

JULY–AUGUST 2023

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The Gospel Magazine



True righteousness • Christ all in all • 'By me kings reign, and princes decree justice'

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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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LIFTING UP A STANDARD

IN DECEMBER 2022 a parent of a school-aged child in the American State of Utah complained that the Bible contains ‘vulgarity and violence’. The relevant school district has now withdrawn copies of the Bible (KJV) from elementary and middle schools (ages 5–13). It is not the first school district to do this: it has been done in Texas, and students at a school in Kansas have also asked that the Bible be withdrawn.

The move seems to be a reaction to the passing of new legislation in some Republican States, whereby material deemed pornographic or otherwise unsuitable has been removed from schools. The parent whose complaint resulted in the Utah decision was merely exploiting the legislation, in a way never intended by its maker. The man who drafted the legislation was initially dismissive of what he rightly considered to be a frivolous complaint, but later changed his mind. Whether he knew that a legal challenge to a refusal would succeed, or whether he had another reason, is not known. According to a report, he has been quoted as

saying, ‘Traditionally, in America, the Bible is best taught, and best understood, in the home, and around the hearth, as a family.’ There is much truth in this statement, but it may also mean that the Bible should not be taught publicly, but only used in private.

This case highlights a current problem for conservative evangelicals. Those who would call themselves such within the Church of England are rightly deeply unhappy about the recent vote at General Synod to ‘bless’ same-sex ‘marriages’ with approved prayers. They point out that the House of Laity voted against the measure, and that there was strong resistance within the House of Clergy. All that was missing to carry the day was a few votes in that middle House, and the appointing of some evangelical bishops. Once the numbers are in the evangelicals’ favour, the wrong decisions of recent years can be reversed, according to this narrative.

It is difficult to reconcile this attitude with anything we find in Scripture. ‘When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard

against him' declares the prophet Isaiah, 59:19. That standard is none other than our Lord Jesus Christ, 11:10 – the word translated 'ensign' there is the same as the one translated 'standard' in 59:19, and indeed in every place it occurs in Isaiah. It is the lifting up of Christ that is our rallying point.

Our Lord Jesus Christ was lifted up most wonderfully and awfully when he was crucified. He was lifted up above the earth, to draw his people to him. He was lifted up to beat down Satan, and by his atoning death he has opened the way to everlasting life for all his precious lambs. To preach Jesus Christ and him crucified is to make that open declaration that there is a God of justice and might, before whom all must give account. The gospel is indeed a savour of life unto life for some, and of death unto death for others. It is the bringing of a sword that will set mothers against daughter, and fathers against sons. It is as water to those who thirst, and it is as pearls cast before swine to others. When the apostles went out in the power of the Holy Spirit and preached the gospel wherever they were led, it resulted in conversions and hatred. They were received into the homes of those who were brought to the saving knowledge of Christ. They were cast into prison at the behest of those who hated the truth.

When the gospel is preached faithfully, and when the Lord is pleased to bring in his people, then society begins to reflect this blessing. The history of our nation declares the fact, and there have been times when the officers of the law in one place and another have found themselves with almost nothing to do. When the monarch's ministers enact laws that are soundly founded on Scripture then the nation is wisely ruled. When religious liberty means that attending divine worship is every person's right, and many

people's desire, then family life, work and all things are wonderfully helped. All of this arises from the faithful preaching of the gospel.

When society begins to turn against the gospel, and when the church ceases to preach as it ought, and when Christians cease to live as they should, then those who are hanging on to the old ways find themselves very much in the minority. If they are in positions of authority they may use that position to try to hold back the decline. They do so against the general run of human inclination. Since there is no substance in society to undergird their efforts, it is inevitable that they fail. The decision of the school district in Utah is a clear example of this. The legislation, intended to curb harmful things, has been used to condemn the Bible. This was never the intention of the lawmakers, but such is the passion of a godless society that every effort is made to turn all things to the advantage of sin. The wisdom of man is not to be compared with the eternal wisdom of God.

Unless and until there is a revival of true religion it is hard to think that any political efforts will make the kind of difference desired for them. Whether it is the passing of laws, or the counting of votes, all such human efforts are in themselves of no use. The Lord does of course use means, and he puts people into positions of authority. There, they are bound to use their position to the best advantage of the gospel and the church. But to rely on such things, and not on the God of all might, is to put one's trust in weak and worthless things.

The great need is to make Christ known, to preach him faithfully, and to pray earnestly that the Lord will prosper all our endeavours for his sake. Let each of us do our part in this matter. Let us turn the promises of God back on him, in faithful expectation. ¶

TRUE RIGHTEOUSNESS

A sermon by THE EDITOR

‘Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven’ (Matthew 5:20)

IT is a common myth that entry into heaven will have little or nothing to do with us, but will be the duty of God because that is his job. There are many in this world who retain the hope that when they die, if there is a God and a heaven, it will be open to them because he will welcome them in. Any suggestion of unworthiness is met with a firm rebuttal: the individual may have done a few regrettable things, but there are worse sinners in the world—and, anyway, it is not God’s job to forgive sins?

To learn that Jesus Christ requires us to be righteous if we would enter the kingdom of heaven is to learn that such a hope as described above is entirely without foundation. The only way of retaining this false hope is to argue that our righteousness does indeed exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees. For this reason it is necessary, first, to show what this righteousness is, then to show why it must be exceeded. Finally, we will say something about how it is to be exceeded.

The righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees

We need no convincing that the scribes and Pharisees are not given to us in Scripture as models of righteousness, godliness or spirituality. They are portrayed as self-righteous, hypocritical, judgemental and unloving. We may therefore suppose that to exceed their righteousness will not be difficult, and we may even wonder why our Lord Jesus made this comment.

A few moments’ pause will, however, show us that there is a sense in which the scribes and Pharisees were indeed righteous, as far as they measured the matter.

For one thing, they had a good knowledge of the Scriptures. When the wise men came to Jerusalem seeking the one who had been born King of the Jews, it was the doctors of the law and the scribes of the people who were able to give the answer: ‘In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel’ (Matthew 2:5–6). They knew what was meant by ‘King of the Jews’ and they knew what the prophets had written concerning him. They expressed no doubt about the matter, but spoke with assurance, as those who were skilled in the knowledge and interpretation of Scripture.

We see this again with Christ’s own commendation of them. ‘The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do’ (Matthew 23:2–3). There was no doubt that to them belonged the right interpretation and application of the law, and anyone who was given an instruction by them was to obey it in this matter.

The scribes knew to look to those matters that were foremost in Scripture. One scribe asked the Lord Jesus, ‘Which is the first commandment of all?’ (Mark 12:28). This was no idle question, but one that revealed

what they considered to be most important. Christ's response, concerning the first and second which are summaries of the two tables of the law, elicited a favourable reaction from the scribe, v. 32f, who in turn was given great encouragement by Christ.

For another, they were careful observers of the law themselves. They tithed with precision, Luke 1:42, and they fasted twice as often as the law required, Luke 18:12 (taking this to be a readily-recognisable depiction of how a Pharisee spoke). The priest and the Levite in the parable of the Good Samaritan would not approach what looked like a corpse for fear of becoming ritually unclean. They were concerned that Christ's body should not remain on the cross on the sabbath day, for fear of desecrating it, John 19:31.

Indeed, they went beyond the requirements of Moses' law, and they added the tradition of the elders. This tradition was in part their understanding of the law, but it was also in part their additions to it. They complained that the disciples did not adhere to these traditions, Mark 7:5, and they were accused by Christ of adding such things as the washing of cups and platters, v. 8.

Again, they kept away from known sinners. It was difficult for them to understand how Jesus Christ could enter into the house of Levi the publican and eat with him and other sinners, Mark 2:14–17. Simon the Pharisee was offended that Christ allowed a known sinner to pour precious ointment on him, to weep her tears onto him, and to wipe them with her hair: did he not know what manner of woman she was, for Simon certainly did, Luke 7:36ff.

For all the condemnation of the scribes and Pharisees in the Gospels it is evident that they were, outwardly at least, the great and the good of their day. When the Apostle Paul, who remained a Pharisee all his life

(Acts 23:6), described his life before his conversion, he was able to declare that he was justified before men, Philippians 3:4–6, for as touching the law he was blameless: none could or ever did bring any accusation against him in this regard. It would be a great error to deny the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, for they were certainly well regarded.

It would be a far greater error to overlook the great error concerning their righteousness. It is summed up in Christ's condemnation, Matthew 23:27. 'Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.' This was the point our Lord was making regarding their tradition of the elders in the washing the outside of cups and platters, but inside they are full of extortion and excess. They have ritually clean eating utensils, but what they eat and drink has come to them by injustice, and is enjoyed with gluttony. Their tradition, which appeared to honour the law, in fact gave them leave to break the law, as their rule about Corban showed, Mark 7:11. They devoured widows' houses, and laid burdens on the people greater than they could bear, without moving even their little finger to help, Matthew 23:4.

We may suppose, in light of this, that to exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees will be a simple enough matter. What is needed is both the outward observance of all the commandments that still pertain, coupled with an inward disposition to do so in a right spirit. So long as we are not of that hypocritical spirit we should fare well, and we will have answered the requirement of our Lord and Saviour, our righteousness now exceeding that of the scribes and Pharisees.

And yet, who will confess to such a thing? Who will stand up before the congregation and declare that they have attained this righteousness? Who will receive the commendation of any other living creature who praises them in this matter? Do not our consciences testify that we offend in many things? Are we not very keenly aware that we have sinned, and come short of the glory of God? Do we not in the secret place pour out our confession to our Father in heaven, pleading for forgiveness? We know that we neither obey in all things as we ought, nor do we love as we should. We know that pride, selfishness and the desire for a good name among men are stronger motives to obedience than we wish.

And there is another problem. The Scripture declares to us that by the deeds of the law no flesh shall be justified, Romans 3:20. A man is not justified by the works of the law, Galatians 2:6. Jesus Christ tells us that, when we have done all that is commanded of us, we are to confess that we are unprofitable servants, having done only what was our duty. In short, even if we were able to keep the law whole and entire we would still need to deal with our sins. Perfect obedience on our part cannot put away the imperfections of the past. Given that we have sinned in Adam, we bear a burden of debt to God that even Methuselah could not have worked off, had he been perfectly obedient every day of his very long life.

When we begin to understand what is truly meant by exceeding the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, we are brought to see that this is a standard to which we cannot attain. What hope is there for us?

The righteousness that exceeds it

It should be clear from what we have just seen that we cannot hope to find the

righteousness we need in ourselves. Our righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees, and yet we have no ability to come to it. What shall we do? We need another righteousness, one that is not our own and yet is accounted as ours. We need what some have called an alien, others a foreign, righteousness. It must be from outside of us and yet so be ours that we are no longer under condemnation. Where shall we look for such a righteousness?

We need to find a truly righteous person. To whom shall we look, if we would find a truly righteous person? Scripture offers us some hope. We are told that 'Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God' (Genesis 6:9). We know that Enoch had walked with God, and he was taken to be with God for this reason, Genesis 5:24. Job is another, 'there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil' (Job 1:8, 2:3). Few men can have come as close to perfect righteousness as Daniel, who would not eat the king's meat, who was given the interpretation of dreams, whose three friends were protected from certain death in the fiery furnace, and who himself passed a peaceful night in the den of lions. Daniel was a man greatly beloved, and the Lord gave him knowledge and understanding of things to come. His prayer of confession of sin was instrumental in the restoration of the Jews to their homeland.

And yet the Scripture declares, 'though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord GOD' (Ezekiel 14:4; 20). In case the matter is not settled sufficiently, hear again the word of the Lord. 'The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity

of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him' (Ezekiel 18:20). We could add other verses to the same effect; Scripture plainly teaches that none can save any but themselves, if they come to this status of being just, perfect, fearing God, and walking with him. We cannot look to any other human being. To whom else should we look?

The only truly righteous person is of course our Lord Jesus Christ. Of him alone it is said that he is without sin, Hebrew 4:15. Pontius Pilate declared him to be innocent as far as the law was concerned, Luke 23:4 etc. His accusers could not bring any charge that stuck, Mark 14:57ff. He suffered many things as though he were a wrongdoer, and yet the Bible tells us 'he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities' (Isaiah 53:5). What he suffered, he suffered in the place of others, and for their sakes.

In what does his righteousness consist? There are three parts to it.

First, he was not shapen in iniquity, nor did his mother conceive him in sin, Psalm 51:5. The miracle of the virgin birth is not only a sign that Jesus Christ is different from all other human beings, but it is necessary to show us that a new line has begun. The first woman, who was named Eve after the fall, bore children who inherited the sin and corruption of their father. All who have come after have shared this same sin and corruption. Even those whom the Scriptures call righteous have begun in this state of sin and corruption. Only Jesus Christ, born of a virgin, is without it. This is not because his mother was also sinless as the Roman Catholic Church falsely teaches, but because that which was conceived in her was of the Holy Ghost. This does not mean that the miraculous conception avoided the sin of concupiscence, as some have taught, but that as God

made the first woman out of the first Adam by his grace and power, so God makes the second Adam out of a woman by the same grace and power. It is a work of new creation, and as such it is untainted by the fall.

Secondly, he lived a life of active obedience. This obedience was in two things, first as regards the will of God, and secondly as regards the law of God: the two are hardly distinguishable. This means that in all things Jesus Christ was all that Adam was not: he obeyed in all things, including resisting the temptations brought by Satan. He was truly without sin, and, among other things, showed that in a state of innocence or perfection a man can keep the law. He fulfilled all righteousness, and everything the prophets had foretold concerning him was done in him. Nothing was omitted that the people had been taught to expect, so that there can be no doubt that he is the promised Messiah. In obeying his Father in every aspect of his life and ministry he showed what a righteous person is truly like, and therefore exceeds Noah, Moses, David and every other righteous person we might care to name.

Thirdly, he was passively obedient to his Father in submitting to the death of the cross. It was the Father's will—not that it was not his own divine will, but his human will sought a legitimate way out, Luke 22:42, without becoming in any sense disobedient. This passive obedience, most evident in his suffering and death, was by no means restricted to the events of the Passion Week. Christ suffered as our Substitute throughout his life. He was hunted in infancy by Herod as the representative of his people. He was tempted by Satan as the new Adam. He was hated and reproached by the self-righteous in the same way that Cain hated Abel and Esau hated Jacob: the ungodly have always hated the righteous precisely because they

are righteous. He bore our sins in his body on the tree, and he shed his blood as the price of atonement before our God whom we have offended with our sin.

In all this he retained perfect righteousness: his passive obedience shows him to be the only acceptable sacrifice, and his active shows him to be the only righteous Man.

We need to acquire that righteousness. It is impossible, as we have seen, to come to our own acceptable righteousness. We need the righteousness of Jesus Christ to become ours. How can this happen? It happens through union with Christ, whereby we are counted in him. Levi paid tithes to Melchisedec, being in his loins, Hebrews 7:8–10. We became subject to the curse, being in the loins of Adam. How can we be joined to Christ? If we are sheep of his pasture it is because he is our Shepherd. We trust in him. We have faith in him. This faith is not of works, nor something we can produce within ourselves, but it is the gift of God. When we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ we are counted as being in him. His benefits are imputed to us, most particularly his righteousness. Our sin is imputed to him who died on the cross to save us from our sins.

How, then, were Enoch, Noah, Job or Daniel accounted righteous? In short, because they believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. The gospel promise of the woman's seed who should bruise the serpent's head and it his heal, Genesis 3:15f, is the promise of Christ.

Trust in that promise, and in the one promised, is the essence of saving faith. God made that promise to Abraham, that in his seed should all the families of the earth be blessed. He repeated it to Isaac and Jacob, and he made the promise afresh with David. The prophets foretold his coming, and the manner of it, and work he would do. They foretold his suffering and glory. They held forth the hope of life in him. That hope is ours through faith in Christ, whose righteousness is imputed to us.

Therefore Christ's own answer to his instruction to the disciples, that their righteousness should exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees, is not to be found in working harder or becoming more legalistic than them, but in coming to Jesus Christ. We become righteous by being found in Christ. We need to be found in him, not having our own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith, Philippians 3:9.

And the great evidence that we are in Christ is that we can say, with the Apostle Paul, 'I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me' (Galatians 2:20). Is this our testimony? If so, let us give thanks for the unspeakable gift of Jesus Christ our Saviour. AMEN.

Thus is a man made righteous, even of God by Christ, or through his righteousness. Now if a man is thus made righteous, then in this sense he is good before God, before he has done any thing of that which the law calls good before men; for God maketh not men righteous with this righteousness, because they have been, or have done good, but before they are capable of doing good at all. Hence we are said to be justified while ungodly, even as an infant is clothed with the skirt of another, while naked, as touching itself.

John Bunyan

MAKING PREPARATIONS

by CARINE MACKENZIE

In any task we undertake, preparation beforehand is really important. I was making oatcakes the other day and before I started I had to make sure I had enough of all the ingredients and then weigh them out. If you invite guests for a meal, you have to set the table and prepare enough food. Preparations have to be thought out carefully and carried out in good time.

The Passover was an important feast day in the Jewish calendar. Careful preparations had to be made before the meal.

Jesus and his disciples were in Jerusalem at the time of Passover. Jesus sent Peter and John ahead of the rest with the instructions ‘Go and prepare us the Passover, that we may eat.’ (Luke 22:8). They replied ‘Where wilt thou that we may prepare?’ Jesus then told them that when they came into the city, they would see a man carrying a pitcher of water. (This task was usually carried out by a woman so the man would be easily spotted). They were to follow that man into a house, and ask the owner for the use of a guest room where they could eat the feast together. Peter and John did as Jesus asked and they were shown into a large upper room and there they prepared the Passover feast for Jesus and all twelve apostles.

The Lord Jesus Christ has made preparations for us. He told his disciples (and us too) that he would prepare a place in heaven for each one of his people. How would he do that? He would go to the cross to suffer to and die in the place of his people, to give them forgiveness of sin. He would rise from the dead for their justification (Romans 4:25). Jesus paid the price of the sin for his people. He procured for them wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption, (1 Corinthians 1:30), and so they are fitted for heaven where their prepared place will be ready.

God’s mercy and provision for his people are bountiful. David in Psalm 23 was very conscious of the Lord’s care in all circumstances. ‘Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies.’ Everything that he needed for body and soul, for time and eternity, were prepared for him by his loving God. Do we remember to say thank you to our loving God for his provisions for us every day—food and drink, shelter and clothes, friends and family—but most of all the provision for our soul of Jesus the Saviour and his Word that tells us all that we need to know about him.

The prophet Amos gives solemn warnings to the people of Israel, ‘Prepare to meet thy God’ (Amos 4:12). That is a message for us as well. How can we prepare to meet God? What should we do? We can have good intentions of doing what would be pleasing to God but we so often make a mess of things and say and do and think the things that God hates. But the good news of the gospel is that Jesus lived the perfect life in our place, he died on the cross for our sins in our place, and rose again from the dead. What have we to do? We have to believe the gospel and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. That faith is a gift from God and is shown in our life by producing love to God and our neighbour—making us a people prepared for the Lord (Luke 1:17).

Bible Search

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

1. And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of _____.
(Ephesians 6:15)
2. Therefore be ye also _____: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh. (Matthew 24:44)
3. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have _____ into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love him. (1 Corinthians 2:9)
4. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a _____ for you. (John 14:2)
5. The preparations of the heart in man, and the _____ of the tongue is from the Lord. (Proverbs 16:1)
6. And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and _____ the sabbath day according to the commandments. (Luke 23:56)
7. And David made him a house in the city of David, and prepared a place for the _____ of God, and pitched for it a tent. (1 Chronicles 15:1)
8. The Lord hath prepared his _____ in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all. (Psalm 103:19)
9. Then shall the King say to them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, _____ the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. (Matthew 25:34)
10. Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and _____ thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me. (Hebrews 10:5)
11. Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom _____ is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the Lord is your strength. (Nehemiah 8:10)

SOME FAVOURITE HYMNS

by PEREGRINUS

SINGING has been an integral part of worship from time immemorial both in the Old Testament Church, and the Church of Christ since his death, resurrection and ascension into heaven.

The Old Testament Church sang the Psalms as they were written, including those which were written by Moses and others down the centuries; for example Exodus 15:1–19 ‘I will sing unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. The LORD is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father’s God, and I will exalt him’ etc; 1 Samuel 2:1–10 ‘My heart rejoiceth in the LORD, mine horn is exalted in the LORD: my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice in thy salvation. There is none holy as the LORD: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God’ etc. Many others were incorporated by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost into the Book of Psalms.

In the period of the New Testament not only did the congregations sing the psalms, but they also sang other compositions such as Luke 1:46–55: ‘My soul doth magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour’; Philippians 2:6–11: ‘Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross’, and placed in the body of Scripture by the

inspiration and guidance of the Holy Ghost.

It has been a tradition of the church to sing hymns composed by both ministers of the gospel and other private Christians, as well as hymns which are paraphrases of passages of Scripture. They have been and continue to be a blessing to the saints of God in the walk of faith and pilgrimage through this vale of tears. The singing of the hymns of the faith has been a great encouragement and also a means whereby the child of God had learned the doctrines of Christianity. For example, what greater hymn can be sung about the Lord Jesus Christ, his Person and Offices as that penned by Isaac Watts, ‘Join all the glorious names’, or that of John Newton who penned, ‘How sweet the name of Jesus sounds.’ We give thanks to God that these men (and others) penned such words that have been such a blessing to the churches.

Alas! The singing of hymns has been replaced in recent years with what I call ‘spiritual nursery rhymes.’ They comprise a few lines and are repeated over and over again, becoming nothing but a meaningless mantra, sung to a monotonous dirge which can hardly be classed as music. They do not build up the child of God, they do not cause the child of God to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ as the old hymns fed the saints who grew strong in the faith and could meet with their Goliaths and other enemies of the gospel. I do not claim that the time for writing hymns is over. Indeed, there are a number of hymns which have been written and sung in recent years, and the text of those hymns is quite

orthodox and glorifying to Almighty God. Nor do I deny that many hymns from a past generation can only be described as doggerel, unsound in doctrine and worthless in worship!

In this occasional series of articles, I would like, with the Lord's help, to consider some favourite hymns which I trust are sound in doctrine and glorifying to the Lord Jesus Christ and which I have sung during my long ministry of almost fifty-five years.

'O what matchless condescension'

The first hymn I would like to consider is one by William Gadsby, a Particular Baptist who ministered mainly in Manchester. Founder and first editor of the *Gospel Standard Magazine*, he also contributed poems and hymns to *The Gospel Magazine* using the pseudonym 'The Nazarene'. He published his hymns under the title of *Songs of the Nazarene*. His hymns have generally fallen out of use, being mainly restricted to *Gadsby's Selection of Hymns for Public Worship*, but a few are still sung in congregations today. I want us to look at his hymn, 'O what matchless condescension' and see how the truths of the gospel are set forth in this hymn.

O what matchless condescension
The eternal God displays;
Claiming our supreme attention,
To his boundless works and ways,
His own glory
He reveals in gospel days.

The writer of this hymn commences with the very nature of God, 'condescension'. Our God is not aloof from man. He is near to his creation, and especially his people: 'For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring' (Acts 17:28).

He has condescended to deal with man, not to be aloof from him but coming to him in his fallen, sinful state. He condescends to do so because his nature is love: 'And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him' (1 John 4:16).

He claims 'our supreme attention' by showing and declaring his 'works and ways'. What works? What ways? Gadsby writes of the work of redemption as being his 'brightest glory' in the third verse of this hymn, but he obviously had other thoughts of the Lord's works when he wrote it. The work of creation: 'The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handy-work' (Psalm 19:1), 'And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day. Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them' (Genesis 1:31; 2:1). All that God had done during that first week of creation was declared to be good—mankind being declared good. But that was before the sin, rebellion and disobedience by man.

His works are without bound, there is none who can measure either the works and ways of Almighty God: 'All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity. To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him?' (Isaiah 40:17, 18).

But the greatest glory is the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ who has been revealed in gospel days: 'God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who being the brightness of his glory, and the

express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high' (Hebrews 1:1-3).

He proceeds:

In the person of the Saviour,
All his majesty is seen!
Love and justice shine for ever;
And, without a veil between,
Worms approach him,
And rejoice in his dear name.

In this verse there are a number of themes expressed by Gadsby. He was obviously thinking of what the Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Colosse, '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. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily' (Colossians 2:8,9). There is, he says, a warning to the child of God that he be not taken up with the rudiments of the world, but rather to be taken up by the Lord Jesus Christ. For in him we can see the majesty of Almighty God and how both the love of God is manifest in Christ (John 3:16) and also the justice of God in the punishment of sin imputed to Christ who stood as the Surety for all his people: 'For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him' (2 Corinthians 5:21). As the child of God is brought to see the fulness in the Lord Jesus Christ he is able to approach him because the veil of the temple was 'rent in twain' (Mark 15:38) and the Old Testament priesthood had been abrogated by Christ

being our Great High Priest. Because of this:

Worms approach him
And rejoice in his dear name.

But Gadsby is so taken up with this theme of redemption by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. He continues with his hymn:

In his highest work, redemption,
See his glory in a blaze;
Nor can angels ever mention
Aught that more of God displays;
Grace and justice
Here unite to endless days.

And because of the reality of this redemption, that highest work of the Lord Jesus Christ, there is nothing greater that can be displayed in the Lord Jesus Christ save the application of that redemption to the poor lost sinner. So he concludes that it is the blessedness of the child of God to dwell in the smiles of the Lord Jesus Christ, not only in time but also throughout eternity, and there to sing the praises of and to him. But whilst here below in this scene of time and sense, and not yet having seen the Lord Jesus Christ as he is, we meet together for public worship and there by faith we look upon the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a sweet and solemn pleasure to meet with the saints of God and worship the Lamb of God by faith in anticipation of the of the marriage Supper of the Lamb.

True, 'tis sweet and solemn pleasure,
God to view in Christ the Lord;
Here he smiles and smiles for ever;
May my soul his name record;
Praise and bless him,
And his wonders spread abroad. ♣

CHRIST ALL IN ALL

REV EDUARD MEINDERS (1691–1752)

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

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

Continued from Nov–Dec 2022, p. 180 – paragraph numbering is correct from this portion

4. He feedeth the elect and giveth them to drink. ‘Come and eat of my bread and the wine which I have mingled’ (Proverbs 9:5). John 6:55.

- a. The hunger and thirst of the elect exists in a total want of all that can satisfy the desires of the soul; and in a total incapacity, both in the elect as in all creatures in heaven or earth to take away that want; so that the elect must eternally smother with the reprobate, if Christ did not come to satisfy.
- b. Christ feedeth them and giveth them to drink, when he taketh away the danger of smothering, and satisfieth their want by imparting of what can satisfy them; that appears in Scripture as spiritual food and drink.
- c. He doth this by degrees.
- d. By means of his Word and Spirit.

5. He covereth and clotheth the naked elect. ‘I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God: for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness’ (Isaiah 61:10). Revelation 3:18.

- a. The nakedness of the elect exists in missing true righteousness and holiness. From this flows a naked, dangerous, shameful and cold state of the soul. This makes the elect as all other men.
- b. Christ covereth and clotheth the elect; when he imputeth them his

righteousness, and the true holiness given them, wherefrom cometh a covered, safe, beautiful, bold and warm state of the soul, whereby they are distinguished from all natural men.

- c. He doth this by degrees.
- d. By means of his Word and Spirit.

6. He maketh the poor elect rich. ‘That I may cause those that love me to inherit substance; and I will fill their treasures’ (Proverbs 8:21). 2 Corinthians 8:9.

- a. The poverty of the elect exists in missing all spiritual treasures. From this flows an encumbered, difficult, sad, dangerous, powerless and despised state.
- b. Christ maketh them rich; when he imparts them which spiritual and celestial treasures; and from that part flows a happy and desired state. This is a relieved, comfortable, pleasant, happy, safe, capable and honourable state.
- c. He doth this by degrees.
- d. By means of his Word and Spirit.

7. He exalteth the elect from their low and mean state to a high and honoured state. ‘And in thy righteousness shall they be exalted’ (Psalm 89:16).

- a. The elect find themselves in by nature in a low estate in reflection to their birth, state, turn and being.
- b. By Christ they are lifted up in reflection to their birth, state, turn and being.

- c. This exaltation is done by degrees.
- d. By means of his Word and Spirit.

A. Christ is all-sufficient for the gracious in respect to their spiritual and physical life.

1. He instructeth the gracious according to his promise: 'I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye' (Psalm 32:8). He instructeth them about the truths, mysteries, duties and ways of the Lord, and this friendly, powerfully, awesomely, continuously, in secret, generally, freely, meritoriously and infallibly. According to his word by his undermasters, the teachers, and by his Spirit.

2. He leadeth the gracious. 'He leadeth me,' David says about him, 'in paths of righteousness for his name's sake' (Psalm 23:2). He leadeth them on the road of life and this leading is soft and easy, powerful, safe, cheerful, and continuous, and has a blessed outcome. For this he useth his word and Spirit, his example of perfect holiness, the examples of others, his blessings and benefactions, as well as his chastisements.

3. He strengtheneth the gracious. 'He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength' (Isaiah 40:29). He strengtheneth them in prosperity, adversity, in exercising duties, in strive, in weariness, in cases of despair and doubt; and this by his promises, by the Seals of the covenant and by his Holy Ghost.

4. He protecteth the gracious for the evil of punishment by a close, immediate and continuous, most safe, most spacious and ever continuing protection. Using for this people, angels, his intercession, Divine omnipotence and Holy Ghost. 'And a man shall be as an hiding from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land' (Isaiah 32:2).

5. He redeemeth the elect from their needs, both spiritual and physical, and such by a gracious, willing, prepared, powerful, timely and perfect redemption, using for this the same means. 'Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the LORD, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel' (Isaiah 41:14).

6. He sanctifieth the gracious, liberating them more and more from sin, continuing their inward renewal, and causing an increasing perfection of their inward virtues. 'For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one' (Hebrews 2:11).

7. He assureth the gracious of their state of grace, in a general or special manner, by the Word, the Covenant seals and the Holy Ghost. 'To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name is written' (Revelation 2:17).

8. He comforteth the gracious, so that he satisfieth their minds in respect to their present and future evil by the enjoyment of present riches and by the exercise of a sure expectation of future riches, which is able to strengthen souls against evil, or to redeem them totally from this, and to bring them to contrary blessedness. 'Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me' (Psalm 23:4).

9. He rejoiceth the gracious, that is, relieveth their hearts and maketh their souls find a sweet pleasure, and an enjoyable pleasure, flowing from a believing enjoyment of present riches, or a believing, sure expectation of future riches. 'The king hath brought me into his chambers, we will be glad and rejoice in thee' (Song of Solomon 1:4).

10. He giveth the gracious boldness, which remains in a faithful state of the soul, in this strength they approach without fear in prayer to the Divine throne of grace, and standing before that, they with boldness

behave themselves as children of God. 'In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him' (Ephesians 3:12).

11. He maketh the gracious to hope on the salvation of the Lord, giving a faithful state and operation of the soul, whereby they in a grounded, sure, glad, patient and working expectation await everything that the Lord hath promised them in his Word. 'Therefore he is called the Hope of Israel' (Acts 28:20).

12. The gracious have in him a right on to the world and receive so much thereof as

they need, because of him. Thus says Paul about the faithful in Corinth: 'All things are yours...and ye are Christ's' (1 Corinthians 3:21-23).

13. He prayeth for the gracious, which is his intercession in his will and demand, whereby he leaneth on his merits, and having power and a right, he demandeth and requireth of his Father the faithful are imparted everything which he accomplished. 'Who also maketh intercession for us' (Romans 8:34).

'BY ME KINGS REIGN, AND PRINCES DECREE JUSTICE'

by JAMES NORTH (Totton, Hants)

Proverbs 8:15

THE recent coronation service at Westminster Abbey reminds us that this nation, the United Kingdom, is a Christian based society and not, as the modern-day pundits say, a multi-cultural society. The pageantry, the ceremony and the oaths all remind us that the monarchy is not only based upon Scripture, but is solidly based in the Scriptures of Truth: The king's jewels handed to him during the service, the anointing of the king, the giving and receiving of the Holy Bible all point to the Christian nature of the monarchy and thus to the Christian nature of the underlying foundations of our present day society. Sadly, the political and social leaders of our nation tell us that our society has changed and the service, the oaths taken by the king are symbols and traditional and have no real meaning or

relevance for today. They are blind leaders of the blind!

Christians, however, do regard the Coronation of the King as being of great value to the nation, and that the nation neglects these 'traditions' to its folly.

In this article I want to consider the text of Scripture at the head. There are a number of points and inferences to be noted by the writer of this text of Scripture. We will note, God willing:

1. That monarchs and governments are subject to Almighty God and his laws
2. How then, should monarchs and governments reign and rule?
3. Monarchs and governments are to mark out the pathway for the nation
4. Monarchs and governments are ministers of God

5. Monarchs and governments being of frail humanity will fail, therefore we look to the true King.

But first, it behoves us to take a little look at the Proverbs, and also the context of the chapter in which this clause of to be found. We are told in 1 Kings 4:32 that Solomon wrote 3,000 proverbs, of which the majority have not, in the providence of God, been preserved. Only a few remain which, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit form the majority of the contents of this book. He also wrote 1,000 songs of which only one has survived, namely The Song of Songs or Canticles. They were written by Solomon to instruct his son Rehoboam in the ways of wisdom. As we read further into the Scriptures, it would appear that Rehoboam did not take to heart that wisdom which Solomon sought to teach him.

In Proverbs 8 Solomon is writing about true wisdom, the wisdom which comes from above, as it says elsewhere, 'Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning' (James 1:17).

When speaking in this chapter Solomon personifies Wisdom and writes of her as being 'set up from everlasting'. We have to remember that this is divine poetry and is therefore to be interpreted by the rule of the analogy of faith. So when Solomon under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost writes of Wisdom being set up from before all ages and before the mountains were brought forth, he is speaking prophetically of the Lord Jesus Christ. For example, when Wisdom speaks of 'excellent things' in v. 6, we can think of the Lord Jesus Christ speaking of 'excellent things' in other places of the Scriptures: for instance we are told that 'grace is poured

into his lips' (Psalm 45:2); again, v. 35 tells us: 'For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the LORD' and we are reminded of the words of the Lord Jesus: 'I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly' (John 10:10).

Solomon can be speaking of none other than the Lord Jesus Christ in this chapter! But it is not so much about the Lord Jesus Christ and his appearance in this chapter of the Book of Proverbs that I want to consider, but to consider more about the blessings of the nation which has a Christian monarch and government and the duties of that monarch and government.

1. Monarchs and governments are subject to Almighty God

It is by the authority of Almighty God that monarchs and governments rule and reign in their respective countries. The history of our nation has caused us, under God, to have a monarch to reign over us and a government to rule in Parliament over the nation.

What a mercy it is that this nation has had a long line of monarchs and governments who have reigned and ruled in the nation for the good of the people with laws that have been, until recently, based upon the Laws of God. We can truly say that this nation is a Christian nation. That does not mean that all the citizens of the country are Christian believers, but that the nation was and still is subject to the laws of Almighty God, and has been since about AD 930, but it was King Alfred who laid the foundations of the nation.

Again, we say that this nation has been ruled by godly laws, but now, as one politician recently said, 'we don't do God.' We have forsaken the rule of the nation by the Lord. But says Almighty God, 'By me kings reign.' Monarchs and governments are in

position by the permission of God.

How then should they reign and rule?

There should and must be an acknowledgment of Almighty God. What a blessing to the nation it was to see that the coronation service recognised that the king reigns by permission of God.

‘But God is the judge; he putteth down one, and setteth up another’ (Psalm 75:7). And do we not see this in Scripture?

We have the examples of Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar. Daniel records that the king had a dream that troubled him and only Daniel was able under God to interpret the dream which was that because of his pride he would be removed from his throne until he acknowledged that he ruled by the permission of Almighty God. ‘I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?’ (Daniel 4:34,35). With that confession by Nebuchadnezzar he was returned to his throne whereas Belshazzar was removed from his throne by Almighty God after his impious feast (Daniel 5). The finger of God wrote on the wall that his kingdom was to be removed from him. That very night he was slain and Darius the Mede took over the kingdom. God sets up one and removes another from his throne. ‘By me kings reign!’ We could cite other examples, but notwithstanding all the machinations of modern society and ungodliness within the nation, ‘The king’s heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will’ (Proverbs 21:1). And,

Almighty God ‘worketh all things after the counsel of his own will’ (Ephesians 1:11).

What a mercy that as we look at the state of the nation, and the state of the world we know that the nations of the world are not governed in a haphazard way, nor are they governed by chance. No! All things and nations are governed and ordered by the Almighty counsel of the Triune Godhead.

2. How then, should monarchs and governments reign and rule?

We have already said that there should be an acknowledgment in the state of Almighty God and the Lord Jesus Christ, and there is no need to repeat what is written above.

However there is another side to the coin.

Monarchs and governments should rule and reign under the influence of prayer. We thank God that there is still a chaplain to the House of Commons and the senior bishops of the Church of England still sit in the House of Lords as Lords Spiritual. We do lament that these individuals do not call the monarch, the government and the country to repentance and guide the nation in the things of God.

But, notwithstanding the actions of professed ministers of the Gospel, the child of God has a duty to pray for their rulers. ‘I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour’ (1 Timothy 2:1–3). We should pray that the king and government should be surrounded with wise counsellors who will help him to lead the nation in paths of righteousness, and for the government to forsake wicked legislation and bring forth legislation that we might be enabled to live

lives in peace, safety and godliness, and ensure that the liberties of Christianity we enjoy which were hard won down the years for us and the nation will continue. We should pray that our king, King Charles III, will be constantly reminded of the oaths he took at the coronation. We should also pray that our church leaders and ministers of the gospel will lead us to the Word of God.

Monarchs and governments should also seek, not only to govern in the fear of God, but also with great wisdom, and that wisdom can only be given by Almighty God. We are told by the Apostle James that 'Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning' (James 1:17). He goes on to say, 'Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom. But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace' (James 3:13–18).

When Solomon became the king of Israel, the Lord appeared to him in a dream: 'In Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee' (1 Kings 3:5). He asked not for riches, nor for length of days, nor for the lives of his enemies (1 Kings 3:11), but he asked for wisdom: 'Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and

bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?' (1 Kings 3:9).

Oh that our rulers, the king and his parliament, will seek unto God the Lord to be given wisdom from on high to govern this nation and its people. The Lord give us the desire to pray for them, that they will abandon worldly wisdom and seek that wisdom from above, 'for them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed' (1 Samuel 2:30).

3. Monarchs and governments are to mark out the pathway for the nation

Our text of Scripture at the head of this article moves on from the actual reigning of kings to the princes of the realm. 'By me kings reign and princes decree justice,' but the sense of the whole verse is that those in authority within the nation—be they king or parliament—are those who direct the public life of the nation. Says Solomon: 'Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people' (Proverbs 14:34). In the United Kingdom it is the government and Parliament who decide the laws of the nation and the pathway that the nation has to follow, whether it be the taxes which have to be levied on the people or whether this nation has peaceful relations with other nations, etc., the Legislature lead the nation in the pathway that should be followed.

The Hebrew word which is here translated 'decree' literally means 'to mark out'. What Solomon is saying is that those in authority must not only give leadership in the nation, but also they are to set the pathway in which the nation should walk

It is important that we should have markers for our pathway both as individuals and as a nation. If we take a journey it would be folly to commence that journey without a map. If we take a journey through the Alps

during the winter storms we would get lost in the midst of a heavy snow fall or blizzard were it not for the markers in the form of tall posts along the side of the road to give direction when the actual road cannot be seen for the amount of snow laying on it. Now this is what Solomon was saying in this verse: 'Mark out the pathway and do not wander away from it because it will lead you into false way and situations.' Leaving the pathway was the cause of Bunyan's Pilgrim being found in Bypath Meadow!

The problem that faces our nation is that we have wandered away from the Ancient Waymarks and we are experiencing the fruit of that action we have taken as a nation. Jeremiah tells us: 'Set thee up waymarks, make thee high heaps: set thine heart toward the highway, even the way which thou wentest: turn again, O virgin of Israel, turn again to these thy cities' (Jeremiah 31:21). Oh, may it please Almighty God that this nation, its leaders, the monarch and the government and its people will follow the pathway marked out for us by the Lord. 'Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls' (Jeremiah 6:16). The response from the Children of Israel was that 'they said, We will not walk therein.' God forbid that it should be so with us and this people

4. Monarchs and governments are ministers of God

We are told in this verse of Scripture that princes decree justice. The Hebrew word used here literally means 'Righteousness' Paul exhorts: 'Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God' (Romans 13:1). Peter, likewise exhorts: 'Submit yourselves to every ordinance of

man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme;... For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men:... Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king' (1 Peter 2:13-17). Jude tells us that the ungodly are 'filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities' (Jude 8). The inference of this verse is that those who oppose and do not support the powers that be are 'filthy dreamers', ungodly wretches. Those who profess godliness are called upon to be subject to those powers and not to engage in rebellion because monarchs and governments are established by the hand and will of God. They are ministers of God to promote true religion and the safe and peaceful rule of the nations of the world. However, this is not the case. The rulers of the nations of the world do not follow God's way and we see in this our nation wrong living, wrong laws and wrong direction. Is there an answer? It can only be found in the obedience of the nations of the world and the preaching and declaration of the gospel of Christ through all the nations of the world. When the gospel is taken to heart then may we see 'the earth shall be full of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea' (Habakkuk 2:14; cf. Isaiah 11:9).

5. Monarchs and governments being of frail humanity will fail, therefore we look to the true King

There are encouraging words from the Psalmist: 'Give us help from trouble: for vain is the help of man. Through God we shall do valiantly: for he it is that shall tread down our enemies' (Psalm 60:11, 12). To place our complete trust in earthly monarchs and governments is utter folly for they are frail like the rest of humanity. They possess no supernatural powers or ability and as such

they are subject to the frailty of the human race. We can only trust in the Living God and thus we are exhorted to flee from man. 'Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?' (Isaiah 2:23). We are to trust in him who is the King of kings and Lord of lords. We do not neglect our duties as citizens of this country and subjects of the newly crowned monarch Charles III, but we have a greater monarch whom we serve in our spirit (cf. Acts 27:23; Romans 1:9), as quoted above, the King of kings who goes forth conquering and to conquer (cf. Revelation 6:2; 19:11).

We look then to our Lord Jesus Christ to be king—to be king of our lives and to conquer our hearts, and we look also to our Lord Jesus Christ to be the King of nations when that time comes when the whole earth is filled with the glory of God in the gospel of his grace.

'And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed' (Daniel 7:14). ¶

COMFORT FOR GOD'S PEOPLE

'Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God' (Isaiah 40:1)

A meditation by THE EDITOR

'BEHOLD your God!' How different is the cry of the prophet to the cry of Aaron, who, having formed the golden calf, cried, 'These be thy gods.' How different from the cry of Jeroboam the son of Nebat who, having set up golden calves in Dan and Bethel, repeated that cry: 'Behold thy gods.' The 40th chapter if Isaiah declares the truth of God in the most powerful, wonderful and attractive manner possible. Referring to the section that runs from v. 12, Gresham Machen drew attention both to the simplicity of the language in the Authorised Version—which he affirmed was the most accurate translation of the original in any version—and to the stupendous heights and depths of the doctrine taught in it. He made the point that Scripture is truth, but it is not truth baldly stated, but so displayed as to be highly attractive to the soul.

It is poetry, but its poetry lies not in the form but in the content. For this reason it far surpasses the best of human poetry.

The main theme of the chapter is the God of Israel, as the opening words declare. He is a God who afflicts for sin, but who also brings affliction to an end, v. 2. He calls his people to prepare for his coming to them in a fresh display of majesty and glory, vv. 3–5. Whereas men are transient and unstable, the word of God stands forever, showing that our redemption depends not on us but on the sovereign power, grace and covenant of our God, vv. 6–8. Lest any should fear the coming of the Lord, he is depicted as a shepherd, carrying his flock and caring for them with a tender love, vv. 9–11. What a wonderful and encouraging image this is, and how different from both the gods of the world, and what

we deserve from the true and living God!

Lest any should be unclear as to who this God is, hear the questions to the hearers, vv. 12–28. These are worth considering.

We are asked to say who is the creator of the world, v. 12. When we see what is said about that one we are led to a single answer, the Lord God. Notice the language of the verse, which speaks of one who does things knowledgeably: he measures and weighs. The waters are measured in his hand, showing that he is both infinitely greater than his creation, and that he has carefully considered the quantity and placing of the water in the earth. He measures out heaven with the span, the width of his hand, making the same points about the vast expanse of the space. He comprehends the dust of the earth, meaning he has estimated the measure of it, not by guesswork but in a deliberate fashion. He has weighed the mountains and hills in scales and balances. The effect of the description is to show us the wisdom and care of God in every aspect of creation. It is exactly as he intended, as Genesis 1:31 declares.

We are asked to say who advised the Lord in this work, vv. 13–14. With whom did he consult, and who helped him with the difficult bits? The answer called forth by the question is, Nobody. He is God only wise, and all sufficient in himself. No power could resist him, no obstacle could thwart him. Nothing was too hard for him, and the whole creation came into being as he willed it. Compare this with the claims made for evolution, or of the legends associated with pagan creation narratives. How great is our God!

The next matter is dealt with by statements rather than by questions. In vv. 15–17 we see the unique dignity of our God. Having confessed that God alone is the creator of the world, and that he had no need of advice or help, we are brought to consider the result of

that work. The mass of mankind is not the great, powerful body that can overcome every obstacle, but is as a drop left in an emptied bucket, or the dust that remains in the scales after the wheat has been weighed: we are of no consequence whatsoever, as the opening part of v. 17 declares. The very fabric of the world, the isles (or coastlands) that mark the boundary between sea and land, can be rearranged as God wills. The land itself is insufficient to offer in worship to the creator, v. 16, for mankind is accounted as less than nothing in his sight. It should be noted that the effect of this is not to teach that God has no interest in his creation, but that we have no power with him in anything we do, nor can we by ourselves offer any worship he will accept. The things we think of as sure and certain are in his will and power, and therefore his dignity is far above anything we can imagine: who are we to rail against him, to decide how he is to be worshipped, or to assume that he must hear our demands?

We return to a question in vv. 18–20, concerning how we imagine God to look. To whom shall we liken him? The folly of idolatry is displayed in the simplest language. Without resorting to any mockery the prophet shows the emptiness of idolatry by describing the way in which idols are made. No matter what the material, the finished product is the work of human hands and human imagination. Given that the Lord is the creator of all, there is a peculiarly foolish folly in making an image of him out of something he has made! Seeing that he is active in creation, weighing, measuring, meting and ordering, it is utter madness to make an image of him that cannot be moved. The smallness of man is evident in the smallness of his mind, and nothing reveals this more than to see how he imagines God to look.

The questions posed in v. 21 return us

to the matter of creation, this time to show what we are to learn from it. That we are to learn is clear from words such as 'known', 'heard', 'told you' and 'understood'. This is not about man working back from the evidence of creation to the necessary existence of God. It is about the objective revelation of truth from the beginning, to which all should adhere. To put it plainly, the biblical narrative tells us plainly that God made the world, in six days, out of nothing. His power and majesty are seen in all his works. His estimation of man is evident in the creation and commissioning of him to be fruitful and multiply, and replenish and subdue the earth. For anyone to imagine God in any way that differs from this is to depart from what has been revealed. Israel knew all this, because Israel was blessed with the Scripture of truth. Other nations had fallen from this because they had not preserved the word of God, which stands forever.

The statements of vv. 22–23 declare the supreme rule of God. He who created the world in wisdom and power is now shown to rule over it in the same wisdom and power. God sits on the circle of heaven, implying a position far above the earth from which he views the whole creation. The people of the earth are as grasshoppers in his sight. Above him stretches the vastness of the heaven as a tent for his habitation. To us the stars are far distant specks in the night sky. To God they are the decoration over his head, so to speak. All rulers of the earth may think they hold power, and may be accounted powerful by us. Their power is nothing, and their authority vanishes when compared with the power and authority of the one whose throne is the heavens. Remember how Isaiah saw the Lord, back in 6:1ff. He knows the true majesty and rule of God: all human rule is but a derived authority, and must be exercised for

the purpose for which it has been given.

In v. 24 we are shown what we must know already, that God is not only the creator of the world, possessing supreme dignity above all creatures, but he is the sovereign Lord who rules all things after the counsel of his own will. Whatever man thinks he has established fails and falls when God blows with his breath. Divine judgement is not to be ignored, and if all lived in the knowledge of coming judgement, how differently would the course of this world be followed by human beings.

Having illustrated the supreme power, authority, majesty and dignity of God, the hearer is asked a plain question, v. 26. 'To whom then will ye liken me, or shall be equal? saith the Holy One.' This question demands an answer, for the mood of the Hebrew means that we are to read 'saith' as 'keeps on saying'. This is the age-long question posed by the Lord to mankind. Who is like me, who is my equal? Where else will anyone meet with a God who can compare with the Creator God? The answer for many has lain above: they have lifted up their eyes to the host of heaven, and have been corrupted into worshipping sun, moon and stars. The folly of this is shown in the fact that they are worshipping the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever. God knows each of the stars, which are by his own statement beyond man's ability to count, Genesis 15:5. With this verse the argument of vv. 12–24 is summed up in a way that shows that the height of human wisdom is to receive the divine revelation that is evident in nature and declared in Scripture, and worship and serve him alone in humility and faith.

All of this has a very practical application for Israel. In the previous chapter the end of the Davidic dynasty was announced, 39:5–7. That the Lord should comfort his people

by telling them that restoration will follow judgement, 40:2, and that God is a shepherd to his people, v. 11, does nothing to quell the rising fear in them. They say (keep on saying) 'My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgement is passed over from my God.' It seems that the Lord has forgotten his people and his covenant. This belief (for it was a belief, born of the failure of faith) is at odds with what the prophet has just declared concerning God. None who know God can consider for a moment that he can or will forget his covenant, or that any part of his creation can be forgotten by him. Fear, however, makes us imagine all manner of dark things concerning ourselves, our God and our hope. The prophet answers these doubts with two unanswerable things, doctrine and experience.

For doctrine he takes them back to the supreme dignity, majesty and power of the Creator, v. 28. In that he rules even now over that creation, it is evident that he neither tires nor faints. His ways belong to eternity and are therefore beyond us to fathom with finite reasoning. Rather than beginning to think of God as being so far above his creation that he ceases to care for us individually, we are to know that he cares for each of us. This is the testimony of Christ, in Matthew 7:25–34. The Lord sustains his creation. We have no power to hold ourselves up, or to manage anything. We depend on the abiding mercy of God to strengthen us and to preserve us. That we are enabled to keep going is evidence of the truth of this assertion. The doctrine of God in creation teaches us the doctrine of God in the preservation of creation. To think, therefore, that the Lord has forgotten us is to accuse him of ceasing to be God. The creation cannot survive without his abiding sustenance: it does continue and so his sustenance is abiding, and therefore he has not forgotten us.

For experience the prophet takes them to the reality of their situation, vv. 30–31. Even those who are naturally stronger than their fellows derive their strength from the Lord. Age and infirmity sap us of natural strength, and in the context of the complaint of v. 27 we should see this not only of physical strength, but of spiritual also. A young believer, full of the blessings of youth, age and prowess, believes all things are possible. The older Christian, having witnessed the failure of some, the collapse of many well-intentioned plans, and the general decline in godliness in the visible church, begins to doubt that much is possible this side of glory. 'But those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.' All who look to the Creator and Sustainer of all, to the God of the covenant in his Fatherly faithfulness, all who are sheep of his pasture and who follow him, are greatly helped. 'They renew their strength;' that is, he grants them such supplies of grace that their faith increases more and more. 'They shall mount up with wings as eagles;' that is, they will as it were soar up into the very presence of God. 'They shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint' because they will be given strength by the Lord. When Israel came out of Egypt they crossed the Sinai peninsular on foot in less time than it took the Egyptian army to cross it in chariots. The Lord gave them supernatural strength to walk without wearying until they were free from their foes. We too are granted a spiritual rather than a natural strength to continue in faith with our Lord and heavenly Father, through the grace and love of our Lord Jesus Christ, because the Holy Ghost the Comforter is given to each and every one of us as the earnest and foretaste of the blessing to come.

The facts of creation, rightly understood, declare God's goodness, glory and

power. They declare his loving purposes for his people, whom he will save to the uttermost. Though our present situation is more akin to the valley of the shadow of death, yet green pastures and still waters are before us,

and our Saviour's rod and staff are with us to comfort us. Let us press on towards that heavenly feast, that table prepared in the sight of our enemies, where we will enjoy the goodness of the Lord in his house for ever. ¶

THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS

A brief outline

by EDWARD MALCOLM

THE Epistle to the Romans is probably the book most commented on in the whole Bible. Its significance is evident to all who read it, and, while some may find more blessing in the Epistle to the Hebrews, surely no child of God can come away from Romans without blessing. But what is the Epistle? Is it a systematic theology? Is it a proclamation of the salvation of all Israel? Is it a manifesto for the church? How should we read the book? The following brief outline, while not intended to answer such questions, might at least help us to see the direction in which the blessed Apostle is reasoning. Given that his reasoning, as well as his writing, was under the inspiration of God the Holy Spirit, we ought to seek to perceive that reasoning in order to better understand the meaning of the words.

1. After the initial greeting, with its extended statement about the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, Paul moves very quickly to a damning summary of fallen humanity: given over to idolatry, and thus given over by God to a reprobate mind. Man foolishly and wickedly worships the creature more than the Creator who is blessed for ever.

2. All are without excuse in this matter, whether Jew or Gentile, circumcised or

uncircumcised, under the law or not under the law. The Jew who breaks the law is as if he were a Gentile, and the Gentile who keeps the law shows that the law is written in his heart. The true service of God is a matter of the heart and not of mere outward actions or empty claims.

3. The Jew is advantaged over the Gentile because he has the revelation of God. Yet none can be justified by the deeds of the law, for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. Salvation is through Jesus Christ our righteousness, and is all of grace, for God justifies the circumcision by faith and the uncircumcision through faith—that is, in exactly the same way.

4. Abraham is the great example. He was justified by faith before ever there was such a thing as the law (as given to Israel). His faith was such that he believed the impossible thing: that he should be a father though almost one hundred years old. Circumcision came later, so that it has no part in justification. We are justified when we believe on him who raised up Jesus from the dead, who was delivered up to death in our place, and who was raised to life again to confirm to us the rightness of faith in him.

5. The blessings of justification by faith are glorious. When we consider that by nature we are children of wrath, we see the manifest glory of God in sending his Son to save sinners. We are all dead through Adam's sin, and our only hope to life is in the one who came to deal with sin.

6. Does this mean we can continue in sin, so that grace may abound? How can we? The whole effect of justification is seen in this, that in Christ we are delivered from sin and death into righteousness and life. If we continue in sin we will receive the wages due to sinners—death. The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

7. Paul now addresses the reality of the believer's experience. We are like a wife who has been freed from marriage by her husband's death. Yet we find we cannot live entirely free from our old nature: sin strives within us. That we view sin as sin and strive against it shows that the principle of new life is in us. We long to be free from the old nature, and we look unto Jesus, through whom we serve the Father in the mind (spiritually) even if we find ourselves from time to time serving sin in the flesh against our wills.

8. Thus we see that the mere outward observance of the carnal Jew is no benefit. To serve sin in the flesh is to be under condemnation. If the Spirit of God is in us we are no longer living in the flesh. In v. 11 Paul makes a crucial point: the body we have is under condemnation as much as our soul. When we are made alive in Christ it is not just our hearts that are made new, but the body is redeemed also—not only at the resurrection, but now, in this life, so that we now in our flesh serve God. This restoration of the body (which is not yet our resurrection body) anticipates the new creation, when all things will be made new. God our Father predestinated us to obtain such blessings, and

nothing can separate us from his love to us in Christ Jesus our Lord.

9. All of this begs a question, as far as Paul is concerned. What of Israel, his nation? He has shown that a sinful Jew is no better off than a sinful Gentile, and that a believing Jew is in the same blessing as a believing Gentile. The covenant God made with Israel might therefore appear to be of no real benefit. In this chapter Paul begins by addressing the difference between ethnic Israel and the true sons of Abraham. God elected Isaac and not Ishmael, Jacob and not Esau. Mere descent from Abraham is no guarantee of blessing. It is clear that only a remnant of the nation that came from Jacob is accounted the true Israel of God. The great obstacle to faith in the Jews was Jesus Christ, the stumblingblock—the same stumblingblock that tripped up so many of the Gentiles.

10. Since faith in Jesus Christ is the necessity, Paul unburdens himself concerning his heart's passion for his own people. He was primarily the Apostle to the Gentiles, yet he never lost his love for his fellow Jews. He knows that only through the preaching of the gospel will any come to faith, but he knows also that many of his own countrymen have hardened their hearts against the gospel. It was preached to them by the prophets, and they would not hear it and repent.

11. Has God therefore cast away his people? Indeed not: Paul is proof, for he is a Jew and he has come to faith in Jesus Christ. It cannot be claimed, therefore, that the whole Jewish nation has been rejected by God. Rather, as Scripture teaches, God has always preserved a remnant. If Israel as a whole has not obtained what was promised, which is Christ, the remnant has obtained it, the rest being blinded. The coming in of the Gentiles to the covenant of grace is not intended to displace Israel, but to stir up

Israel to jealousy: when they see Gentiles enjoying their inheritance through faith in Jesus Christ, they should be moved to faith in him also. Lest any Gentile think to boast about his inclusion in the covenant of grace, let him beware lest he suffer the same fate as Israel, and be cut off as a dead branch. The coming in of the Gentiles, coupled with the conversion of Israel's remnant, is the saving of all Israel—for the true Jew is not the one who is circumcised in the flesh, but in the heart.

12. The fact that all believers, regardless of nationality, are inheritors of the covenant blessings, means that all ought to live aright. That life of sacrificial service is the only proper response to such mercy and grace. The unity of the church demands it, as well as the health of the body of Christ. Behave according to your Christian calling.

13. This is true as regards earthly powers. If, as many think, the Epistle was written after Nero lifted the ban on Jews living in Rome, this section is aimed at some who may have entertained seditious thoughts. It does not become the believer to engage in such plots. Rather, we are to live honestly, as witnesses to the new life we have in Christ.

14. As we are to submit to authority, so we are to submit to weaker brethren, in that we are not to lord our strength over them, but to accommodate ourselves to their weakness. It is likely the weak brother is the Jew who carries over into his Christian faith his former attitudes towards clean and unclean meats, and to certain festivals. Rather than look down on the Jew for being like this, take pains to relieve his concerns by not putting him in the position of having to choose. This is the way of peace in the church, and this is the way we show love to our neighbour.

15. The conclusion to the former argument is that Christ pleased not himself, and

so we should follow his example. Christ is Saviour of believing Jews and believing Gentiles, so the gospel must be preached to the Gentiles. That gospel is being preached by Paul, among others, and a great harvest is being reaped. Paul hopes to visit Rome on his way to Spain, but before he can do so he must go to Jerusalem with the gift given by the many churches of Macedonia and Asia. There, he knows he will face the hatred of unbelieving Jews, and he asks that all at Rome would pray for him in this matter.

16. Paul ends with greetings, commendations, a final exhortation and doxology.

In the first 8 chapters Paul has gone from the fall to the new creation, showing that only in Christ is fallen man restored. Neither the law nor the absence of law is key, but faith in Jesus Christ.

In case it should seem that Paul is denying the covenant, he declares his deep concern for his fellow Jews, and shows that, far from failing, the purpose of God toward Israel is being fulfilled in the salvation of the remnant, the elect of God among Israel. They, with Gentile believers, will (by implication) be the inheritors of the new creation. Let the Gentiles heed the warning of natural Israel, and not boast in blessings instead of trusting in Christ. Where both Jews and Gentiles are in Christ, as in the Roman church, let them live as believers, bearing one another's burdens. The opposition of unbelieving Jews is a present problem, and Paul must face them at Jerusalem. Let the united prayers of the Roman congregation support him. Let the mutual flourishing of God's people at Rome stand as a testimony to gospel grace. After all, in the light of the first half of the Epistle, these are the people who shall inherit the world to come: let them live as such now, that Christ may be glorified. ¶

FORMER DAYS

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

250 years ago: July & August 1773

That the Holy Spirit is truly God is the subject of the first article. Taking the names and titles, the peculiar attributes, the divine work attributed to him and the divine worship offered to him, the article consists in Scripture quotations to illustrate each point. It will be continued. In the same manner, the second piece takes the doctrine of the restoration of the Jews, under nine headings.

Typical Persons takes, first, the younger brother of the one who dies childless, Deuteronomy 25:5–10, as an allegory of our Lord Jesus Christ and the seeming lack of issue from his earthly ministry. Voluntary bond-servants, Exodus 21:5f, are also taken as a type of Christ, who took upon him the form of a servants for our sakes. The hanged malefactors of Deuteronomy 21:22f are taken through the Scripture application of the text to refer to Christ. So also David's lineage, the prophets, the Nazarites and the Nethinims. This will be continued. Prophecy concerning the Chaldeans is harmonised in a continuation of a previous piece, and is followed by Queries. This takes up a question asked in an earlier issue about regeneration and the baptism of the Holy Ghost. This is a relevant topic today, and the wisdom with which the matters is handled deserves our consideration. Various brief articles, including the account of the conversation of a 12-year-old girl, conclude the month.

The article on the Godhead of the Holy Ghost concludes in **August** with an examination of his extraordinary and external works. Typical Persons takes the Levites and the Aaronic priests. Scripture Prophecy

concerning the Chaldeans is continued. The last hours of a Mrs Huyghens is recorded.

An encouraging letter from an old believer to Samuel Walker of Truro is followed by another concerning gospel work at Truro. A second letter on Predestination calmly considered is published, followed by a soul-searching letter from one called to the pastoral office, written to himself. A further letter stresses the need for reliance on Christ in the matter of redemption, beyond the commonly accepted needs for both assent and consent to the gospel message. The statement, 'No one can truly repent of himself; and yet everyone is inexcusable for impenitency' is set down, and responses are invited. Several poems conclude the issue.

200 years ago: July & August 1823

The rise and progress of missionary work gives a writer reason to examine claims being made for the millennial reign of Christ. He argues that, far from promising an age of near-universal faith, Scripture warns of rising unbelief.

The church in the wilderness of domestic trouble is the subject taken by the next writer. This will be continued in a later issue. Proverbs 25:25 provides the text for some comforting thoughts. Myra takes gracious issue with an earlier writer who had asserted that man's apostasy was not in the decree of God. Myra shows from Scripture something of the true extent of God's decree concerning sin and redemption in Christ.

The Theological Review commences with *The Protestant Dissenter's Catechism*. While much about it is approved, its author's

accusations against the Church of England are refuted. A *Retrospective Summary* of Robert Hawker's life and ministry is decried as a thinly-veiled attack on the man had his gospel. A third work looks to the recent granting of independence to the Greeks (from Ottoman rule) the emancipation of Roman Catholics in Britain and Ireland, and the expectation that the Jewish people were about to return to the Holy Land. From this, the author looks for the coming of the Millennium. The reviewer, while applauding the writer's evident zeal, remains unconvinced. William Gadsby's evaluation of Sandemanianism is welcomed, as is a treatise on Antinomianism. The author of this piece takes the trouble to define Antinomianism, and is able to say that the term cannot be applied to any true believer. It really refers to libertines, whose condemnation is already in the Scriptures. Of course, the term is attractive to any who seek righteousness by works, as a stick with which to beat opponents of that error. Various other short reviews conclude the issue.

The **August** issue opens with a warning to true and false prophets, showing the nature of gospel ministry against other forms. Another contributor takes issue with the claim that Calvinists only preach the gospel to a few; in reply, it is pointed out that the Arminian preaches the gospel to none, since he is a denier of it. The source of moral evil is the subject of a writer, who argues that it must be located in the divine decrees.

Previous writers had discussed whether God punishes sin in believers. A writer returns to the subject to assert that the chastising by God of his people is *for* sin, even though the satisfaction has been made in Christ; God afflicts for no other reason.

A letter from William Tyndale to John Frith is reprinted, and a writer takes Genesis

2:17 and discusses the death died by Adam in the day of his sin, and us by decree as we are in Adam.

Thoughts on Christ's intercession continue from January. A writer looks at what he considers to be the difference between divine foreknowledge and divine fore-appointment, in response to earlier contributions. Another writes against striving in the ministry, referring to that spirit of self-promotion when faced with accusations. The answers given at his trial by Sir Walter Mill, an elderly former Romish priest, are reproduced. They show the gross errors of the popish religion, and the answers are full of gospel truth.

The issue closes with the reprinting of a letter lately published in *The Times* on the subject of slavery. The latest argument against abolition of existing slavery in the colonies was the cost of freeing all the slaves. The correspondent proposed forming a society and taking up contributions to buy the slaves out of their plight and have them rehired as employees on the plantations. It would be another ten years before all slaves were emancipated, but this letter shows that the cause was dear to the hearts of the Editors, and, one trusts, to all readers of *The Gospel Magazine*.

100 years ago: July & August 1923

Joshua 1:6 is the text for the opening sermon in **July**, 'Be strong and of a good courage.' The necessity of this exhortation is well illustrated by a long account of the publication of a new book, in support of the Liberal Evangelicalism then current in (among others) the Church Missionary Society. Names are named, new doctrines are exposed, and the very real danger posed by the movement is amply indicated. Sadly, this is the view that has won the day: the historicity of the early chapters of Genesis is largely denied,

evolution is widely accepted, and intellectual acceptability has frequently superseded spiritual truth.

The same concerns appear to be in the heart of the author of Wellsprings. An exposition of Psalm 145:11–13 looks at the present plight of believers contrasted with what Scripture promises. Another sermon, from 1 Corinthians 15:17, sets forth what would be the effect of Christ not rising from the dead, before showing what is true because he is risen again.

Reference was made near the beginning of the issue to Christmas Evans, giving a few details about his life. A sermon of his, on the Prodigal Son, is reproduced. The style is very direct: this was apparently preached towards the end of Evans's life, in the maturity of his faith. Some thoughts on Tender Mercy are followed by some thoughts on the alleged difference between Christ's teaching and his utterances. The writer's aim is to show that we cannot discount anything in Scripture on the spurious ground that not all of Christ's words were of equal authority. Psalm 42 provides a writer with comforting thoughts on hoping in God. Another contributor provides a brief survey of the opening words of Bible books. Toplady is quoted on the divinity of Christ.

A paper on the subject of proposed Prayer Book revision is reprinted. The speaker trusted that at least some of the proposals would be dropped: to the best of our knowledge, all were incorporated.

The Editor's **August** sermon is on The Lord's delight in his people, from Isaiah 62:4. He redeems them, highly values them, brings them into a close relationship with himself, grants temporal mercies, and gives them high titles.

The exposé of Liberal Evangelicalism is continued, here in relation to the Bible. The rejection of the plenary and verbal inspiration of Scripture and the denial of the historical trustworthiness of much of its content, are the chief points covered. Such views have become so common today that we are no longer surprised to meet them. We must always remember that they are novelties, lately crept into the church, and they have no natural roost within. The second piece, on familiar acquaintance with God, is as a breath of fresh air after the stale and dank air necessarily brought up in the first piece.

Wellsprings takes Psalm 23:3, 'He restoreth my soul.' A sermon by the Rev James Ormiston, on John 16:8–10 is concluded from an earlier issue. The question asked by the Philippian gaoler, Acts 16:30, is the text of another sermon. The scriptural warning against unbelief is sounded. A writer looks back over past issues of the *Magazine* and sees the concerns that were being expressed before. She then looks forward and sees how most of those fears have been realised. A sermon on John 15:16, on being chosen, ordained and made fruitful, is followed by some plain comments on the English Sunday. The writer decries the decline of the day of rest in our nation. One shudders to think what he would say if he saw most so-called Christians today. The dangers of Liberal Evangelicalism, reported in this and the previous issues, are shown to be becoming evident in the Presbyterian Churches in North America. A contemplation of Canticles 4:10–14 is followed by thoughts on 2 Peter 1:3. The Protestant Beacon warns of the changes being proposed to the Burial Service, which would include prayers for the dead. Brief reviews conclude the issue.

TO BE CONTINUED

The Protestant Beacon

The necessity of Protestantism

THERE was once a time when people knew the difference between Protestantism and the alternatives. Those alternatives were limited to two: any other religion, or no religion at all. More particularly, Protestantism is distinguished from Roman or Anglo-Catholicism, which are but two facets of the same errors.

Those days have gone, and there are now relatively few who understand either the difference or the need for it. Roman Catholicism is rarely seen for what it is, and the distinctives of the Protestant faith have sadly been eroded. It is good to encourage one another by being reminded of what Protestantism really is.

1. Protestantism affirms the truth

We know Pilate's infamous retort, 'What is truth?' We also know that the truth is Christ, who is the way, the truth and the life. We know the truth is set out in the Scripture of truth. We know that the Spirit of truth teaches us all truth. All in whom the Holy Spirit dwells, who have the Spirit of Christ Jesus, are led into the way of all truth. This is because we have been redeemed through the atoning sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our redemption is a spiritual work, begun, continued and ended through the operation of the Holy Spirit according to the eternal decree and will of the Godhead.

It is not possible that any in whom the Spirit lives can lack the truth. We may not know all things, but the Spirit beareth witness with our spirit, both that we are the children of God, and that we recognise and confess the truth when we hear it. It is

conceivable that a person will learn the form of sound doctrine, and be able to speak in an intellectual manner about them, but only the child of God can do so from the heart, with love to Christ, and out of a humble thankfulness for mercies received.

It must be recognised that in this matter both Arminians and Calvinists can call themselves Protestants. We affirm that the body of doctrine known as Calvinism is the authentic declaration of the Christian faith, without the errors or confusions that arise from the promotion of free will. In such cases the term Protestant is used in a less defined manner. While there is broad agreement on some matters of doctrine, the very deep divisions that remain on others mean that not all Protestants agree on what 'the truth' is. This is not a small matter, and all who hold positions that would not be recognised by our Protestant Reformer—or, indeed, by the apostles and prophets of old—need to look again at what they believe, and come to a better understanding.

2. Protestantism resists error

All affirming of the truth must necessarily entail a resisting of error. This is why the lack of complete unity among Protestants is a cause for concern, since the errors held by some come dangerously close to the errors we oppose in those who are not Protestants, and in some cases can become indistinguishable from them.

The question we need to be prepared to answer today is this. By what right do we call another opinion error, and on what ground do we resist it? Given that the prevailing

attitude is that truth is relative, and that my truth can differ from your truth yet both be 'true', this is a matter we need to consider.

We believe that God is, that he orders all things after the counsel of his own will, and that he has spoken by his prophets and through his Son. We believe that he has taught us all we need to know about him, ourselves, sin, redemption and the life of faith. We believe that we can be sure and certain about the doctrines of our faith, and that they are not difficult to receive. We believe that the chief cause of difficulty is either the elevation of human reason above the place it ought to have, or the refusal to humble ourselves before the majesty on high. A faithful, humble reception of the truth is the way by which we are delivered from the uncertainties that afflict so many.

All that dissents from the faith once delivered to the saints may properly be classed as error. The chief tenets of the Roman Catholic Church, the office of the Pope and the priesthood that depends on that office, and all the system of salvation that requires the intercession of human beings (living or dead) fall under the heading of error. Likewise all that denies the truth and supreme authority of God's word is to be called error. All that elevates science so-called and makes it definitive of the contents and meaning of the Bible is to be rejected. Every philosophy and system of human reasoning that attempts to explain or explain away the doctrines of grace is to be condemned as false.

The resisting of error is never popular, since it requires us to accept that in order for the Christian faith to be right and true, everything that dissents from it must be wrong and false. Our critics are quick to point to Matthew 7:1, 'Judge not, that ye be not judged', and tell us that we are wrong to judge others. We would reply that we judge

nobody. We are nobody's judge: Christ is the only judge, and we leave all judgement to him. What we do is warn against error and the danger of departing from the faith. We warn because we earnestly desire to see sinners saved, and because we know that the promotion of the truth glorifies our Lord Jesus Christ.

For us to be able to resist error we need to be alert to it. This is not a happy pursuit, but it is a necessary one, for all to whom it is given to do it.

3. Protestantism preaches the gospel

The first Protestants were Gospellers, or Evangelicals. They preached Christ and him crucified as the only hope of sinners. They understood that an unrighteous person can only be justified by faith, and that faith is a gift that cannot be earned or merited. They knew that the Lord had given preaching as the way in which the good news was to be declared, and that in preaching it is necessary to warn against specific sins. They recognised and proclaimed the authority of the Bible as God's final revelation as the only source of truth. They affirmed the necessity of the role of the Holy Spirit in the work of grace. Their lives were living examples of what they preached, and in many cases their deaths sealed that testimony.

When a person knows that they have been brought from death to life through the application of Christ's finished work, they know that they have a message to declare. The converted sinner testifies to the power of God's grace, to the efficacy of Christ's blood to cleanse from all sin, and to the comfort of the Holy Spirit.

Others claim to preach the gospel, and some make a fair attempt at so doing. Some preach a false gospel, and teach their hearers things that are worse than useless. Some

make no attempt at preaching any sort of gospel, and fall back instead on moralism, doing good, and encouraging their hearers to work their way to heaven. The very worst deny that any are sinners (except those who preach the true gospel), that there is no such God as we claim, and that there is neither a heaven nor a hell. Such wicked people have

nothing to look forward to but everlasting punishment and woe.

Protestantism is out of favour today. True Christianity is out of favour today. A love of right doctrine is out of favour today. These three things are by no means unrelated. It matters if we are true Protestants or not. ¶

BOOK REVIEW

The King of Kings; Meditations on the Coronation

Published by Ettrick Press, 98 The Brow, Brighton, BN2 6LN, 2023, 136 pp pbk

This book comprises papers given at the annual conference of the Sovereign Grace Union in 1937 immediately prior to the coronation of King George VI. The contributors to the book were Strict Baptists (Charles Breed), Calvinistic Independents (Herbert Moore), Anglicans (H.A. Lewty), Presbyterians (J. Macleod) and others, contributing a total of 11 papers. The subjects covered include The gift of a king, The king's person, and The king's robes.

On the King's Person, Macleod writes, '[The Lord Jesus Christ] and the Father are one, not only in oneness of their essential glory. They are distinct in person, so that the Father is not the Son, nor is the Son the Father. Yet they are one in nature... (p 29). Herbert Moore, erstwhile pastor of Jireh Chapel, Lewes, speaking of the King's Sceptre of the kingdom of grace, says, 'The King of Heaven ... exercises his royal sceptre in awakening men from the death of sin. At his commanding voice they come forth from among the dead... Secondly, he designs for them nothing less than conformity to his own image... All this then is the head of the church doing...' (p 96f). Space forbids further quotations.

We congratulate the publisher for rescuing this book from the dust of time and republishing it at such an appropriate time. It is a pity that it was not published earlier in the year for a wide circulation. It is certainly worthy of a wide circulation! Churches could well, with profit, obtain multiple copies and distribute it amongst their congregations.

I recommend this book to the readers of *The Gospel Magazine*.

JEN

MINISTRY

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

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

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 and 6.30 pm. Metrical Psalms and hymns. AV only used. Pastor Elisha John Masih. Tel. 07737031749. wattishambaptist.org

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

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