

JANUARY–FEBRUARY 2023

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The Gospel Magazine



Reason • Vain philosophy the spoiler of the church • Images

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1766–2023

*Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.
Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.
Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

These texts, which have been associated for so many years with *The Gospel Magazine*, give some indication of what this bi-monthly stands for. We seek to present the Lord Jesus as the only Saviour for a lost world: to edify the people of God; and to promote unity among believers, ‘the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace’.

The Gospel Magazine is believed to be the oldest religious periodical still being published. One distinguished former editor was the Rev. Augustus Toplady, whose famous hymn, ‘Rock of Ages cleft for me, Let me hide myself in Thee’, was first published in these pages.

The Trust Deed of *The Gospel Magazine* is defined in terms of the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion of the Church of England, but the magazine itself is non-denominational. We aim to provide variety in unity, publishing articles from a wide diversity of past and present writers committed to ‘the faith once delivered to the saints’.

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REASON

‘But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear’ (1 Peter 3:15).

WE are told by the Apostle Peter to sanctify the Lord God in our hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh us a reason of the hope that is in us with meekness and fear. What do we make of this word ‘reason’? The unbelieving world has a very different understanding of it from the one we should have. The world’s understanding, however, can be more influential on us than we may suppose.

The world understands reason to be rationalism. How often have I spoken with people who say they would be prepared to accept the gospel if only a certain matter could be explained to them. That matter might be the doctrine of the Trinity, or the reason why God allows suffering, or why Jesus is the only Saviour. No matter what I tell them, they are unsatisfied. Why? Because they can think of reasons to object to something I have told them. They consider that the obstacles they can raise are reasonable excuses to refuse the

gospel. They cannot see that their reliance on so-called reason is nothing more than a demonstration of deep-seated unbelief. They think they are wise than God, and that they have seen the flaws in his salvation.

There is probably no area of doctrine where such people cannot raise objections. These objections are not well founded, nor are they acceptable reasons to reject the gospel. One of the most common areas of objection is the Bible itself.

The Bible teaches special creation, no matter what the theistic evolutionists might allege. God tells us plainly that he created the whole world and the heavenly bodies out of nothing by the word of his power in six days. The world—and some professing Christians—reject this in favour of the allegedly rational theory of evolution. We are urged to consider that it is more probable that pre-existing matter, the origin of which cannot be explained, blew up in an explosion

so vast and powerful that a few molecules floating in space became planets and plants, moons and mammals, seas and stars. This is supposed to be more rational than the belief that the eternal God worked as he has told us in his word, creating man in his image and setting him at the pinnacle of the creation.

The Bible teaches that God made man to be male and female, to be fruitful and replenish the earth. The Bible teaches that God made the man from the dust of the earth, and the woman from a rib taken from the man. The Lord God brought them together in the first marriage, and blessed them with children, and children's children, down to this very day. The world—and some professing Christians—teach that the concepts of male and female are arbitrary and can—and even should be—discarded. We have long been told that we are killing the planet by the explosion of the population, and thus two key aspects of human nature are denied by the world. The implication is that either God was mistaken in making man as he did, and in commanding him to reproduce, or that the whole of that account is false and should be discarded. Either way, reason is alleged to show the failure of revelation, and thus the rational argument is thought to triumph over faith.

The Bible teaches election and predestination. Our election is unconditional, in that the Lord God did not look into the future and see who would respond to the gospel, choosing only them. Rather, the Lord God set his electing love on some for no other reason than his choosing. The world—and some (many) professing Christians—reject this, or hold to a view of predestination that is mere fatalism. They prefer to speak of the autonomy of the individual, of freedom of choice, and of God not making robots. Reason, they say, teaches us that we have free

will, and they deny the sovereign power of our Creator to have the authority of the potter over the clay.

The Bible teaches the total depravity of sinners, and declares our inability to do good. Our supposedly good works, done before we come to faith, are only sins committed with the feelings of self-righteousness. The world—and many professing Christians—deny this, teaching instead that we can do enough to earn the favour of God; if indeed we need to earn his favour, which they frequently deny. After all, they cry, who is God to stand in judgement over us? He allows suffering. Children die of diseases and famine, and good people (as the world judges goodness) get sick. Such people are convinced that, so long as we do our best, the Lord can ask no more of us, and should be thankful that we deign to do any good at all.

The Bible teaches the exclusiveness of Jesus Christ to be the Saviour. He alone is the lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world; we look in vain through the whole of history for another redeemer. The world—and some professing Christians—believe that all religions lead to God, and that sincerity is all that can be asked. The present Bishop of Rome is on record as teaching that, since man is made in God's image, we all contain a spark of the divine, and therefore all will be saved including atheists of the bitterest sort. The world thinks that all religions are equal, and equally foolish. If there must be religion, let it take on the care of the poor unfortunates of society, because that at least is acceptable to unbelievers. Reason teaches that religion was invented by man to explain the inexplicable, and to provide a grand authority into whose mouth breath-taking claims could be put. If a being called God tells us to do this or that, or to avoid this or that, then we are more likely to take notice

than if a mere man says it; yet, according to the rationalist, a mere man did say it. We foolishly allow ourselves to be beguiled by the concept of divinity, and reason frees us from such primitive shackles.

The Bible teaches us the depth and richness of Christian doctrine. You will no doubt have noticed that some of the paragraphs above are taken from the Canons of Dort. The so-called Five Points are not the sum of all truth but are merely the responses of the Reformed to the Five Remonstrances of the followers of Arminius. The creeds and the Protestant Reformed statements of faith offer rich selections of doctrinal truth, but even these cannot begin to encompass the fulness thereof. The world—and some professing Christians—dislike doctrine and claim that it divides, that it is nothing more than the invention of clever people, and that it is completely unnecessary. The father of English Rationalism, the philosopher John Locke, reduced the tenets of the Christian faith to one, the belief that Jesus is the Messiah. His idea of belief was, one suspects, mere intellectual acceptance of the proposition, devoid of any element of trust. This is the level of doctrine preferred by many, since it allows people to believe whatever they wish to believe, and to allow others to believe contrary things, yet all claim to stand roughly together.

How ought we to understand Peter's exhortation? He has been speaking of suffering for righteousness' sake, and has shown that, whereas we might suppose that as obedient children of God we have no cause to suffer, vv. 10–13, in reality wicked people might bring us to suffering, v. 14. In such a case we are not to be afraid of their terror, nor be troubled. Rather, we should sanctify the Lord God in our hearts, and be ready always to give an answer to all who ask us for a

reason for the hope that is in us. What does he mean? He means that we should answer in the Lord's name, and to the Lord's glory; in other words, not to justify or defend ourselves, and far less to hurt or condemn our accusers. The hope that is in us is the faith worked in our hearts by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is our love to him, our trust in him, our resting on him. When we are asked why we are not afraid in the face of persecution and suffering, we are not required to explain the whole body of divinity, but to express our confidence in the Saviour. The hope that is in us cannot be arrived at through the exercise of reasoning, yet it is far from unreasonable. Once we accept the basic premise, that Jesus Christ died on the cross to atone for my sins and that I have union with him through that justification which is by faith, then the rest follows. He is mine and I am his. I am as secure in him now as if I were with him in glory. My treasure is in heaven, and none can take it from me. As the Apostle Paul put it, 'I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day' (2 Tim 1:12).

We have such confidence in Christ that our minds are at rest, even when we are troubled and oppressed. Our Saviour told us before that we should face such things, and the hatred of the world is a confirmation that we are not of the world. We are not irrational to believe the gospel, but entirely rational, our eyes having been opened to behold the truth and our hearts having been renewed to receive it and believe it. Our wills have been transformed, so that we now delight to do the will of him who saved us. We live in him, for him and to him, and we long to be with him, as we know we will be in the life to come. The world considers this folly. We give thanks for the unspeakable comfort. ¶

JOY

by THE EDITOR

Glad tidings of great joy are central to the message of the incarnation. We are drawn to those things, events and encouragements that lift up our hearts and cause us to rejoice. This is true of everyone in the world, although for many the standard of joy is usually low. For the child of God the standard of joy is as high as can be, since the source of all joy is our heavenly Father, and the nature of true joy is contained in his gracious promises, blessings, graces and goodness to us. There is no greater joy than the Lord Jesus Christ.

Joy comes in a variety of situations, and is connected to a number of aspects of our lives. Consider the following.

‘There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth’ (Luke 15:10).

The purest joy must be the joy of heaven. There, where the glory of God is seen in all its fulness, and where nothing short of absolute perfection can be found, the fulness of joy is to be had. And what brings joy in heaven? As far as the angels of God are concerned, the repentance of a sinner is a cause of great joy. Why should this be?

The angels—beings created by the Lord God during the six days of creation (I leave you to ponder the day)—observed the disobedience of Adam and the effects of the curse. It must have been beyond strange to them that Adam should rebel against the perfect goodness of the Lord. The heavenly beings who worship and serve before the eternal throne see the beauty and holiness of God, and it must be impossible for them

to comprehend why any should sin against him. When Adam was placed in the garden, in the presence of the Lord God, and invited to enjoy his hospitality, there was nothing to justify anything other than loving and willing obedience. The Lord God was only good to Adam and his wife. He gave them a home, an abundance of good things to enjoy, work for which they were entirely suited, and, above all, his face shining upon them. That they should spurn all this in sin is a mystery to all ages, yet we know that they did. We live with the effects of their sin, and every day we feel the consequences of the fall in and around us.

The greater mystery is that in the day of Adam’s sin the Lord promised the coming of the woman’s seed, who should bruise the serpent’s head and it his heel. Hope was not only not lost, but it was set before Adam as the federal head of the human race in the very hour when only the blackness of despair was evident.

What is repentance? We know the word means a change of mind, thinking again. Yet repentance is not simply the conclusion to a rational process, as if we can reason our way from unbelief to faith in God. That change of mind is itself a work of grace. It is what Legion experienced, who before was wild and untameable, but who was found clothed and in his right mind when the Lord Jesus healed him. The sinner who repents is the one who has obtained grace, whose heart has been renewed from above, and who has been given the gift of faith. Repentance and faith are not the same thing, yet none can repent who do not also believe, and none

believe who are not also repentance—if we are speaking of justifying faith.

Why should the angels of God rejoice when a sinner repents? In part, because this is a powerful acknowledgement that the Lord our God is good. The unbeliever is in fear of God, as Adam was when he sinned. The repentant sinner now knows the Lord to be his Father in heaven, and he turns to him as such.

In part, repentance is a demonstration of divine grace, a grace not available to the angels. Salvation is through the seed of the woman, and the two parties involved are God on the one hand, and man on the other. There is no redeemer for the angels who fell with Satan. There is no atonement for them and so there is no hope for them. That man should hear the promise of redemption may be a wonder to the angels. That the Lord should be prepared to save sinful people may also be a wonder to them. When a sinner is brought to repentance, the goodness of God and the power of his salvation is seen. No wonder the angels are moved to joy. They have witnessed a great miracle. We who have been brought to repentance, and who trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, should also know the greatness of this miracle of grace, and our hearts ought always to be filled with joy. Let us, with the angels of God, rejoice over the repentance of a sinner.

‘I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth’ (3 John 4).

Here is a particular joy for ministers of the gospel and for parents. John wrote as a minister of the gospel, an apostle and a martyr for Christ. Walking in truth is a sign of two things in particular, which is why there is joy in seeing one’s children walk in truth.

In the first place, walking in truth is a sign that the truth, having been preached,

has been received. One reason why many professing Christians appear not to walk in truth is that they have been taught very badly. This is the fault of their teachers, but not so much as to excuse their hearers. After all, if we have the word of God before us, the Spirit of God within us, and the presence of God with us, then we ought to be led into all truth. We know we do not all arrive at the truth in an instant, but through long years of study, contemplation of the word, and prayer. We know that we learn through experience, and in the company of fellow believers. But we can be kept from entering the truth as deeply as we should by the bad or false teaching of some. It is important to know who is teaching us, and to be certain that they are walking in the truth themselves. When a gospel minister sees his people walking in the truth—not merely as he judges truth but as Scripture declares it, the creeds and Confessions summarise it, and the testimony of the faithful down the ages submits to it—then he has good cause to be filled with joy.

This is because of the second aspect; the reception of the truth. A school teacher may explain something very clearly and as simply as possible, yet it is likely that some in the class will not get it; to them, the matter remains obscure. Sometimes this is because of a lack of application, sometimes because some people need things explaining in very specific ways, and sometimes because a complete lack of interest means they never actually listen. The fault does not lie with the teacher but with the student. In gospel matters we know that not everyone hears the same things. We come to the truth with prejudices and preconceptions, and as a result we have a tendency to hear what we want to hear, and we are very capable of not hearing what we dislike. We consider that Mr or

Mrs So-and-so needs to hear certain things, without seeing our own need to hear them. But when we receive the truth, in its fulness, we testify to the working of grace. It is grace alone that shows us the Lord Jesus Christ in his glory and power, in his saving work, and in his kingly rule. It is grace alone that shows us the implications of being justified by faith, so that this does not become an excuse to live lawlessly. It is grace alone that teaches us to entrust all to Jesus Christ, so that we can confidently say we have no other hope in this world or the next.

Walking in truth means living as Christians. It means having all our opinions, hopes, ambitions and joys shaped and moulded by the gospel. It means giving Christ all the glory, and honouring him in word and deed. It means being separate from the world, even though the world hates us for being different.

Such a walk brings joy to Christian parents who bring up their children in the knowledge and admonition of the Lord, as well as to pastors who seek to teach their people faithfully. Parents who take their duties seriously, who read the Scriptures and pray with their children, who discipline them in godly principles, and who are themselves examples of godliness, are filled with joy when their children come to faith. They still love their unbelieving children, but there is a special joy to be had when a child is born again, and begins to live for Christ in love and not out of a sense of duty to their parents. Happy is the home, and happy are the parents, as well as the congregation, in such a case.

‘The joy of our heart is ceased; our dance is turned into mourning’ (Lam 5:15).

Joy is not constant, nor is it something we can stir up in ourselves in every situation. There are times when joy declines and

departs, and we are left with sorrow and tears. There is a time to weep and a time to laugh; a time to mourn and a time to dance. Bereavement, personal illness, the unkindness of others—especially those we consider to be friends—and the trials of life can all stand in opposition to joy. When we fall into sin we know the departure of joy, for we have no pleasure in sin and we mourn the breaking of fellowship with our gracious Saviour. Joy can be a fragile flower, and the frosty winds of trouble can cause it to wither.

The context of the verse at the head of this section, however, points us to a specific reason for the loss of joy. Jerusalem has fallen into the hands of a fierce and cruel enemy. The suffering of the remnant is too great for the prophet to bear. He speaks of the wickedness perpetrated in the place, 5:2–16, pleading with the Lord to behold the reproaches of his people, v. 1, and calling on him to restore them, vv. 19–21, even though he knows the cause of that trouble is so serious, v. 22. We look at the state of the visible church in our nation today, and we mourn its terrible condition. The timeless truths recovered at the Reformation have been cast out. The defenders and promoters of gospel truth have been rejected with their proclamations. The wonderful gospel preaching of the sixteenth century Reformers, who cleansed the visible church of its errors and abuses, gave way to the deeply experiential ministry of the Puritans, who had to deal with the rising rational opposition to biblical truth. By the middle of the seventeenth century too much of the church was given over to millennial muddles, with the expectation that New Jerusalem would appear in England. The failure of that expectation largely explains the death of the Commonwealth and restoration of the monarchy. By then the Church of England was riddled with Arminianism,

although there was a solid remnant who remained faithful to the 'Calvinianism' of the first Reformers. While much of the old Puritanism descended into Unitarianism, the Arminians declined into Pelagianism, Socinianism and Rationalism. That situation prevails today. Here and there gatherings of the Lord's people, whether parts of larger denominations or independent, have sought to maintain the old ways and to preach the pure gospel. Yet we know that few men seem to be called to maintain the old paths, and that aging congregations must wait, perhaps decades, for the Lord to send them an under-shepherd rather than the hirelings who bite and tear the flock.

Let our cry ascend to heaven, as we mourn the state of the church in our nation. Let us pour out our hearts to the Lord, seeking his mercy to overturn this present trouble and to restore us once more. Let this be our joy, that we commit all to him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.

'Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation' (Hab 3:18).

Habakkuk lived and ministered in a most difficult time. The people of God had sinned and deserved to be punished. Almost inexplicably the instrument of judgement was a nation far more wicked than Judah. Part of this short book is taken up with the prophet's difficulty in accepting this, but the conclusion to chapter 2 is full of hope: 'But the Lord is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him.' The sovereignty of God is our great anchor in the midst of the upheavals and turmoils of this life. Whatever else may change, or appear to be changing, our God does not change. His will is absolute and his power is supreme. This is why chapter 3 is a psalm, as vv. 1 and 19 state. The

contents of the prayer is intended to teach the people who are going into exile to hold fast to the faith once delivered. The judgments that are falling in his people are those that were threatened long ago if the people turned to serve idols. The terrible calamity that now overtakes the nation cannot have come as a surprise since it was all set out in Deuteronomy. The fruitfulness promised in Deut 30:9 to those who repent and return to the Lord is nowhere in sight, as Hab 3:17 shows. Yet it is precisely this thought that leads the prophet to his declaration of joy in the God of his salvation. How can this be?

Notice that the threat of judgment for sin is accompanied by the promise of restoration upon repentance, Deut 30:1ff. Habakkuk knows perfectly well that the dreadful situation the people are experiencing is not down to the growing power of the Babylonians, nor to the weakness or unfaithfulness of the Lord. Rather, it is exactly as God had forewarned. This means that even invasion and exile are evidences of the Lord's covenant faithfulness. Far more terrible would be his abandoning his people because of their sins. Suppose he had cast them off for ever, declaring them to be not worthy of his patience or grace. Suppose he did the same to us, because we fall into sin so often. Yet the glory of covenant faithfulness is that we are not cast off, and the throne of grace is always accessible through the shed blood of our Saviour Christ. Our God is faithful. He keeps his word no matter how often we fail to do our part. Habakkuk knew this, and so found joy when every sign was against hope. If the Lord has brought the covenant curses upon his people after they have turned from him, then the covenant blessings for repentance cannot be far off. Our hope, therefore, lies not in our repentance but in God's faithfulness. This does not mean we should not

repent, but that we rely not on repentance but on his unchanging word for our salvation. We are altogether unprofitable servants, and we depend entirely on the Lord to save us, help us, strengthen us and to love us. We love him because he first loved us. We obey him because he has given us the gift of faith. We can only do anything for him because he strengthens us. He is the God of our salvation, and with such a God we know that this salvation is full and effectual. Therefore we are not cast down by the trials and difficulties of life, even when these things are the consequence of our own sins. We know that God's purposes for us in our Lord Jesus Christ are not thwarted. His power is not diminished. His will it not changed. We rejoice in his constancy, faithfulness and glorious power, his sovereignty. This is our fixed point, our foundation, our rock and anchor. Let us, like the prophet, joy in the God of our salvation.

'Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore' (Psalm 16:11).

There remains yet a rest for the people of God. It is not an earthly rest but a heavenly. This will be our final joy; final, because it will be unchanging. This will be the culmination of the whole work of redemption. We will at last be in the presence of our Saviour, the Lamb of God who sits upon the throne. We will be gathered before him, part of an innumerable company. Together, we will sing his praises without end, for he is worthy of all honour and glory. We will not be troubled by sin, for there will be nothing corrupt or corrupting in that place. There will be no more sorrow, no more suffering, and

no more tears.

We will be there because, in the day of Adam's sin, our heavenly Father revealed the coming of the Saviour. In the fulness of the time he came, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law. Through the preaching of the everlasting gospel, and through the operation of irresistible grace, the elect of God have come to faith and repentance. We have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, and have been renewed in our minds and hearts. The covenant faithfulness of God kept us through the years and decades until we came to faith, not looking upon our rebelliousness but upon his eternal purpose for us. Though we live in days when the truth is hardly known and when righteousness is rarely to be found, yet we know that our calling and election are sure. We have not been brought to a false hope, but as we are Christ's so are we secure as the sheep of his fold.

We begin to know the joy of God's presence now. Although our joy may ebb and flow with the circumstances of life, its fundamental essence does not depart. This is because at the right hand of God sits his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who declared the work of redemption to be finished on the cross. Our joy is inseparable from Christ, and as Christ is ours for ever, so our joy cannot be taken away. When we are with him in glory, then shall we know the fulness of joy. Until then we give thanks for such joy as is granted to us, knowing from whom it comes and by whom it is maintained. True joy is Christ, and Christ is ours, and we are his. Let this new year, with all its abundant difficulties and trials, be a year of true joy to each one of us. ¶

BEGIN THE YEAR

by CARINE MACKENZIE

As we start this New Year, have you wondered why we call it 2023? Our calendar is set by an early estimation of when Christ came into the world. The years before Christ's birth are referred to as BC, standing for Before Christ and the years after as AD, or Anno Domini, which is Latin for 'in the year of our Lord'. This system was devised by a monk in the year 525. So our calendar is set from the momentous event of Jesus, the Son of God, coming into the world. God sent his Son to the world because he loved it so much.

God had created the world in the beginning. He created man in his own image—male and female. Adam and Eve lived in the ideal environment in the Garden of Eden. They had fellowship and communion with God. But Satan in the form of a serpent interfered. He cast doubt on God's word and tempted Eve and then Adam to disobey God's word and rebel. Sin entered the perfect world and it was no longer perfect. Every person born since then, has been born a sinner. We need to be made right with God. God provided the remedy when he sent his Son Jesus who was born like one of us. He became our great deliverer when he bore our punishment for sin on the cross. When we use the number of the year—like 2023—we can remember the coming of the Saviour to the world so many years ago.

In the book of 1 Kings we read about Solomon building the temple. This was started in the fourth year of Solomon's reign. The date is identified as 480 years after the children of Israel came out of the land of Egypt (1 Kings 6:1). Time in this case was measured from God's saving work for the children of Israel.

The children of Israel had settled in Egypt at the time when Joseph had been used by God to save his family and the Egyptian people from famine. Pharaoh was very grateful to Joseph and allowed his family to live and rear their animals in the best of the land. But many years after Joseph's death, another Pharaoh ruled Egypt. He had never known Joseph. He hated the Israelites who lived in his land. He was afraid they would become more powerful than the Egyptians, so he made them slaves. They had to do hard, back-breaking work making bricks for Pharaoh's building projects.

God knew all about the Israelites and their difficult situation. He had a plan to deliver them. The man he used was Moses. God told Moses to ask Pharaoh to let the people go. Moses was afraid. 'I will teach you what to say' said God. 'Aaron, your brother, will help you to speak to Pharaoh.'

Pharaoh was stubborn and did not want to let the people go. God sent plagues to teach Pharaoh a lesson—but nine plagues later, still Pharaoh had not consented. After the tenth plague Pharaoh finally begged the Israelites to leave. It was the worst plague by far. The first-born son in every Egyptian family died, causing great mourning throughout the land.

On the night before they left Egypt, the Israelites ate a feast of roast lamb with bitter herbs and bread made without yeast. They ate it hastily, ready to leave. When they killed the lamb, they took some of the blood and put it on the doorposts and lintel of their homes. When the angel of death passed through the land killing all the firstborn sons, the homes with the blood

on the doorposts and lintel were ‘passed over’. The feast was called the Passover Feast.

This Passover Feast was celebrated each year from then on, to remember God’s gracious deliverance from slavery in Egypt. They celebrated this feast in Solomon’s time, 480 years after the event. We read of Jesus celebrating this feast with his disciples in the upper room, the night before he died on the cross (Mark 14:12–26).

For the feast a spotless lamb was killed for each family. This is a picture of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. His death, in our place and for our sins, is all that is required for the forgiveness of our sins. Jesus Christ died to save the ungodly and to reconcile sinners to God again.

Bible Search

Find the missing words from the verses. The initials of the correct answers will spell out a word from Exodus 14:13.

1. For all have _____, and come short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23)
2. For I _____ my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.
(Psalm 51:3)
3. I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with _____
have I drawn thee. (Jeremiah 31:3)
4. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the _____ through our
Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 15:57)
5. The Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward
_____, but the Lord looketh on the heart. (1 Samuel 16:7)
6. The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb
of God, which _____ away the sin of the world. (John 1:29)
7. I will _____ thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I
will guide thee with mine eye. (Psalm 32:8)
8. So Christ was once _____ to bear the sins of many. (Hebrews 9:28)
9. But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son
of God; and that believing ye might have life through his _____.
(John 20:31)

VAIN PHILOSOPHY THE SPOILER OF THE CHURCH

A sermon by CHARLES BRIDGES (1794–1869)

Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ' (Colossians 2:8)

WE thank God for the solemn ordinance of this day,—setting apart a much-honoured Brother to the Episcopate in our Church.¹ We thank God, because we can testify that he is no 'novice' in his Master's work; but that he has so 'used' the lower ministrations 'well, as to purchase to himself this good degree' (1 Tim 3:6, 11). And now we most earnestly commend him to your 'helping prayer, that for the gift bestowed upon him by the means of many persons, thanks may be given by many on his behalf' (2 Cor 1:11).

And, indeed, at this fearful crisis, we—both Bishops and Presbyters—must cast ourselves upon the prayers of the Church—specially upon the pleading of the Great Head of the Church—that we may be richly endowed with wisdom, boldness, and love.

The first word of our text is a warning—Beware! Thrice in this chapter does the trumpet sound (vv. 4, 8, 18). For in times of danger the Shepherd must become the Watchman. He must give the alarm. 'The thief and the robber are climbing up some other way,' lurking about, to spoil the fold

and carry off the prey (John 10:1, 8–10).

Our Lord identifies these 'thieves and robbers' as the false teachers in his Church (ibid). Such teachers the Apostle knew to exist in the Colossian Church. Such we know to be found in our own. To poison the waters of life is Satan's deadly hate.

Our subject will lead us to consider—The Power of Satan in the Church of God. And this we shall endeavour to open to you, in dependance upon the Divine Teacher, by marking the agency which he employs, and the means by which it works.

I. *The agency which he employs: Philosophy.* But surely not all philosophy. The Apostle carefully distinguishes between the substance and the perversion. He expressly limits his caution to that philosophy, which is linked with vain deceit. The Bible is full of the true philosophy—the love of wisdom engaging the whole heart and soul in the knowledge of the ever-blessed God. And what exercise can be more noble and elevated within its own legitimate province?

And yet in the early times of the Gospel there was a strange mixture of the Heathen and the Christian element—of the school of Plato, and of the school of Christ. It was, in fact, Platonized Christianity. Philosophizing converts brought the leaven of Paganism into their new faith; and—as the Church historian admits, 'the Platonic predominated

¹ This sermon was preached at the consecration of Samuel Waldergrave as Bishop of Carlisle on November 11, 1860. It was published 'at the request of the Lord Archbishop of York and the Lord Bishop of Carlisle.' The original text contains a number of footnotes referring to works no longer likely to be available: most of these have been omitted. Scripture references have been brought into the text for ease of reading.

greatly over the Christian element.' 'Early prejudices,' he remarks 'might react in such a way, as to pervert their mode of apprehending and of shaping the truth' (Neander's *Church History*, book iv. 92, i. 25. Comp. Mosheim (Soame's Ed.), i. 143.) The mass of professing converts—as one tersely observes—'paganized Christianity to christen paganism' (Coleridge, quoted in Rigg's *Anglican Theology*, a careful and well-considered work) They could not be the true disciples till they were brought down to the humbling conviction—'If any man among you seem to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise' (1 Cor 3:18).

And thus does the vain philosophy of our day set up Man's wisdom as wiser than God's, to explain—should we not rather say, to explain away?—the Revelation of his gospel. The extreme of subtilty is used, the closest imitation of the truth, smoothly keeping on some terms with the Bible, as if drawing from its source. But lay it open to the broad light. What is it? Infidel theories are grafted upon Scripture, under Scripture names, sometimes in Scripture language, totally perverted from its natural meaning (Thus, the Sacrifice of the cross is set out mainly, as the most perfect example of self-sacrifice and sympathy. The name is retained; but the great and primary object connected with the name is denied or obscured). Thus does Heathen philosophy supplant the gospel. The Book of books is degraded from its Divine supremacy; its infallibility is denied; its authority is disannulled as the rule of faith and conduct, and as the standard of determinate truth. Nothing can be more revolting from the laws of true philosophy than this attempt to place our darkling speculations upon God's own level. The teachers of this school appear to have framed a God after their own imaginations—an ideal God of love, shorn

of his awful perfections of justice, holiness, and unchangeable truth. 'I am obliged,' writes one of their body, in language sufficiently obvious—'to believe in an abyss of love, which is deeper than the abyss of death' (Maurice's *Theological Essays*, p. 276). Thus the indelible and distinctive results of good and evil are swept away. As the necessary conclusion from this theory, the 'cursed,' whom the Lord shall have bidden to 'depart from him' into the realms of his wrath, shall be yet summoned back to the arms of his love. 'The worm that dieth not' shall die.

Forgiveness shall be meted out to that, for which it hath been solemnly declared there is no 'forgiveness, neither in this world, nor in the world to come.' 'From such denials of what is written,' so prays a faithful and able Protester, 'may God deliver us.'

We mark another assault upon the foundations of our faith. Scripture has revealed as with a sunbeam that most precious testimony. 'God hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him' (2 Cor 5:21). Here, penitent sinner, is thy free welcome to peace. Here is the special charm, which clears away all disquietude from thy conscience. Here the sting of the broken law is plucked out of thy heart. Thy double interest in the Gospel—that which quiets as well as that which purifies—is sealed to thee. Thy glorious investiture of righteousness assures thy title to heaven. This peace-making atonement is admitted to be the plain apostolical preaching. But reason is the only warrant of faith. And here both reason and moral sense revolt. Besides, it is contrary to absolute goodness. It cannot therefore be received.

My brethren—we want not a philosophizing gospel. We want the gospel 'revealed unto babes' (Matt 11:25; 18:3, 4). We desire to bow before the testimony. We profess to

be shocked at Pagan idolatry; and yet man's own reason is the greatest idol ever set up. It can do nothing in the gospel but cavil. We trace, therefore, the difficulties to the pride of a heart that will not bend. The simplicity of the Gospel is still, as in olden times, 'a stumbling-block and foolishness' (1 Cor 1:22–24). In the stead of it comes man's pride of intellect—as we have been lately told—'the great lever that moves the world is knowledge; the great force is the intellect' (Dr Temple).

You that are Bible Christians have been taught in a very different school. You do not ask whether the doctrine is according or contrary to your mind. But 'What saith the Scripture?' The question is not what *should be written*, but what *is written*; not what thinkest thou, but 'how readest thou.' We can readily distinguish *the philosophy*, which contradicts or ignores God's plainest declarations. The mark upon it of *vain deceit* is broad and deep. It is 'science *falsely* so called' (1 Tim 6:20). It promises an unfailing remedy; but it blots out God's remedy; and there is no other. The heart sinks in despondency; reason, unenlightened by faith, leaves us in utter darkness.

And as truth is the very root and spring of holiness, where there is no truth, there can be no acceptable fruit to God (Eph 4:20–24). 'Men do not gather grapes of thorns, nor figs of thistles' (Matt 7:16). We know the origin of this complex and destructive evil by its fruits.

We cannot err in tracing it to the agency of the great enemy. It is 'a root of bitterness, springing up and troubling us; and thereby many be defiled' (Heb 12:15).

But we must hasten to describe more briefly,

II. *The means by which this agency works.* The

first surface view of the text would seem to point at three independent sources of evil *Philosophy, Tradition, Rudiments*. Our version gives, however, the more accurate view, showing 'philosophy dogmatizing according to the *traditions* of men, and the *rudiments* of the world' (Wordsworth) '*tradition*—in opposition to the Bible; *the rudiments of the world*—instruction intended only for the non-age of the Church, not for its maturity; for its worldly, not for its heavenly state (Gal 4:1–3, 9). Our Lord's crushing rebuke exposed the worthlessness of Rabbinical *tradition* (Matt 15:1–9). And as to the accumulated mass of Church *tradition*—if it be *of men*, to admit it into our faith, is to corrupt the purity of the Gospel. The Colossian teachers had combined the traditions of heathen philosophy with the exploded rudiments of Judaism. Admitting the general authority of the Gospel, they contended that it was incomplete without their superadditions. Heathenism, therefore, brought into the system 'the worshipping of angels' (v. 18) as a more suitable mediation with God. The Judaizing element mingled the rudiments of the world, 'as if they were of the same importance with Articles of Faith, and equally necessary to salvation, and as if they had not been fulfilled in Christ, and abrogated by him' v. 17. Both combined to make a philosophical 'shew of the flesh in will-worship and humility' (v. 23). Against both these elements at once the Apostle lifts up his warning voice—*Beware lest any man spoil you*.

And shall not we, with our great Hooker, take up the same protest? 'We have no Word of God but the Scripture.' That deceptive Philosophy, which casts out the Bible from its supreme place, gives ample room for this carnal mixture. A new excitement is given; the disciple is taught not to listen to the simple and foolish teaching of the Cross alone.

'Let him take the volume of our tradition; it will expand his thought, ripen his intellect far beyond the mere littleness of the teaching of the crucified One.' Thus man's proud wisdom 'darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge' (Job 38:2). The pathway to heaven is clouded, and we are left to 'walk in the light of our own fire, and in the sparks which we have kindled' (Isa 1:11).

We see then the false principles brought out before us—*Rationalism*—Reason, corrupt and blind, proud and daring, sits in judgment upon Revelation. It is a cold atmosphere—the chill of death. God has nothing to do with the heart. There is no communion with him. The object is, not to bring him near to us, but to keep him at the greatest possible distance. Tradition! if not the philosophical delusion, yet something akin to it—something that equally shuts out God's Word, or assumes to be a supplement to it, as if it were not complete of itself. The testimony of the Word—it would seem—cannot be received except it be confirmed by the Church; and what if the Fathers and Church authorities should decide doubtfully? The enquirer's faith, not being purely grounded upon the testimony, is shaken at its very foundation. Here the spoiler has done his work. Well does he deserve his name. Closely allied is the superstition of Ritualism, spoiling us of the privileged inner service of God. It is 'the body without the spirit; not the 'living sacrifice'—not upon the true altar—and therefore spurned from the Divine presence: 'Who hath required this at your hand?' (Isa 1:12).

Superstitious appendages show a cumbersome and unlovely religion. Yet 'many place more holiness in following rites and human inventions, than in obeying the gospel' (Bp Davenant). What we want is a reality, a name indeed, but much more than a name—something that will end in eternal life. The

world—alas! the Church also—is full of false phases in religion. We all naturally prefer the shadow to the substance. We all alike need 'the Spirit of truth to guide us into' truth—'all truth' (John 16:13)—truth as distinguished from all subtlety of error; truth in its proportion, its harmony, its integrity; truth as God's medicine for the disease of a corrupt heart.

The great evil of superstition is, that it withers all the essentials of true spirituality. How can it, brethren, be otherwise, when the branch is separate from the root? Everything truly Christian evaporates. The priceless masses of inspired thought are overlaid. Nay, it *spoils* even the holy sacraments of their real efficacy. Hence these Divine ordinances are too often administered, not as means of grace, but of self-righteousness or formality. For surely it is hard to suppose that the external form of baptism, alone, can be the channel of grace. And we know in the other Sacrament, that the real presence of the most blessed body and blood, our Church expressly limits to the faithful in the Lord's Supper.

It is, therefore (as Hooker admirably lays it down), 'not to be sought for in the Sacrament, but in the heart and soul of him that receiveth it.' The faith of the penitent is the sole scriptural medium of sacramental grace. A gorgeous ceremonial therefore, exhibited to the carnal eye, brings no real communion to the soul. The Saviour is not manifested in the outward show. A formal dependance on the consecrated elements, without a spiritual feeding upon the flesh and blood of the Son of man—this does not bring to the feast, where the Master of the feast has promised his presence and blessing.

But to speak to our subject—Of the philosophy, which we have briefly laid open, the Apostle emphatically decides—It is not of Christ. It neither brings us to Christ, nor

Christ to us. It is a deep obscuration of his Divine glory. Of all the lines of truth he is both the centre and the circumference. 'Every true philosophy must begin and end in him.' Here lies the source of all theological error—not holding the Head (v. 19). There can be no Divine teaching, no vital religion, unless he be acknowledged as the Head of all spiritual influence. 'These human inventions,' observes a late eminent prelate 'are of another school. There is no kind of affinity between Christ and them. They are antagonist powers. The substances will not amalgamate. As we cannot by any process turn brass into gold; so we cannot improve or raise vain philosophy into Christianity.' The fascinating enchantress holds out human tradition 'in her right hand; in her left hand' Judaical heathenism.

But she has no hand for Christ. And what is the covering from this subtle fascination? Let the Saviour be in view. All is then clear light. Be it our care, as it is God's pleasure, 'that in all things he might have the pre-eminence' (Col 1:18). Our adorable Lord! Let us preach and live, as if all beside him were one grand impertinence. Is not he on earth—yes, even in heaven too—above all praise? High is he as God. 'For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead.' Low he condescended to be as man. For this infinite treasury of the Divine substance 'dwelleth in him bodily.' The human tabernacle is the temple, in which he 'dwelleth' with ineffable delight. Most sublime and complete is the picture! in few words, indeed, but with simple grandeur of expression.

And here is the great reason, why we should cast away all human additions, from whatever quarter. If he, in his one glorious person, reflects the infinite fulness of the Godhead—all that connects with our acceptance, our holiness, our present comfort,

and our everlasting salvation—what need we any further addition? What should we look for out of Christ, when all fulness is found in him? 'And'—then adds the Apostle to our unspeakable joy—'ye are complete—completed—consummated—in him' (v. 10 Gk).

1. And now, Honoured Fathers in the Church, Beloved Brethren in the ministry—'suffer the word of exhortation.' Need I remind you, that the two grand verities of our faith—the Inspiration of God's Word, and the Divine atonement—that central doctrine, the life-blood of our system—are now fearfully assaulted? Surely this is not the time for feeble and indecisive action. 'For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?' (1 Cor 14:8). Will not our Ordination and Consecration vows be the millstones upon our necks, unless they be our pledge to be 'ready with all faithful diligence to banish and drive away all erroneous and strange doctrines contrary to God's Word'? Never let us sacrifice truth (the jewel after all) upon the altar of expediency. Never let us compromise principle, to escape the baseless imputation of a party. The crisis, if need be, of 'resisting unto blood in this strife,' (Heb 12:4) would be the brightness of a martyr's crown. Meanwhile, let us joy in the bright-shining promise of our Master's presence with us 'to the end' (Matt 28:20). Let us apply the great lever of the preached word, as if we knew its power. Forget not that an adulterated Gospel God will never bless; and that a free, unencumbered proclamation, with the light of a holy life before our people, will be to them 'as life from the dead.'

2. I would venture a word to the young and inexperienced. Keep close to your Bible, as the best means of holding fast to God. Shrink not from an unreserved confidence

in it. Tamper not with its faithful statement, as if it admitted of any uncertainty. Beware of turning aside even an hair's-breadth from the pure simplicity of its doctrine. Avoid listening to the spoiler. The very atmosphere is poisoned. It is infinite peril—as much as your souls are worth to stay needlessly another moment in it. Great men—learned men—men of the highest grasp of intellect nay, even good men—earnest, thoughtful thinkers have been 'beguiled.' You must not expect your Divine Teacher, your heavenly Guide, to shield you on the enchanted ground. 'I will go out as at other times,' said Samson, 'and shake myself. And he wist not that the Lord was departed from him' (Judges 16:20). The spoiling work 'corrupts from the simple feeling of the heart towards Christ' (2 Cor 11:3 Gk). And how near this may bring 'concerning faith to make shipwreck,' (1 Tim 1:19) only God can tell. He will keep you in suffering, not in sinning. 'Watch and pray.'

3. I would remind my brethren, of longer standing, that if any new excitement be springing up, how great is the need of godly restraint! It is easy to be dazzled by the glare of new things, new theories, new philosophy, new discoveries in religion, old truths wearing out, and a brighter intellectual light coming on. But let it be our taste to value 'the old paths.'

Let it be our inquiry to 'ask for the good old way,' where is the promise of 'rest' where are 'the footsteps of the flock' (Jer 6:16, Cant 1:8). And let it be the plain call of duty, not the indulgence of a prurient curiosity, that turns you into a new atmosphere of untried principle. Mistake not your own will for Divine guidance. Remember, presumption

has the colour of faith; and the progress of error is often much more rapid than the energy of truth. Whatever be 'the steadfastness of our faith,' we are none of us beyond the need of the warning. Many a little budding of 'the root of bitterness,' may be unperceived. Confidence in the strength of our principles, without a careful spirit, is a very insufficient cover in the temptation. When we are least afraid, we have the most reason to fear. It will beat once our wisdom and our security, if not an hour—not a conscious moment—passes without the felt-need of the cry—'Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe' (Ps 119:116). The danger is great indeed; and piercing was the eye of the inspired penman, which noted down the warning—Beware—as a Divinely appointed beacon to the Church of God to the end. The good Lord keep our eyes fixed upon it, in daily recollection and practical exercise!

4. In conclusion, this meeting,—this solemn meeting,—is but the shadow of a greater and more solemn assembly, when we shall all meet again, then to be fixed for eternity; when all the Ministers of his Church, of every grade, will 'give account' to 'the Bishop of souls' (Heb 13:17) and when all the flocks committed to their charge must witness how they have received the message; whether as 'a savour of death unto death, or of life unto life' (2 Cor 2:16). That great message—let it this day bring an unbounded welcome to every soul that hears it—welcome to Christ their only Saviour—to heaven as their eternal home. This is the gospel warrant. We bid you come to Christ. He bids you believe on him. All that his blood has purchased—all that the treasury of his grace can bestow—is ready for you. ¶

THE LORD, THE SHEPHERD OF HIS PEOPLE

by JAMES NORTH (Totton, Hants)

He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Psalm 23:3

As we return to our thoughts on Psalm Twenty Three, it would be profitable to recap previous articles written on this psalm.

In v. 1 we considered the fact that this psalm is dealing with the **sovereign**, the **shepherd** and the **supplier & supply** (May/June 2022; July/August 2022). In v. 2 we considered the 'Green Pastures' and the 'Still waters' and looked very briefly at the Lord's dealings with his people in both providence and grace. We noticed the place of **rest**, the place of **dependance**, the place of **provision**, the place of **plenty**, the place of **presentation**, the place of **contentment** and the place of **communion**.

We now progress to the third verse we notice that this verse deals with the Lord's mercies toward us in grace. David mentions four particulars in this verse:

1. The **restoration** of the child of God: 'He restoreth my soul.'
2. The **refreshment** received by the child of God: 'He leadeth me...'
3. The **righteousness** of the child of God: 'The paths of righteousness.'
4. The **reward** to the child of God: 'For his name's sake.'

1. The restoration of the child of God

Some years ago, I was a trustee of a Grade I listed building. It was not a ruin, though had it been further neglected it would have soon become a ruin; but after a great deal of work and monies expended, it was put into a

reasonable state of repair. There are historical buildings almost without number which have, over the years, become ruins yet with careful attention, and a program of restoration having been undertaken, these once derelict building have been put into order and used again.

But there is a greater ruin than that of historical and important buildings!

It is the ruination of the human race!

We are told in Scripture that when Almighty God created man, he created him perfect and without sin. Man was created on the sixth day of creation: 'And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them' (Gen. 1:26,27). Made in the image of God, that is, that his moral nature reflected the moral nature of God and being a 'reflection' (if we can use that word) he was as pure and holy as Almighty God. Genesis 1 goes on to say of all creation that 'God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day' (Gen 1:31). But man fell from his state of primeval innocence by his one act of disobedience! The wise man of Ecclesiastes tells us 'Lo, this only have I found, that

God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions' (Eccles 7:29). And Paul tells us that the consequences of that sinful act of Adam passed on to the whole of the human race of which he is the father: 'Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned' (Rom 5:12). Adam brought about the ruination of the human race.

But the wise man of Ecclesiastes tells us that the fall of man, his corruption and ruin was something that he had found out—obviously by his own experience of the state of his own heart. We neither know the state of our hearts by our own experience nor will we know anything about the state of our own heart until we are taught it by the work of the Holy Ghost convicting us of our fallen nature and sinfulness. The hymn writer, Joseph Hart, writes in this manner:

Though all are sinners in God's sight,
There are but few so in their own.
To such as these our Lord was sent;
They're only sinners who repent.

In the order of salvation (*ordo salutis*) or the steps to salvation there must be firstly, an understanding of the sinful nature and total depravity of the human heart. This is known by the teaching and quickening of the work of the Holy Ghost (cf Jer 17:9 & Eph 2:1). When there is that knowledge within the heart there will then be repentance and seeking forgiveness in the Lord Jesus Christ. 'They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance' (Mk 2:17). This is what the Wise Man and every other child of God finds by experience, 'Lo, this only have I found.' What a mercy it is to be brought into that state of knowing that we are sinners, convinced and convicted

by the powerful work of the Holy Ghost. For where there is sickness, there is the seeking for the remedy! And, oh, the blessings that follow. The restoration of fellowship with Almighty God and his eternal Son. 'That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ' (1 Jno 1:3).

So the Psalmist says here in this verse, '*He restoreth my soul.*'

But how?

Only by the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ: by his person—the second person of the Holy Trinity, the eternal Son of God. Only by the obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ: by his obedience to the law of God, fulfilling it in every jot and tittle. By his obedience to his Father's will, said the Lord Jesus, 'Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart. I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O LORD, thou knowest. I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation' (Ps. 40:7–10).

Only by the offices he undertook for his people. He is their prophet, priest and king. Isaac Watts beautifully pens the description of the offices of Christ in his hymn, 'Join all the glorious names...'

Great Prophet of my God,
My tongue would bless thy name;
By thee the joyful news
Of our salvation came;
The joyful news of sins forgiven,
Of hell subdued, and peace with heaven.

Jesus, my great High Priest,
Offered his blood and died;
My guilty conscience seeks
No sacrifice beside.
His powerful blood did once atone,
And now it pleads before the throne.

My dear, almighty Lord,
My Conqueror and my King,
Thy sceptre and thy sword,
Thy reigning grace I sing;
Thine is the power; behold, I sit,
In willing bonds, beneath thy feet.

There has, however, to be the application of these things to the heart of the sinner before he can know anything of the restoration of which the Psalmist speaks. Just as the blind man said to the Pharisees, 'Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see' (Jno 9:25). Just as the spittle and clay were applied to his eyes and they were washed in Siloam, and he had sight restored to him so the atonement has to be applied to the heart of the awakened sinner (cf. Jno 9:1-38).

There is another restoration of which we can speak and which, no doubt was in the mind of the Psalmist. He is probably thinking also of restoration after a period of declension and backsliding. Hosea speaks of the restoration of the backslider: 'I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him. I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon. They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon' (Hos 14:4-7). What a mercy it is that the Lord does not cast off those

of his people who was into 'bypath meadow'. He does not cut us off from his salvation that he has given to his people through the merits of Christ alone. No! He loves them freely—he has loved them with an everlasting love and will always love them. In the verses quoted above, see how the Lord treats his people; when they are brought back from their wanderings into sin and declension he promises that they will grow in grace; their roots will spread into the deep things of God (Ps 1; Jer 17:7,8). He also promises that there will be growth in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. The returning backslider who has been refreshed and brought back by the heavenly dews will display the graces of the Spirit. There are many examples in Scripture of the restoration of the backslider.

We commence with David: David king of Israel, a man after God's own heart, the Sweet Singer of Israel. Did he not commit adultery and arrange the death of Bathsheba's husband? And yet when he was brought in contrition before the Lord by Nathan's rebuke, 'Thou art the man' (2 Sam 12:7), he was contrite and penned the words of Psalm 51 and the cry of his heart was, 'Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee. Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness' (Ps 51:10-14).

Then in the New Testament we have the parable of the Prodigal Son. Whilst many a preacher has used this parable explain the gospel of salvation, the parable is more about the return of a member of the family, the son! It was the son who went away, it was the

son who spent all his wealth in riotous living, it was the son who came back and when he sought his father's forgiveness he was restored into the family again.

If we take a brief look at Thomas we see in his own pride of heart, he stated that he would not believe that the Lord Jesus Christ was raised from the dead, he said, 'Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe' (Jno 20:25). But when he actually saw the Lord Jesus Christ standing in the midst of the upper room his unbelief was shattered and he was brought by that sight of the Lord Jesus to confess that he was his Lord and his God (Jno 20:28). He was given the sight of the Lord Jesus and also the faith to believe in him.

Peter, bold Peter who insisted that he would never deny the Lord Jesus Christ, at the first question addressed to him denied all knowledge of the Lord Jesus. Three times he went back on his promise to the Lord Jesus who himself knew exactly what would happen to Peter in the courts of the high priest. It was when the Lord Jesus was taken away and He looked at Peter who went out and wept bitterly (Mt 26:75). But the days moved on. What was in the thoughts of Peter's heart and mind during those days we are not told. Now Peter and other of the disciples are by the sea of Galilee; they have fished all night and caught nothing and the person whom they do not recognise because their eyes were holden in the same way as the eyes of the disciples on the road to Emmaus 'were holden' (Lk 24:16) told them to let down the nets on the other side of the boat. They did so, caught a large draft of fish but their net was not broken. It was revealed to John who the man on the shore was: 'It is the Lord' (Jno 21:7) he said to Peter, who immediately

made for the shore. We are only told of some of the conversation between Peter and the Lord. He asked him three times if he loved him. Each time answering that he did so. It was, no doubt, a time of repentance and reconciliation. He, like the others, was restored to fellowship with their Lord. 'He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep' (Jno 21:17). There was the restoration! 'He restoreth my soul.'

And the restored Church of God stands like a great army ready for the spiritual warfare, and 'having done all, to stand (Eph 6:13).

2. The refreshment of the child of God

'He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness'

It is the duty of the Shepherd to care for his sheep! He is a poor shepherd who neglects his sheep! He is a poor shepherd who does not feed his sheep in good pasture! He is a poor shepherd who does not provide for them! Ezekiel writes about the hireling shepherds in chapter 34 of his book, but there are also words which speak of the Good Shepherd and the work that he does for his sheep: 'As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country. I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall

their fold be: there shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel' (Ezek 34:12–14). What a mercy it is that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Shepherd who cares for his sheep. He leads them into the green pastures where the clean waters flows and the sheep are able to drink from those fountains of water and find refreshment. 'For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes' (Rev 7:17).

Consider the refreshment which was provided for the Children of Israel for forty long years whilst they were crossing the wilderness. They had manna—bread from heaven, angel's food, provided for them for six days in the week. They were also provided with water from the rock. The bitter waters at Marah were sweetened by a tree that was cast into them. These all speak of the wonderful provision made for the Children of Israel. How much more is there spiritual provision for the Children of God in today's evil and wicked world?

The woman of Samaria came to Sychar's well to find refreshment from the water in Jacob's well. But she met with the One who could give her spiritual refreshment. Said Jesus, 'whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life' (Jno 4:14). She was one who needed that refreshing water that Jesus gives. All those who are without God and without hope in this world will only find spiritual refreshment in the Lord Jesus Christ; they will never find it in the world with all its amusements and quack remedies. Later in John's Gospel we see the Lord Jesus Christ at the great feast, the Feast of Tabernacles. During the feast

water was poured out in remembrance of the water gushing from the rock (Ex 17:1–7). The children of Israel had forgotten the spiritual significance of the pouring out of the water. It was a reminder that God provided for them in the exodus and also a prophecy of the Lord Jesus Christ and his death and pouring out of his blood at Calvary—that is why Moses was told to speak to the rock rather than strike it a second time. The sacrifice of Calvary was a one offering of Christ (Heb 10:12) which was never to be repeated. In the sacrifice and atonement of Christ there is spiritual refreshment, the forgiveness of sin and newness of life. Jesus, therefore at the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles when the water was poured out, cried out, 'If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified)' (Jno 7:37–39).

We seem to have wandered away from the text of the twenty-third Psalm, but what we have been considering is the leading of the Lord Jesus as the Good Shepherd who leads his people in his care of them and thus he provides for them as the shepherd would day by day find pasture and water for the flock. We have looked at some of the provision made by the Lord for his covenant people in both the Old and New Testaments.

We live in a day of declension and the Lord's people long for reviving and refreshing in the church. Said the Lord Jesus to his disciples, 'The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it' (Lk 17:22). Can we not say that the days in which we live reflect those times of which the Lord Jesus

spoke. 'And ye shall not see it!' Oh, but do we not desire the outpouring of the Spirit of God in true reality, not in man made 'revivals' (sic). Should we not then pray that the Lord will lead us to and furnish the Church with his provision and lead his church into abundant pasture and the land of Beulah?

3. The righteousness of the child of God

'The paths of righteousness'

We could paraphrase this clause of v. 4 by saying that the Lord leads his people by a right way into paths of righteousness and right living. We can consider two facets of 'paths of righteousness'; firstly the paths in which the Lord leads his people and, second, the right living of the child of God.

Firstly, the way in which the Lord leads his people. The Psalmist says, 'Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory' (Ps 73:23, 24). What a mercy and privilege to know that we are not subject to chance or luck but that it is the Lord's good hand which leads us safely through this vale of tears. Just as the Lord Jesus said as recorded by John in his Gospel, we are held in the hollow of his hand and none can pluck his people therefrom. Chance plays no part in the path we walk. It is the Lord's good providence which leads us through this world and then, we, the children of God, are received into glory and will hear the words of our God, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world' (Matt. 25:34), 'and so shall we ever be with the Lord' (1 Thess 4:17).

Secondly, we have to consider the right living of the Lord's people. Paul expresses it thus: 'I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your

bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God' (Rom 12:1, 2). And again, 'I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace' (Eph 4:1,2). Isaac Watts wrote:

So let our lips and lives express
The holy Gospel we profess;
So let our walks and virtues shine,
To prove the doctrine all divine.

Thus shall we best proclaim abroad
The honour of our Saviour God;
When the salvation reigns within,
And grace subdues the power of sin.

Our flesh and sense must be denied;
Passion and envy, lust and pride;
While justice, temperance, truth and love
Our inward piety approve.

That sacred stream, Thy holy Word,
That all our raging fear controls:
Sweet peace Thy promises afford,
And give new strength to fainting souls.

And here in Psalm 23 the Psalmist speaks of the path of righteousness. It is a glorious pathway where the sheep is led in the right way by the Good Shepherd leading the way which is followed by the sheep and it is a right way. 'Good and upright is the LORD: therefore will he teach sinners in the way. The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way. All the paths of

the LORD are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies” (Ps 25:8–10). And as we wrote above, that path leads to heaven: ‘the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day’ (Prov 4:18). What a mercy to be thus led and what a precious injunction from the Lord that the child of God is to walk circumspectly.

4. The reward of the child of God

‘For his name’s sake’

The reward of the child of God is to be able to ascribe unto our God all the glory and praise that is due to his name. The Psalmist wrote: ‘Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth’s sake (Ps 115:1). We are to glorify the Lord in all our ways remembering that we are the natural children of Adam and have a fallen nature and that it is only of the love and mercy of Almighty God who has brought us into the covenant relationship with him through our Lord Jesus Christ, and not we ourselves.

Now, if we are desirous of giving glory to God for all his mercies in both providence and grace, then it naturally follows that we would want to be always in his presence—we are always in his presence by the nature of the omnipresence of God—however, when we have the opportunity of being specifically and consciously in his presence by joining in the public worship of Almighty God. The times and seasons we spend in the courts of the Lord are precious to the saints of God. We follow the exhortation of Paul: ‘Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together,

as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching’ (Heb 10:25). Why? Because our time spent together in worship is a blessed foretaste of the glories of heaven for our occupation in heaven is to sing the praises of the Lord Jesus Christ for all eternity. If we find public worship tedious now here upon this earth, how will we be able to enjoy the reward of worshiping our Lord Jesus Christ for all eternity? Again, to quote Isaac Watts:

The men of grace have found
Glory begun below;
Celestial fruit on earthly ground
from faith and hope may grow.

The hill of Zion yields
A thousand sacred sweets,
Before we reach the heavenly fields,
Or walk the golden streets.

Then let our songs abound,
And every tear be dry;
We’re marching through Emmanuel’s ground
To fairer worlds on high.

God grant that we are among those that are travelling onward to the heavenly Zion, trusting alone in Jesus Christ. The countless martyrs of Jesus cry ‘with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?’ (Rev 6:10). The countless saints of former generations and whose names have passed into oblivion are there in heaven singing his praises. Will we be amongst them? God grant that it may be so.

TO BE CONTINUED

The Protestant Beacon

Images

Readers will no doubt be aware of the recent reports about a sermon preached at Cambridge towards the end of November. The preacher, a student, claimed that Jesus 'had a trans body' and based this on depictions of our Lord in medieval art. The preacher was defended by the dean of Trinity College, and has been criticised in a number of quarters—and rightly so.

The student in question has done his research—being a junior research fellow, one should expect no less. However, what has been researched? The answer, obviously, is medieval art. Among the religious and pseudo-religious scenes depicted in such paintings, there are many that show our Lord after his death. The painters showed a commendable modesty in the way in which they depicted the naked body. This, it seems, has led this student to form his opinion.

Could the student have formed his opinion for another, more reliable, source? Indeed he could, and should. The best and only source is God's word written, the Scripture of truth. Here we read the record of certain facts connected with the infant Jesus.

And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb. And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord; (As it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;) And to offer a sacrifice

according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons (Luke 2:21–24).

Two matters stand out here. In the first place, our Lord could not have been circumcised if the assertions of the student are true. That fact alone ought to be sufficient to completely discredit his blasphemous claim. In the second place, had our Lord that body claimed for him, he could not have been presented in the temple. We are told three verses later that Simeon came by the Spirit into the temple, and there met Mary and Joseph with the infant Christ. No man with a genital mutilation was permitted to enter into the assembly or congregation of the Lord, Deut 23:1. Mary could not have brought her son into the temple if he possessed the body claimed for him by that student.

There is more. No descendant of Aaron, bearing any physical defect, could offer sacrifice or do service in the temple, Lev 21:17–21. Our Lord Jesus Christ is our great high priest, which he could not have been according to the law—that same law which he kept whole and unbroken—had he had any sort of defect in his body.

Again, it is stated that the blood offering made to atone for sin had to be without blemish. Our Lord Jesus was made to be sin (or, made to be the sin-offering) for us, 2 Cor 5:21, which he could not have been if he was imperfect in any way.

How could a student, or anyone else for that matter, arrive at such a conclusion when the Scripture is so clearly against it? All that is required is to trust the artist and not the

author, to look to the painter and not the printer, to rely on imagination rather than inspiration. The word of God has been given to us, and wonderfully preserved for us down the ages, so that we may know with certainty all that belongs to our salvation. We depend on the Bible for the revelation of the truth. The mystery of godliness would remain hidden from us were it not revealed through the inspired Scriptures. If we confine our researches to the Book of God, we will not go wrong.

For this to be true we must also accept and submit to the authority of the Bible. When a declaration from a person in authority is read out, it is as if they themselves were there to speak the words. The affixing of their seal to the document should be

sufficient to silence any doubters, who must otherwise face the penalty for not obeying as instructed. How much more is this true when the Author is God, the seal is that of the Holy Spirit, and the instruction concerns our eternal hope in Jesus Christ.

Images have no place in worship, being forbidden by the second commandment. Images are no guide to doctrine, being the works of human imagination only. They may have a certain appeal as works of art, but cannot be taken as safe guides to fact. They may possess a certain inspiration as the world understands it, but they have none of that inspiration that is God-breathed. To look to images rather than to the word is to turn from truth to imagination, and from imagination to grievous error. ¶

FORMER DAYS

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

250 years ago: January & February 1773

The bound copy for 1773 includes a Preface. The Editors explain that the reader will come across a number of pieces that may not be entirely agreeable. These will relate to the work of the Spirit in regeneration, sanctification and consolation. These will relate also to 'some pieces on the nature of saving faith, some of which seem to deny the existence of it as a living principle in the heart, and others to prevent its various acting upon the Lord JESUS CHRIST, as its immediate object in our approach to God or our daily converse with him.' The answers supplied to such pieces may not all agree in every detail, but, say the Editors, some are suited to the weaker brethren, others to those who are strong

in the faith. We are therefore forewarned about what to expect in the coming year.

After a seven-page index the January issue begins. The series on Typical Persons is continued, taking Aaron, Bezaleel and Aholiab, Phineas the son of Eleazar, Joshua, and Gideon. The Harmony of Scripture Prophecy also continues, concerning Egyptians, and headed with Ezekiel 30:2-3. The explanation is given by bringing together a large number of verses that speak of Egypt, her sins, her warnings from the Lord, and her judgements. Various phrases and images are explained in the process. Next comes the fulfilment of those prophecies, in the form of a summary of Egypt's subsequent history well into the Middle Ages. It

is also shown that there was a large Jewish population at times, and that Jews from that region were at Jerusalem at Pentecost.

The nature of effectual calling continues to be examined. Objections to the Reformed doctrine are considered within the exposition. This is a very helpful resource for anyone who wishes to study this doctrine further, or who harbours any doubts concerning it. The argument of a correspondent in an earlier issue, that Mark 9:49 ought to be re-translated to read 'every burnt offering shall be salted with fire', is rejected. The most compelling reason is that nowhere does the Mosaic law require any such thing; how, then, could our Lord command it? Rather, we are to understand that those who are reserved unto judgement are kept as by salting unto that day. The corollary is in the end of v. 50: we who are reserved unto everlasting life are likewise salted and are therefore preserved. Omicron writes at length of the subject of Temptation at the request of the Editor (Joseph Gurney). He will consider why the Lord permits some of his children to suffer such dreadful temptations, and then offer some advice to sufferers. Satan's temptations are often the least painful, though the most dangerous: he tends to try to lead us away from Christ by very subtle means, and it is only when these fail that he becomes more openly cruel. We are therefore exposed to the extent of his malice, though the Lord sets the bounds of his power. By this gracious provision we are shown his true nature, and are kept by the Lord's mercy from over-confidence, lightness and irregular walking in the right path. Temptations also show us the power of the Lord to sustain us in their midst. The endurance of temptation by grace serves to conform us to our Head, Jesus Christ, to his life, and to his image. Temptations tend to the mortifying of the flesh, as we begin

to see what is passing and what is eternal. The advice shows what Satan aims at in all his temptations of Christ's people, and thus what we ought to do when tempted. The reality of the discouragements felt in temptation are not hidden, but the reader is encouraged to exercise himself in the means of grace. A letter on the Glory of the Church considers it as a building, how it is framed, how it grows, and what is its perfection. The letter will be concluded later. Another letter answers a question from March 1772, concerning the creation of angels; was it before or during the week of creation? The correspondent replies, rightly in our opinion, that angels were created at some point during the week and not before, although the precise day cannot be determined. Various Scripture verses are used to demonstrate the soundness of his proposition. The last piece is a series of seven queries, all on the theme of human freedom; in short, can God make a being that is entirely independent of his Creator, and can this be reconciled with predestination? Poetry concludes the issue, including a short poem by a father on the death of his little girl. It is full of confidence in Christ, and gives thanks for divine mercies.

Samson, Boaz and Samuel are the Typical Persons who open the **February** issue. The Harmony of Scripture Prophecies considers Predictions concerning the Philistines, and then the Ethiopians, treating in the same manner in which the Egyptian prophecies and fulfilments were treated in January. The doctrine of Effectual Calling continues to be expounded by way of dealing with objections. Omicron offers the substance of a full library. It ought to consist in four books; one, the text (the Bible) and three the commentaries upon it (the books of Creation or Nature, Providence, and the Heart). The letter on The Glory of the Church is concluded from

the previous month. The life of one Elizabeth Cairns of Scotland is provided. It is her account, edited for brevity, and showing the way in which the Lord touched her heart at a very young age, and brought her by stages to saving faith. The account is worth reading, describing as it does a way of life long since lost, and showing us the gracious providences of a loving heavenly Father to save on of his own in circumstances that would appear to be discouraging in the extreme. The account, of the highs and lows of her spiritual life, will be continued. Another writer takes the necessity of gospel revelation as the only comfort in the face of death, showing both what revelation reveals on the subject, and how it consoles us before it. He follows this with imagined visions of heaven first seen, taken from Scripture. A query on whether it is an indispensable duty for each believer to give himself up to his church and people united in the faith and order of the gospel, is answered. The writer shows that not every so-called church is a true church, but that all true believers ought to have unity regardless of differences in order and practice. This thoughtfully-written piece is worth reading. A certain preacher who frequently said that 'God out of Christ is a consuming fire' is taken to task for this unscriptural phrase, by one who counts him a friend. The writer shows that nowhere in Scripture do we ever meet God out of Christ, but only ever God in Christ. Poetry concludes the issue.

200 years ago: January & February 1823

The Preface is a summary of the gospel as understood by the Editor, Walter Row. It is unlikely to be accepted by many of our modern Evangelicals without some reservation. The Index runs to four pages, though is set more tightly than it was in 1773. The **January** title page rather unhelpfully states the year to be

1822, but the version on the website carries a label declaring this to be a typographical error; it is indeed 1823. The text for the first article is Psalm 116:15, 'Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.' Its preciousness is shown through its inseparable connection to our Lord Jesus Christ. Next we have the continuation of a critique of a letter that had been printed in the *New Evangelical Magazine*. It concerns man's duty and his strength to perform it. *The Gospel Magazine* editor considers the letter to be full of contradictions, both internally and when set against Scripture. He spares no pains in describing them. Hosea 8: 1, concerning God's affection and conduct towards Israel, takes up the attention of a writer. It does so within the context of another critique, this time of modern theology. The willingness of scholars to imbibe the opinions of others rather than to form their own understanding from the study of Scripture, is shown to carry two serious faults. It precludes impartial investigation, and it envelopes the mind in prejudice and ignorance. The correct approach is then outlined, and is then illustrated by an exposition of the text. Susannah writes on the tempted soul fleeing to Christ, and another correspondent writes on Thoughts on the Union of Christ and his Church. Another writer sets forth Jesus Christ as the only suitable comfort to a believer in trouble. The first part of the life of William Tyndale is followed by The Right of Redemption, from Ephesians 1:7. The right to redeem belongs to the Redeemer. Another writer considers Seeking after Christ. Notices of publications, including a proposal for a uniform edition of John Owen's complete works, is followed by Poetry. Book lists, including the Works of Dr Robert Hawker, conclude the issue.

The **February** issue continues the New Year theme, with some Broken Fragments

of Truth. 'Jesus is not a house to summer in merely, but a house to winter in also; for when the north winds blow he proves a covert, yea, at all times, quite contrary to the lottery wheel of Arminianism, the movings of which leave its admirers in a state of uncertainty, not knowing who shall gain a prize; for the foundation of God standeth sure: having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his; and let whatever storm will arise to shake the confidence and try the faith of the living stones, yet their rock and foundation is ever the same.' The letter on Man's Strength being Equal to his Duty is further critiqued. It requires careful reading, as on the face it seems to speak well, but the critic rightly shows that it is built on deeply flawed principles. Carefulness and exactness in our doctrinal language are essential if we are to avoid doubt and provide clarity. The next extract from the life of William Tyndale is followed by a letter on The Believer in a Sinless State. This is an answer to A Dwarf's piece in a previous issue, in which he argued that the only sin a believer can commit (but will not) is the unpardonable sin. The present correspondent replies that there is such a thing as the sinless state, but it is not found in us but in Christ. Another writer reflects on the theme of Christ's love to his people, and another displays the Portrait of the Church, to encourage the Lord's people in a day of blasphemy and rebuke. The Portrait will be continued. Four more sermon skeletons are provided, from Isaiah 27:13, Acts 8:33, Zechariah 10:8 and Psalm 27:14. Tomlinson's attempt to rescue Scripture from ridicule continues with the rainbow as a memorial of the everlasting covenant. He proposes that 'a memorial' should be translated 'a faithful witness' since it cannot be supposed that the Lord God *could* forget his covenant. Tomlinson then turns to Genesis

9:21, to examine the supposed drunkenness of Noah. He argues that we should read 'was drunk' as 'was satisfied.' He shows that Hebrew has other words for intoxication, and that the word translated 'was drunk' here is used in a condemnatory fashion only when it applies to spiritual drunkenness; being satisfied with things that are ungodly. It is an interesting argument, but would require one better qualified in Hebrew than this writer to decide for or against. Notes on specific verses in the remainder of Genesis are provided, with proposed alterations to translation in order to bring out the full force of the Hebrew. The same caveat applies, concerning one's ability to judge such matters. It is clear that, to Tomlinson, accuracy of translation is both possible and essential, and we would agree with that. The question is, do we not have it already in our Authorised Version? Another writer speaks to the Prudent Man, being the one who orders his life according to the gospel. Any who profess faith but who fail in this will not enjoy peace. The subject of Punishment for Sin is revisited once more, in an attempt to finally answer the question of whether the child of God needs to have his sins punished in order to learn to hate them. The writer considers this impossible, since our interest in Christ must preclude any indifference towards sin. The Life of one James Fairey of St Neots, who died at the age of 40, is described. He was a Particular Baptist by conviction. Two poems conclude the issue.

100 years ago: January & February 1923

The Preface reiterates the commitment of the *Magazine* and the Editor to the gospel principles that have been held from the beginning, in the face of the growing Romanising of the Church of England, and the Modernism destroying theology. The Index runs to three pages, and the January issue is prefaced with

the now-regular mention of the Magazine's parlous finances, while gratitude is expressed to all who made donations, large and small. We the present Trustees are, in 2023, deeply thankful to our loving heavenly Father for securing the financial basis of the Magazine for, we trust, many years to come. The opening sermon is from Psalm 130:7, on the Character, the Basis and the Objects of divine mercy. A quotation from Adolph Saphir on the inspiration of Scripture contains the following words. 'The Bible we believe to be inspired by the Holy Ghost; and here we make no distinction, and especially none between what is called Old and New Testament. Genesis is as authoritative as Matthew's Gospel, the Prophet Isaiah as true a messenger as the Apostle Paul, the pages of Zechariah as truly given by the Most High as the Apocalypse entrusted by Jesus to the beloved disciple.' We are aware that in many services today the Old Testament is not read, or is hardly ever read, as it is so little understood. The theme of thanksgiving is given as a New Year subject from Colossians 3:15. There may be nothing new in the matters for which we give thanks, but we should also never tire of giving thanks for our Saviour, our redemption, and all our spiritual blessings in Christ. Wellsprings takes Psalm 72:17 as its text. Though a Psalm of Solomon (readers may be aware that there is a discussion to be had as to whether this is to be understood as being by Solomon, or by David about Solomon) it is beyond all doubt a messianic Psalm. Christ is the subject, and any reading of the psalm that misses this, misses the whole point. The sermon preached at the SGU meeting at Grove Chapel in 1822, by the Rev F. Peacock, is printed. His text was Colossians 1:14. God's goodness going before and behind is treated for the New Year. The theme of seeing, hearing and saying

is taken from Jeremiah 1:7 & 9, after which we have thoughts on Isaiah 55:10–11. Some words of encouragement from readers are followed by thoughts on the cost of the temple. David had collected the money to pay for it, but its foundation was on land he had bought at his own cost. So the Church of Christ is bought with the blood of Christ. Three acts of Satan are considered; he *blinds* (2 Cor 4:4), he *beguiles* (11:3) and he *buffets* (12:7). The death of a Miss Cowan of Bath is noted, with a brief account of her life. The death of another saint, a Mr Alfred Penfold, is also noted with a biographical sketch. The Protestant Beacon draws attention to the plight of Gospel Christians in Spain, whose situation has not improved greatly since the terrible days of the Inquisition; there was then no liberty of conscience, only toleration so long as no over evangelism was carried out. The writer states that mission halls where Christ Crucified was preached were soon closed down. The deep-seated hatred of the priests to Protestantism is copiously illustrated. Notices of publications conclude the issue, with the theme of proposed Prayer Book revision featuring once more.

The regular financial appeal is followed in **February** by Three Beatitudes. We were recently the recipient of a letter complaining that the Beatitudes are much underrated in the church today, a fact we dare not deny. The Editor in 1923 took three from Psalm 84:4, 5, and 12. Much gospel comfort is provided. Wayside Notes considers the statement in Acts 28:23, concerning Jesus in the law and the prophets. The scene described is of the Apostle, with the Old Testament open before him, showing his questioners that Christ is to be found throughout, for he is their grand theme. Wellsprings takes Psalm 116:4–5 (actually 3–4), and considers the tenderness of the Lord towards his people in their troubles.

Part of a sermon by the late the Rev James Ormiston from Job 23:10 is printed. Some words of Jeremiah's enemies, from Jer 18:18, are considered, and shown to be as common today as they were when first uttered. The effect of their refusal to listen is illustrated, to warn the present generation of their perilous condition. The name Hephzibah is considered, to show the delight the Lord has in his people. The Unequal Strife sets the trials and problems of life against the blessings and peace of God; he will always be better! A testimony to the blessing of reading the *Magazine* is followed by a contemplation of Zechariah 13:9, the Lord's presence with his people in suffering. Notice is given of the formation of a new missionary Society. The attempts to return CMS to its original doctrinal position having come to nothing, a group of concerned individuals decided that the only alternative was to form a new Society. This was The Bible Churchmen's

Missionary Society, and its stated intention was to accept and maintain the trustworthiness of the Scriptures in their entirety, and the truthfulness of every one of Christ's utterances. The present Editor's grandfather, father and mother, as well as an uncle, were all BCMS missionaries at one point. John 6:7 and the disciples' attempt to judge the situation by human reasoning alone, is considered against the power of our Lord to provide all to every one of his people. A memorial of the late Mr Ebenezer Carr is provided by a reader. Mr Carr was closely connected with the Aged Pilgrims' Friend Society for many years. The death of a Mrs Buckland of Bath is also noted, with a brief account of her life and character. The death of a Mr T.G. Cook from Canada is similarly noted. He was an avid reader of the *Magazine*. The Protestant Beacon addresses Rome's attitude to the Scriptures. Correspondence and notices of publications conclude the issue.

TO BE CONTINUED

Some may probably please themselves with the notion, that grace does not change the nature of man, in order to excuse and palliate their disorderly walk and irregular passions before men, and to keep themselves from being humbled for them before God; yet this we are sure and certain of, that real grace, though it does not cure, yet it regulates both the passions of the mind, and affections of the heart, and when in exercise subdues and keeps under that pride, passion, causeless anger, inveterate wrath, and intemperance which persons' constitutions incline unto. The Spirit and grace of Christ causeth such meekness, such gentleness and kindness, as is everywhere recommended in the scriptures; for the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits. It causeth the wolf to dwell with the lamb, and the leopard to lie down with the kid; is such a check to the disorderly passions and irregular motions of the mind, as makes a person to say, Lord, what wouldst thou have me to be or do?

When a palace or castle lies in ruins, it is an emblem of our nature, as it is now destroyed by sin. The very ruins of this place shew that it was once a very famous building; so the very ruins of our nature shew that it was once a very noble building of God.

Anon

BOOK REVIEWS

Our attention has been drawn to a PhD dissertation entitled ‘Retaining the Old Episcopal Divinity: John Edwards of Cambridge and Reformed Orthodoxy in the Later Stuart Church’ (OUP 2022) by Jake Griesel. Dr Griesel is currently lecturing at George Whitefield College in South Africa, in Church History and Anglican Studies.

The dissertation is available to buy for £64 hardback, with a cheaper version available for e-readers. It is also available to download free. The downloadable version runs to 294 pages.

Some readers may be aware of the work done a few years ago by Dr Stephen Hampton on the state of the church during the late Stuart period and into the beginning of the Hanoverian period, published in ‘Anti-Arminians: the Anglican Reformed Tradition from Charles II to George I’ (Oxford: OUP, 2008). In it he shows that the Reformed doctrines were very much alive in the Church of England, even if the majority were Arminian. Dr Griesel’s major contribution is to show that this is something of an exaggeration. John Edwards, the subject of his dissertation, was far from being a lone voice for Reformed doctrine. Rather, as the author shows convincingly, he was one of a large number of eminent Churchmen of the period who adhered to the old ‘Calvinianism’ of the Protestant Reformers, and who contended strongly for it against Arminians, antinomians, Pelagians and Socinians. Our reading of the thesis has led us to peruse a number of Dr Edwards’ works, available online. We trust to reprint one of his fast sermons during the coming year.

John Edwards was a clear and faithful expounder of the doctrine of justification by faith, in a far richer and fuller way than modern writers on the subject. Read him for the edification of your soul, and the confirmation of your faith.

Anyone who wishes to be encouraged in the midst of the present decay and decline would do well to read the thesis. It shows that in previous dark days the light of truth has shone more brightly in our land than we might have supposed. The labours of these men gave way to the Evangelical Awakening under such men as George Whitefield, James Hervey and William Romaine. Who knoweth if the Lord will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him?

EJM

POETRY

CANTICLES 2:16

‘My beloved is mine, and I am his; he feedeth among the lilies.’

Ev’n like two little bank-dividing brooks,
That wash the pebbles with their wanton stream,
And having ranged and searched a thousand nooks
Meet both at length in silver-breasted Thames
Where in a greater current they conjoin
So I my Best-Beloved’s am, so he is mine.

Ev'n so we met; and after long pursuit
 Ev'n so we joined; we both became entire
 No need for either to renew a suit,
 For I was flax and he was flames of fire
 Our firm united souls did more than
 So I my Best-Beloved's am, so he is mine.

If all those glittering monarchs that command
 The servile quarters of this earthly ball
 Should tender in exchange their shares of land,
 I would not change my fortunes for them all:
 Their wealth is but a counter to my coin;
 The world's but theirs, but my Beloved's mine.

Nay, more: if the fair Thespian ladies all
 Should heap together their diviner treasure,
 That treasure should be deemed a price too small
 To buy a minute's lease of half my pleasure.
 'Tis not the sacred wealth of all the Nine
 Can buy my heart from him, or his from being mine.

Nor time, nor place, nor chance, nor death can bow
 My least desires unto the least remove;
 He's firmly mine by oath, I his by vow;
 He's mine by faith, and I am his by love;
 He's mine by water, I am his by wine;
 Thus I my Best-Beloved's am, thus he is mine.

He is my altar, I his holy place;
 I am his guest, and he my living food;
 I'm his by penitence, he mine by grace;
 I'm his by purchase, he is mine by blood;
 He's my supporting elm, and I his vine:
 Thus I my Best-Beloved's am, thus he is mine.

He gives me wealth, I give him all my vows;
 I give him songs, he gives me length of days;
 With wreaths of grace he crowns my conquering brows;
 And I his temples with a crown of praise,
 Which he accepts as an everlasting sign,
 That I my Best-Beloved's am; that he is mine.

Francis Quarles

MINISTRY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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