall, and there will be none to lift them up. The righteous know that the Lord is their strength.

This is a warning to the wicked, and an encouragement to them. All who seek the strength of the Lord, and trust in Christ the perfect man, will obtain the blessings of faith. All that the wicked despise and mock will prove to be true, and all that the wicked trust in and hope for will prove to be as solid as mist. The Lord delivers the righteous. All whom to Christ he will in no wise cast out, and the penitent will obtain mercy in abundance. There is no justifiable reason to remain in wickedness, rebelling against the Lord and his Christ, and hating his word and his people. That is the way of death. To come to Christ is to come to the one who died that we might have life, and who shed his blood that our sins would be covered. The pursuit of righteousness may earn us the hatred of the world, but since the world is passing, is it not better to enter into the love and favour of the Father, and to obtain all the blessings of his grace? Amen. ¶

FORMER DAYS

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

250 years ago: September & October 1772

The statement in the previous issue regarding the non-availability of the July 1772 issue was incorrect. It is the issue for June 1772 that is missing; the one on the website

is for June 1775. This is particularly frustrating because we are missing the first part of the series entitled, 'Of the Covenant of Works, in the Making, breach, and ruinous Consequences thereof.' This was continued

in both the August and Septembers, concluding in October. The whole article would be of immense value, we judge, and would be worth reprinting in full.

A correspondent presents a lengthy and detailed argument against the form of words found in Mark 9:49. We are not much moved by proposals to emend the text of Scripture.

A contributor provides the first part of a list of points by which he compares God with the soul. The account of the death of Lawrence Homma of Amsterdam is concluded at some length. Romans 8:33–34 provides the text of a dialogue between a Believer and Satan, in which the former resorts to the Priesthood of Christ as being the ground of his confidence against all sins. The examination of Mark 4:28 is concluded. The third Letter to a Friend on the Atonement of Christ is also concluded. The month ends with Poetry, much of which is one long composition. The comma at the end of p. 440 suggests that at least one leaf is missing.

The series on the Covenant of Works is concluded at the beginning of the October issue. Next is a Letter on the Office and Work of the Holy Spirit. 'If the Spirit of God does not in any sense operate on the minds of the children of men, those who pretend to be subjects of his influence, must be arrant enthusiasts.' The writer sets out to answer four questions, beginning to answer the first:

Does the Spirit of God, in any sense whatever, operate on the minds of men, so as to influence their wills, and determine their actions?

A lengthy extract from Dr. Abbadie's *Defence of the Divinity of Christ* is reprinted. Jacques Abbadie, 1654–1727, was a French Protestant minister who became Dean of Killaloe in Ireland. The work is on at least two internet libraries.

The comparison of the soul with God is concluded, and the writer shows the infinite worth of a soul on gospel principles: that God should redeem a soul in the way declared in the gospel proves the point well. Another writer takes up the simplicity of godly sincerity. 'It would be a happy time if all professors of the gospel could with the apostles rejoice in the testimony of their consciences, that they walked in simplicity and godly sincerity.' The letter on the Atonement of Christ is concluded. Another, on the impropriety of association with wicked and profane persons, follows. How many who watch television fall foul of this warning? Then comes a declaration of the antithesis between a true Christian and a hypocrite. A letter from a sailor to his friend invites him aboard 'The Royal Refuge man-of-war' under her commander, Lord Emmanuel. Presently berthed in the Gospel-Dockyard, she is ready to receive all comers. Her destination is Mount Zion, and her commander has given assurance that nothing shall be lost that is safely stowed aboard. This is followed by the recruiting-officer's speech, in a similar vein.

Another correspondent returns to a theme from March, where a writer had taken up the argument that no soul comes to Christ until Christ comes to them. The point under review is the first writer's assertion that Christ lets a soul be at rest until he comes to it. The responder argues that the Lord disturbs and even takes away entirely the rest of soul prior to his coming, so that they are weary and heavy laden until they find their rest in him. The whole is a warning against false understandings of grace and salvation.

The next article is a response to a previous one, on prophecy. The tone is slightly sarcastic, and the writer lists a number of points to bear in mind when dealing with prophecy. These include not applying prophecy

backward in time, and learning to distinguish between literal and typical matters. At bottom, everything that can be applied to Christ and his church ought to be so applied.

Another writer reflects on his spiritual elevations and dejections. These reflections will be continued.

This is followed by one asking a perennial question: how may I, a sinner saved by grace, know it is my duty to join a church? It will be interesting to see how this is answered. A number of poems conclude the issue.

200 years ago: September & October 1822

The design of the sacred writings forms the subject for **September's** opening piece, taken under two headings, the departure of the glory of God by the fall of man, and the restoration of the glory of God by the redemption of man. Of the first, the writer states,

The design of the scriptures is to give a concise, but satisfactory description of the awful effects of the fall...to the close of scripture history at the final period of our Lord and his apostles.

God's love to his people made known by their calling is the second piece.

The saints take great pleasure in God's sovereign love, and in Christ's ancient headship, covenant engagements, incarnation, active obedience, bloody death, resurrection power, re-coronation glory, and in his all-prevalent advocacy at God's right hand.

Another letter on Christian experience, dealing with darkness of the soul, is followed by the latest the correspondence on the difference between chastisement and punishment. Words of comfort are offered from Micah 2:10. The prophecy of Ezekiel is further considered with reference to the

Christian church. Psalm 102:17 is opened up to show the Lord's regard to the poor and destitute. A correspondent accuses another of Arminianism.

The Theological Review takes up the speech by the Bishop of Peterborough in answer to a petition brought against his examining questions for candidates for ordination. Readers may recall that this was covered in a previous issue. The writer is strongly of the opinion that the Bishop is at fault, both in his original intention, and his defence of his actions. One cannot disagree. Two pieces by Toplady are commended to readers. Various other publications are mentioned, some at great length, and not all with approval. Poetry concludes the issues.

In **October** the first piece considers the value of Christ's flock, through a consideration of the price of its purchase—the blood of Christ. Psalm 45:1 provides the text for a discourse on the kingly majesty of Christ.

A correspondent wishes someone to answer his query about the beginning of Christ's spiritual reign. He evidently has in mind some who think that the spiritual reign of Christ has yet to begin.

A writer shows the divine origin of the gospel, on strong grounds. A Dwarf replies to SS who has accused him of error. A Dwarf shows, by quoting his own words from a previous issue, that the accusation is unfounded. The letters of John Bradford are continued. The consideration of Ezekiel with reference to the Church is concluded.

The doctrine of the Trinity is the subject of the next piece, in which the Editor replies to a reader whose own position is not orthodox. Another correspondent has taken the Editor to task for asserting rejecting the gospel, not sin, as the meritorious cause of condemnation. The Editor replies that to suggest, as many preachers do in his experience,

that sinners must come to Christ, is to require the impossible from them. None can come except those who the Father draws. Anything in Scripture that appears to be a call to do the works of repentance is in fact a call to sinners to discover the impossibility of saving themselves.

The interpretation of Micah 5:5 is sought by one, and another takes issue with the expression, 'How sweet is it to serve a reconciled God and Father.' Surely, he asks, it is the world that is reconciled to the Father, and not the Father to the world. Next is an account of a young man's conversion. A rather troubling account of a man's persecution is recorded. It appears that he and some others in a congregation came to a clear view of the doctrines of grace, and met outside the normal services for mutual support. The man in question, being a Deacon in the congregation, was singled out by the Minister and accused of various faults and eventually excommunicated. The one who submitted this piece styles himself An Enemy of Priestcraft. A poem and notices conclude the issue.

100 years ago: September & October 1922

Two parables on prayer, from Luke 18, provide the subject for the opening piece in **September**. Two more parables provide the text for a sermon on the development and growth of evil in the church, from Matt 13:31–33. Solomon's fall in 1 Kings 11:9f gives a writer cause to warn against turning from the Lord. A communion sermon from Samuel Rutherford is reproduced. The text is Revelation 19:7–14. The Canadian contributor writes on Natural Darkness and Supernatural Light. Adam, Nathanael and Zacchaeus are taken as types, all connected

with trees: Adam hid from the Lord among trees, Nathanael was seen by the Lord under one, and Zacchaeus went up one to behold the Lord. A devotional piece on Christ as the Master is followed by another on the difference between needs and wants. The ongoing troubles of the Church Missionary Society and its refusal to endorse the authority of Scripture is chronicled at length. Short correspondence and notices of two deaths lead to the Protestant Beacon, and to warnings about the introduction of Anglo-catholic practices into the African churches. That error continues to plague those churches to this day. Book notices conclude the issue.

The opening sermon for **October**, from 2 Kings 5:10, speaks to the cleansing of a sinner. Two further parables from Matthew 13 are considered. The interpretation proposed for the Pearl of Great Price may surprise some, but is worth weighing. What lies in the hearts of men is considered from John 2:23–25. A sermon by the late James Ormiston, from 2 Chron 1:3–5 is concluded from an earlier issue. Samuel Rutherford's communion sermon is concluded. Bible texts on prominent buildings are commended. Questions propounded in Holy Writ takes Matt 21:42. Psalm 107:43 provides another devotional piece. Christ's vicarious atonement is set forth to encourage us. The troubles of CMS continue: this time over the appointment of a man to a college in India who denied the Virgin birth. Not so, came the cheerful reply: he merely doubts it! The Fatherhood of God is set forth, and this is followed by correspondence, further obituaries, and the Protestant Beacon: this time on Confession and the Confessional. Book notices conclude the issue.

TO BE CONTINUED

Correction. The quotation from John Flavel on p. 127 was in fact from James Hervey.

BOOK REVIEWS

The Glorious Feast of the Gospel

Richard Sibbes

Banner of Truth, 2021. 184 pp pbk £5.50 ISBN 978-1-80040-090-0

This is one of the latest additions to *Banner of Truth*'s series of 'Puritan Paperbacks.' These now number 50 and the full set (subject to availability) can be obtained from the publisher at a cost of £221.

The author, Richard Sibbes lived from 1577 to 1635 and spent much of his ministry in Cambridge as lecturer at Holy Trinity (1610–15) and master of Catherine Hall (1626–35). He is regarded as one of the greatest preachers of his day and among those of later generations he is said to have influenced are Wesley, Spurgeon and Lloyd-Jones.

First published in 1650, the present volume is subtitled *Christ's Gracious Invitation and Royal Entertainment of Believers*. Whilst this may perhaps bring to mind Our Lord's parable of the great wedding feast, the book is a series of sermons on Isaiah 25, verses 6 to 9, commencing 'And in this mountain shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.' The sermons are prefaced by an address 'To the Reader' by the three ministers who had evidently prepared them for publication, Arthur Jackson, James Nalton and Will Taylor. This also provides a useful summary of the contents of the sermons. It is interesting to note that whilst Sibbes himself had remained loyal to the Church of England during his lifetime, Jackson and Nalton were both numbered among the 'ejected ministers' of 1662.

What they have preserved for us is certainly a rich feast for the believer, setting before him both the great benefits he enjoys in this life and the sumptuous fare of the greater heavenly banquet to come. Here is one short extract to illustrate this, from Sermon 8, specifically on verses 8 and 9 of Isaiah 25, 'We have waited for him':

Though we wait, God will perform whatsoever we wait for. And therefore, 'Lo, we have waited for him.' As there is a time of promising, so there is a time of performing; as there is a seedtime, so there is a time of harvest. There is a succession in nature, and a succession in grace; as the day followeth the night, and the Sabbath the week, and the jubilee such a term of years; and as the triumph followeth the war; and as the consummation of marriage the contract; so it is a happy and glorious condition, above all conditions here on earth. Therefore in this text you have not only the seedtime of the Christian..., but here is likewise the harvest of a Christian. As there is a time of sowing, so there is a time of reaping; as time of waiting, so of enjoying. We have waited and now, lo, we have what we waited for.

Very often Sibbes' arguments are expressed in the form of objections and answers, as in this example from Sermon 2, concerning Christian joy:

Objection. But the world's objection is, that of all kind of men in the world, those that profess religion are the most melancholy.

Answer. But if it be so, it is because they are not religious enough. They have pardon from sin, and freedom from the guilt of sin, but know it not. They have good things, and do not know them. And so in regard of spiritual comforts, God's people may have spiritual joy

and inward consolation, and yet not know of it... But the true character of a Christian is to be cheerful, and none else can be truly cheerful and joyous.

A message perhaps that today's Christians need to take to heart!

Sibbes writes throughout in lucid prose, so that the reader can readily grasp his meaning. The end result is powerful medicine for the soul, a spiritual tonic to restore the weary Christian and set him firmly on the way to the heavenly banquet.

Other writings by Sibbes are also offered by Banner in both the Puritan Paperbacks and Pocket Puritans series.

JBD

The Works of Robert Traill

Banner of Truth, 2020. 2 vols, 543pp & 597pp hdbk ISBN 978-1-84871-985-9

We welcome the republishing of Robert Traill's Works. The BOT published these volumes in 1975 as facsimiles of the early 19th century edition. The four original volumes were issued in two volumes and suffered from an imperfect typeface. This new edition has been completely re-typeset and additional sermons have been added. The typeface is pleasant to the eyes and easy to read.

The volumes do suffer from there being no adequate biographical introduction. There is a biographical sketch which covers just five and a half pages. We are told that Traill was born at Ely in May 1642 and died after a fruitful ministry in 1716. The unnamed writer of the biographical sketch (although he is identified as a Presbyterian—see footnote to p xiv) tells us that Traill was ordained as a Presbyterian minister in London in 1670, spent some time on the Bass Rock for his Presbyterian principles from where he was released from this prison in 1677 and moved to Cranbrook, Kent, where he ministered to a Presbyterian congregation; this was followed by his ministering to a Scottish congregation in London. Whilst he was in London the republication of Dr Crisp's Sermons caused a controversy which led to a 'flood of legal doctrine...among the Dissenting ministers. ... The doctrines of grace, as explained by the Reformers, were branded as Antinomianism' (p xiv). Traill ably defended the orthodox position in his six sermons on Gal. 2:21, which are published in Volume 2 of the *Works* from which the following quotations are made: 'Their great error lay here, in mixing the works of the law with the righteousness of Christ, in the grand point of the justification of a sinner before God' (p 388). 'Justification is not barely the pardon of sin; it is indeed always inseparable from it, the pardon of sin is a fruit of it, or a part of it. Justification is God's acquitting man and freeing him from all attainder; it is God's taking off the attainder that the broken law of God lays upon every sinner.... Justification is an act of God's free grace; sanctification is a work of God's Spirit: sanctification is a work wrought within us' (p 403).

Apart from the improvements made in the presentation of these books, there is also an addition of further miscellaneous sermons taken from *Select Practical Writings of Robert Traill* published by the Free Church of Scotland in 1845. The writer of the biographical sketch tell his readers there were (at the time of the writing of the original sketch) a number of manuscript volumes held by the family descendants of Traill. It would no doubt be profitable if a search could be made to see if any of those manuscripts are in existence and where. And if they could be published.

The original reviewer wrote in 1976 in *The Gospel Magazine*: 'Here is an example of Puritan preaching of a high order in which there is a searching exposition of the Scripture leading constantly to a practical application!' (TGM, 1975, p 218). We agree, and recommend these volumes to our readers.

JEN

In the Shadow of the Rock: An Auto-biography

Geoff Thomas

RHB, Grand Rapids, 2022. 325pp hdbk £27.99 ISBN 978-1-60178-867-2

Geoff Thomas is a well known minister of the gospel. He has spent most of his ministerial life as the pastor of the Baptist Congregation meeting at Alfred Place, Aberystwyth, Wales. He has also undertaken an international ministry and is a voluminous writer. He now undertakes an itinerant ministry

In this volume he traces his life from childhood through school, university, Westminster Theological Seminary and his pastorate down to his leaving Alfred Place and his moving away from Wales. The opening three chapters are really introductory, in which we are told of his parents and their families. He then moves on to the town in which he was brought up and the schools he attended; all of which were to influence his life and outlook.

There is much we could say about this man and minister, but we would rather let him speak for himself, as follows:

He speaks of his call by grace: 'In March 1954, as I heard his gospel message one Sunday night, I was given a heart assurance that Jesus Christ was the Lamb of God who had taken away my sins. It was an event of recognition. I agreed with the claim that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. It was not mere chance and luck that made the world and us. I agreed the creator is not silent...' (p 61).

He tells us his story 'warts and all', and is perfectly honest about his failings: 'Writing one's autobiography can be a dangerously ego-reinforcing exercise. My secret falls are between me and God. Many times I wonder about the people I have hurt, how they are doing now, and have deep regrets all over again. But there are other costly falls of mine...' (p 89).

He speaks lovingly of his dear wife whom he married in 1964, and speaking of her after her death he writes: 'It was not her good life and prayers that saved her; it was Christ. It was not her joy that saved her, it was Christ. It was not even her faith that saved her. That was a mere instrument that made her put her trust in Jesus Christ for everything in living and in dying and in the glory beyond. Her presence at the feet of Christ while I am writing these words and while you are reading them is all because of who Christ is and what He did and does do still...' (p 165).

Space forbid further quotations from this book.

You will find in this book a fascinating recounting of Evangelical Christianity in the latter part of the twentieth century from the eyes of one who has taken a prominent part amongst the Evangelical and Reformed constituency. I found the book to be interesting and at times, gripping. We have given to us a fascinating account of the faculty of Westminster Seminary during the time he was a student there.

JEN

MINISTRY

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

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

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The Trustees of *The Gospel Magazine* are looking to complete their physical collection of past issues. All years are as far as possible available on the website (gospelmagazine.org.uk) but we should like to add the volumes for 1772, 1799, 1942, 1944 and 1945.

If any reader of this *Magazine* is in possession of any of these years and willing to part with them, please contact the Editor. *We are happy to pay reasonable prices for these volumes.*

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