

SEPTEMBER—OCTOBER 2023

£1.50

# The Gospel Magazine

The background of the cover is a photograph of a stone tower with three turrets, situated on a grassy hill. The sun is setting behind the tower, creating a dramatic silhouette and lens flare effect. The sky is filled with soft, orange and yellow clouds. In the distance, the ocean is visible, with waves breaking on a beach. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and serene.

Of the eternal decrees, or predestination • Jerusalem and her children

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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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# THE GOSPEL MAGAZINE

*Incorporating the Protestant Beacon and the British Protestant*

*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.*

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## ‘WHAT CAN THE RIGHTEOUS DO?’

THE PSALMIST knows the intentions of the wicked, who bend their bow and make ready their arrow, that they may privily or from the darkness shoot at the upright in heart. His friend has urged him to flee, v. 1, but as he puts his trust in the Lord he cannot accept this advice. If he falls, continues his friend, what will become of the righteous? The foundations refers to the one on whom the state is supported, meaning here the king, for this is a Psalm of David. Should he perish, what hope will there be for the righteous, asks the friend, trying to persuade David to flee.

The answer of the king is a comforting reminder to us that we ought not to fear what man can do. The Lord, declares David, is in his holy temple, on his heavenly throne. Jerusalem may be in rebellion (assuming this psalm refers to the time of Absalom’s rebellion) and the palace in the hands of one who has usurped power, yet true power is far beyond the reach of men. We see in Hebrews 8:1–2 that there is a true tabernacle, not pitched with hands, the heavenly sanctuary, 9:1, in contrast with a worldly. Our mighty

God cannot be touched by the wicked intentions of any who rebel against him. They may claim to judge him, but it is he who judges them, his gaze piercing into their very hearts and thoughts. Such situations test the righteous, and here we are reminded that it is the Lord who tests his people. He sets a difference between them and the wicked, whom he hates. Judgement shall fall on the wicked, and their punishment will be according to their deserving, the portion of their cup. The reason why the Lord both tests the righteous and puts a difference between them and the wicked is that he, being righteous, loves righteousness. His gaze may pierce the souls of the wicked, but he looks with fatherly love upon his dear ones.

Trust in the Lord requires us to know something of who he is. In part, any who do not trust in the Lord have a defective understanding of his nature, character, person and power. Their God is too small, often seen as no more than a superhuman who is tainted with the weaknesses and faults of a human being, though having power to do

more than any mere man can. He is thus a dangerous being, for none can control him in his rages or vacillations. Such a god is no God. We know that our God is the maker of heaven and earth, and of all things therein. He made man in his image, creating them male and female, and setting them over his creation. When man fell in sin God cursed him, and the creation for man's sake. Yet he also declared coming redemption in the seed of the woman, and he kept that hope alive through the unfolding revelation of hope. In the fulness of the time he brought forth that redeemer, his Son our Lord Jesus Christ, to shed his blood on the cross to atone for the sins of his people. He died and rose again, and is alive for evermore at the right hand of the Father. All this was accomplished in the midst of the darkness of a sinful world, for the salvation of those who were yet dead in trespasses and sins, having no thought of God and his righteousness, nor any desire for redemption. Only through the preaching of the good news of Jesus Christ were we brought under the sound of hope, and only through the work of grace were we brought to new life in Christ. This is the tender mercy of our God, whereby the Dayspring from on high hath visited us.

Our heavenly Father sets a difference between those who are Christ's and those who are not. He loves the former and he hates the latter. The wicked love violence, hate the righteous, and seek to destroy him upon whom all good is founded, even Jesus Christ our Lord. They sought his life to slay him in his own day, and they seek his servants to destroy them every day. They try to turn the truth of God into a lie, and they attempt to subvert the glory of Christ with all manner of false teaching, blasphemy and deceit. The Lord will reward them according to their ways.

It is altogether different for those who are accounted righteous with God. We have no righteousness of our own, but we are accounted so for the sake of him who gave himself for us. As we are in Christ, so we are viewed by our Father in heaven as cleansed by the blood of his dear Son. Having satisfied his justice against us in the person of his Son, his love and tender mercy now extend to us. He loves us with an everlasting love, and holds us secure in his arms. The limit of human power is rightly shown in Matthew 10:28, that man can destroy our body but not touch our soul. It belongs to none but our Creator and Judge to decree our final state, and he who is faithful and just has forgiven our sins who have confessed, as he has promised. What brought us to confess our sins? The knowledge, through the work of grace, that we deserve hell yet Christ came to give life to as many as should believe on his name.

We therefore know that the present state of this world, with the roaring ocean of wickedness, hatred of the truth, rage against true godliness, and rejection of Christ and all his blessings, is not a sign of divine weakness. Rather, it is as promised, and stands as a sign and witness to us of the truth of God's word and the greatness of our salvation. Were it not for God's grace we would be among the wicked. By God's grace in Christ we are heirs of eternal life. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith in the midst of a foolish and perverse generation. Let us look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, in whose presence we shall dwell eternally. The foundation cannot be destroyed, for Christ is sat down at the right hand of God in glory. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion is from generation to generation. We are on the Lord's side, whose victory is won already! Let us not fear. ¶

# OF THE ETERNAL DECREES, OR PREDESTINATION

by JOHN EDWARDS (1637–1716)

AMONG the articles of religion mentioned in the title prefixed to these Discourses, this of the Decrees is the first, and chief, and on which the rest depend.<sup>1</sup> It is certain that this mightily influences on every one of them; for that the right decision of them cannot be expected without a clear understanding of the Divine Decrees. Therefore I will begin with this; and I will make this proposition as clear and manifest as any in our whole religion, *That God hath from eternity decreed all things that come to pass in time, and all things that shall be to eternal ages.* The Apostle's assertion is universal, 'He worketh all things after the counsel of his own will;' Ephesians 1:11. Everything that happens is according to this counsel of God's will, called 'the determinate counsel of God,' Acts 2:23. This is no other than his eternal decree (for the decree was an act of his will) whereby he hath determined what things shall be, whereby he hath purposed to do or not to do such and such things; to permit or not to permit them; whereby he hath appointed how everything shall happen, in what order and manner they shall be effected. And nothing is done, nothing is effected, but according to this divine counsel and will. The decrees are large and comprehensive, and have respect to all causes, effects and events; all things past, present and to come, whether they relate to angels, good or bad, or to men, or to any other creatures whatsoever. The eternal decrees reach not only to the end, but the means in order to it. They extend not only

to the persons and things, but to time and place, and all other circumstances belonging to them, which shall afterwards be distinctly and clearly proved.

Yea, all natural, and even inanimate things, and their effects and operations, are fixed by the divine decrees and are thereby immovable and unalterable. Concerning the glorious works of creation, the Psalmist thus speaks; 'He hath made a decree which shall not pass', that is, he hath made an unchangeable decree concerning them, Psalm 148:6. Particularly concerning that noted meteor the rain, Job affirms that God made a decree for it, Job 28:29. It is the very same word in the original that is used by the psalmist in the aforementioned place. The number of the showers of rain, and of the very drops of them, is determined. And the particular places and cities which have the benefit of them is also appointed, Amos 4:7. And God himself, speaking of the wonderful confining and restraining of the vast ocean, says thus: 'I brake up for it my decreed place,' Job 38:10.

Or, according to the Hebrew, 'I established my decree upon it.' It is the very same word still in the original. So again, in Proverbs 8:29. 'He gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment'. And we are informed from v. 23 that this decree was 'from everlasting, from the beginning'. Then it was determined that the profound and spacious cavities of the earth should be the receptacles of the waters of the sea, and that the shore should be the boundaries thereof. Therefore God

<sup>1</sup> Chapter 1 of *Veritas Redux* (Truth Restored) (1707), by a clergyman of the Church of England.

himself saith, he hath 'placed the sands for the bounds of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it.' Jeremiah 5:22. By virtue of this decree the roaring waves, the raging billows, which of themselves are apt to fly out, are kept within their proper channels.

This divine decree or order concerning the regulating of natural bodies, and their motions, and operations, is mentioned in other places of Holy Writ, where we read of the ordinances of heaven, Job 38:33, and the ordinances of moon and stars, Jeremiah 31:35, and the ordinances of heaven and earth, Jer 33:25. In which texts the same Hebrew word is made use of, that I took notice of before; and it lets us see that the decrees and the ordinances in these places are the same. Unto which it must be attributed, that all things appertaining to the heavens and the earth are invariably kept up and maintained; and that they remain in the same equal and steady posture through all generations. It is by virtue of the decrees that there is this settlement.

But though the divine decree be thus general and extensive, and is God's eternal purpose and disposal concerning the things and beings whatsoever, yet we are more especially to consider it as it hath a particular respect unto men; and that, first, as to their temporal and bodily concerns; and secondly, as to those which are spiritual, those that relate to their souls, and the condition of them in this and the other world. My present undertaking obliges me chiefly to speak of the decree as it respects the salvation or damnation of mankind; but yet, to lay open fully the doctrine of the decrees, I will consider them in their utmost extent and latitude. And accordingly, for the sake of the true lovers of God and Truth, I will first show that all the temporal and worldly concerns of mankind are the object of the divine decrees; and then I will more largely and amply discourse

of these decrees, as they have regard to our spiritual state, namely that of grace and salvation, and that other of sin and perdition.

First, I shall make it evident from the express and frequent testimonies of the inspired writings, which are the infallible rule and standard of all divine truth, that man's life here upon earth, and all things appertaining to it, are unalterably appointed and predetermined. The very individual and precise terms of his continuance in this world is prefixed and limited by the Almighty. Which being admitted and believed, we can scarcely doubt whether all men's particular conditions, together with all the circumstances and concomitants of human life, be not also irrevocably fixed and determined. Wherefore I shall endeavour the proof of the former, and then I will reckon that the latter will be granted, as a consequence of it. However, lest any should presume to deny it, I will evince the truth of it.

Who is more able to inform us concerning the set determination of the time of man's life than holy Job, whose days were embittered by all sorts of troubles, afflictions and calamities, and who was reduced to such a deplorable and wretched condition that he was weary of his life, and passionately longed for a period of it? This put him upon studying this grand point, and enquiring into the true state of this question, namely Whether the divine destiny had set any particular limits and boundaries to his life, and to the lives of other men? And to hear his resolution of this problem; 'Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth?' Job 7:1, which way of speaking, by way of interrogation, is equivalent with a positive assertion, in the style of Scripture, and therefore it is as much as if he had directly expressly averred, That the time of man upon earth is appointed. Indeed the Hebrew word *tsava* is translated

by some, a warfare; for that is the import of it sometimes. But if we rightly consider it, we shall find that it amounts to the same thing which is here expressed in our translation, for though it primarily signifies warfare, yet the next denotation of it is the time of warfare; the particular set time of a soldier being in arms, and more especially of being upon service and action. And thence it comes to denote and set and prefixed time, and consequently is fitly and properly rendered here an appointed time. Such is man's life, saith our inspired author, in this world; it is set and determined by him who gave him his being.

And therefore, in another place, is called by this holy man the days of our appointed time, Job 14:14, because the days of it are appointed and determined by God; because there are certain limits set to it, beyond which there is no sallying forth. Which is confirmed by what the holy man there saith, that he will wait till this appointed time, which is accompanied with so great a change, shall come. Which clearly implies that the period of his days was precisely fixed, and that it could not be hastened or delayed. That is the reason why he waited for it, and patiently expected it. Whereas if the term of our life were not immovable, we could not be said to wait until it arrived; this importing, that we must weather out all the time with patient and contented minds, not entertaining a fond imagination that it can be either lengthened or shortened: and therefore there is good ground for our patient waiting.

I return back to the first verse of the seventh chapter, where we had the words, 'Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth?' And then it immediately follows, 'Are not his days also like the days of an hireling?' Where we see that the latter clause explains the former, and instructs us in this doctrine, That the days of our life are set and fixed; for they

are the days of an hireling, which are set and determined for a particular time, and when these are expired he is no longer an hireling, for he was only hired for a determinate time. To which purpose let those words of Isaiah 16:14 be consulted, 'The Lord hath spoken, saying, Within three years, as the years of an hireling, and the glory of Moab shall be contemned'. And those of Isaiah 21:16. 'Within a year, according to the years of an hireling, and all the glory of Kedar shall fail'. Whence it is evident that the years or days of a hireling signify a precise and prefixed time, and such as is absolutely determined. The reason of which is plain, because of old (as well as since) hired workmen or servants were agreed with for a certain determinate number of years or days, and as soon as that term was ended, they looked for their hire. Thus this fit similitude doth both prove and illustrate the truth which I am now advancing, That the days and years of all men's lives are fixed by an eternal decree. The familiar comparison which the Holy Ghost makes use of here doth sufficiently establish us in this belief.

Again, I might mention Job 30:23 where the grave is called 'the house appointed' (*beth mogned*), or 'the house of appointment', 'for all living.' For *'agad*, whence the Hebrew word here used is derived, signifies to constitute, appoint, or set a certain time or place for anything, and so *mogned* is an appointed time or place. And therefore the solemn congregations and assemblies of the Jews, which were determined by God to set and prescribed times of the year, were called by this name (*mognedim*, appointed feasts, Isaiah 1:14). Which plainly shows that the house appointed, before mentioned, denotes unto us that the end of our lives is exactly determined, and that we must descend into the grave (which is the house here meant) at that very moment which was prefixed by the divine decree.

But the plainest, fullest, and most unanswerable text that can be produced to prove the fixed term of man's life is that in Job 14:5, 'His days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass'. The obvious sense of which words is, that the term of our lives is fixed from eternity, and beyond this no man can go, and none can fall short of it.

And that we may be assured of the truth of this, it is set forth in three sorts of expressions; first it is said, 'man's days are determined'; but lest that should not sufficiently express the holy man's meaning, it is added, 'the number of his months are with thee'; nor is this thought to be enough, and therefore to render the thing unquestionable, and not liable to the least doubt, it is further added, 'thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass'. So that it is a matter of amazement to me, that a truth which is thus repeated and reiterated, should meet with contradiction. I know it is confidently affirmed by some that this text denotes only the brevity of man's life, which is confined within a small space, and is shut up and circumscribed in certain bounds, but if we seriously and distinctly weigh the words and mind the emphasis of them, we may easily discern something more in them, namely that they speak of a precise space of time, and definite term of days and months, a particular period of every man's age, that God hath appointed and ordained. Here is plainly expressed the particular decree and counsel of God from eternity concerning this, whereby he hath set particular limits to every individual person so that some shall arrive to such an age, and others to another. Thus these words are to be understood, 'his days are determined,' that is, limited and confined by the predetermination of heaven. 'The number of his months is with thee,' that is, in thy eternal purpose. So that none can make

the number of his days fewer or more, non can add to them or detract from them. 'Thou has appointed his bounds that he cannot pass,' that is, it was by the divine appointment and constitution that not only in the general man's life should be contracted here on earth, and reduced to a short space of years, but more particularly, that there should be a prescript term of every man's life, and consequently that the time of his death should be fixed and determined, which is the sense of the words that immediately follow, v. 6. 'He accomplisheth, as a hireling his days', that is, every man hath his particular time set him, as a labouring man that is hired; but of this I have spoken before. I look then upon this remarkable passage of Job, together with what he had said before, as a most signal confirmation of the doctrine which I offer, to wit, That the particular limits of all men's lives were determined by God before the foundation of the world; and that no person ever went beyond these limits, nor came short of them. If there were no other proof than these texts already mentioned, I think we might rationally acquiesce in it, for the places are very plain and perspicuous; but I proceed to others.

This I take to be the sense of the Psalmist in Psalm 31:15. 'My times are in thy hand:' that is, Thou hast from eternal ages appointed the years of my life. Thou hast determined the certain limits of my duration on earth, wherefore it is impossible that any of my enemies should take away my life before the time that thou hast prefixed. The context clears this to be the sense of the place, for we find the Psalmist struggling under great perplexities and miseries. The reflection on his past sins fills his soul with horror, and exhausts his spirits. 'My strength faileth because of mine iniquity, and my bones are consumed.' And without, as well as within, he is assaulted and afflicted. 'I was

a reproach,' saith he, 'among all my enemies, and a fear to my acquaintance: I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind: I am like a broken vessel' of no use or account, 'while they took counsel together against me, they devised to take away my life.' I see they are all weary of me, and would thrust me out of the world; but all their devices and attempts of this nature shall create no disturbance in me, 'for,' saith he, 'I trust in thee, O Lord, I say; Thou art my God, my times are in thy hand.' Thou art the greater arbiter of life and death, because thou hast from eternity fixed the period of my life, which cannot be extended or abbreviated; and therefore in vain do my malicious adversaries plot to take away my life. Thus the scope of the Psalmist informs us what is the true meaning of these words, 'my times are in thy hand,' that is, the whole time of my life in this world is set down in the rolls of thy decrees, and depends entirely on that. Especially if we consider that 'thy hand' may particularly note the divine decree, (for the hand and the counsel of God are equivalent terms, in Acts 4:28) we shall be forward to believe the Psalmist's meaning to be this, that all his days that he was to live upon earth were settled and determined by the eternal purpose of God, so that it was not in the power of the infernal spirits, or their malicious instruments, to antedate his death. Thus his times were in God's hand.

I pass to the New Testament, and there we have this truth attested by our Saviour, Matthew 6:27. 'Which of you by taking thought, can add one cubit to his age?' For so it should read, the Greek word ἡλικία signifying age (as well as stature) and so accordingly we render it in John 9:21, 23, 'He is of age', and in Hebrews 11:11, 'Sarah was

delivered of a child when she was past age' or more exactly according to the original, παρὰ καιρὸν ἡλικίας, beyond the time of her age, beyond the fit season which is proper for child-bearing. And even in those places where our translators render the word otherwise, it might conveniently enough be Englished thus, as in Luke 2:52, 'Jesus increased in wisdom and stature', where in respect of his human nature it is rightly said that as his years increased, so did his wisdom; he improved in both these, and so became the more illustrious in the sight of all men. 'Zacchaeus was little in age' Luke 19:3, that is, he was but low considering his age and years. And lastly, that other text, Ephesians 4:13, where the word is again used, shows that it is to be taken in that sense which I have offered, 'Till we come,' saith the Apostle, 'to the measure of the age of the fulness of Christ', which clearly expresses the Apostle's intent in that place, that Christ had given some, Apostles, and some, Pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, and that they might all come unto a perfect man, (who is of full age, as it follows) unto the measure of the full age of Christ, which by an ordinary Hebraism is here called the age of the fulness. Thus it is evident that in all those places where the word ἡλικία is used, it denotes the quantity of time, not that of the body. And there is more especially in the text before us, it cannot be otherwise understood and translated; for the plain sense is this, which of you can by taking thought make the least accession of time to your age? Which of you is able to add one day to his life? Not one of you; for the thing is wholly impracticable, because your lives are fixed by the divine decree, and therefore not one minute of your time can be either anticipated or prolonged.

**TO BE CONTINUED**

# A CARELESS DECISION

by CARINE MACKENZIE

We recently returned from a trip to America. We had checked in our luggage at the airport in Nashville Tennessee and flew to New York, then London and then to our home town of Inverness in the north of Scotland. We had a long journey overnight with not much sleep but we're very glad to be home safely. We hoped very much that our luggage would make it home safely too. Crowds of people were waiting round the luggage belt. I spotted a familiar case among the first to arrive – how pleased we were. Our other case arrived very soon after.

When we settled in our house, I decided to get started on the laundry. I went to open up my case, and was shocked to discover that I had picked up the wrong one. This one was black like mine, was the same size and material, even had a similar coloured label but I could not open it as it had a padlock which I had not noticed before. I turned over the label to read another person's name and address. So in one careless moment I had chosen what seemed like the right thing but was in fact completely wrong. This caused upset to me and also to someone else who must have been concerned about her missing case.

In our life's journey we have to make choices and decisions. We are bombarded with suggestions and advertising telling us that certain products and experiences will bring us happiness and contentment. Holidays, clothes, cars are among the things that we are told to choose to make life pleasant and easy. But these things are not what brings satisfaction. They indeed have a useful place in our life but they are not what we should choose as of first importance. Stephen Charnock, one of the Puritans said, 'Nothing less than Christ will satisfy, and once you find him, nothing more could be desired.'

How important to choose the real thing. Moses passed on the word of God to the people of Israel. 'I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live' (Deuteronomy 30:19). That word is for us too. The only way we can choose life is through the Lord Jesus Christ. He lived the perfect life for us. By his death he conquered sin, took our punishment and obtained eternal life for us.

Joshua spoke to the children of Israel too about making right choices. 'Choose you this day whom ye will serve.' Would they make the wrong choice and serve the false gods of the Amorites, in whose land they lived? Joshua was not drawn away to worship a heathen idol. 'As for me and my house,' he said, 'we will serve the Lord' (Joshua 24:15).

It is important that we are not deceived by what we hear even from a pulpit. False doctrine and heresy has cropped up in the church over the centuries and we must be careful that what goes into our minds is the genuine message of the gospel. Paul and Silas went to preach at a town called Berea. The people there 'received the word with all readiness of mind' (Acts 17:11). They searched the scriptures carefully every day to make sure that what they were hearing in the preaching was according to the truth of God. We can be led astray by false teaching. It is so vital to weigh up what we hear, with the truth of the gospel – that word which is 'quick and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of souls and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of

the heart' (Hebrews 4:12).

Hopefully I learnt a lesson to be more careful when collecting luggage at the airport and to make sure that I read the label on the case in future. How important to be careful in the choices and decisions we make every day with regard to the Lord Jesus Christ and his gospel. Read the word of God carefully every day to check that you are making the right choice.

### Bible Search

Find the missing words in the verse. The initial letters of the right answers will spell out a phrase from the story.

1. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am \_\_\_\_\_; and shall deceive many. (Mark 13:6)
2. For that they \_\_\_\_\_ knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord. (Proverbs 1:29)
3. Yea, they have chosen their \_\_\_\_\_ ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations. (Isaiah 66:3)
4. Envy thou not the \_\_\_\_\_, and choose none of his ways. (Proverbs 3:31).
5. A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than \_\_\_\_\_ and gold. (Proverbs 22:1)
6. Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the \_\_\_\_\_ and choose the good. (Isaiah 7:15)
7. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my \_\_\_\_\_: yet what I shall choose I wot not. (Philippians 1:22)
8. I will \_\_\_\_\_ thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye. (Psalm 32:8)
9. And there shall arise \_\_\_\_\_ Christs, and \_\_\_\_\_ prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. (Matthew 24:24)
10. By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than \_\_\_\_\_ the pleasures of sin for a season. (Hebrews 11:25)

# 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)*

*C. Christ is all sufficient for the gracious in respect to eternal life.*

1. *He redeemeth them from physical death.* The God, namely the Messiah, of our salvation. He that is our God is the God of salvation, and unto God the Lord belong the issues from death (Psalm 68:19, 20.)

2. *He redeemeth them, when they die, from hell, and maketh them blessed according to the soul.* Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life and shall not come into condemnation (John 5:24). Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth (Revelation 14:13).

3. *He shall raise and glorify the bodies of the gracious.* Who, namely the Lord Jesus Christ, shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working thereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself. (Philippians 3:21).

4. *He shall acquit them in the last judgement, and as their Judge, ascribe to them the heaven with these words:* Come in ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world (Matthew 25:34).

5. *He shall impart to them heavenly life, to soul and body.* The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (Roman 6:23).

Let men take all these parts together and conclude from this with Paul that Christ is everything.

**II. The second part**

But what would be the benefit of Christ’s all sufficiency if it was for nobody? So Paul points at the same time to those for whom he is everything, saying: Christ is all in all.

A. The word all should not be taken for all men, head by head, because without mentioning other reasons, this opinion does totally not agree with Paul’s end, he only wants to show that the separation of men, in respect to the renewal, is now taken away.

B. By all is meant all kinds of people. God was in the Old Testament only a God of the Jews. For the Lord’s portion is his people, Jacob is the lot of his inheritance (Deuteronomy 32:9). He sheweth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgements unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation: and as for his judgements, they have not known them (Psalm 147:19–20). But under the New Testament he is become in Christ also a God of the Gentile. God promised this to Abraham: And in thy Seed, the Messiah, shall all the nations of the earth be blessed (Genesis 22:18; Galatians 3:8). This the prophets have clearly predicted. It is a light thing that thou shouldst be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob. And to restore the preserved of Israel; I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation to the end of the earth (Isaiah 49:6). And Christ coming into the world, hath broken down the wall of partition (Ephesians 2:14). And hath redeemed by his blood out of every kindred, and tongue,

and people, and nation (Revelation 5:9).

C. It is thus for all elect from the Jews and Gentile, in whom Christ is and becometh all in all, as soon as they are united by faith with him. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which 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). And his fullness have all received, and grace for grace (John 1:16).

Christ thus being all in all, then in respect to the renewal of the mind, there is no partition anymore between persons, outward privileges of states; because:

1. *Is Christ all?* Then neither the foreskin, nor the circumcision, nor freedom, nor servanthood does anything. He can circumcise the heart and take away the foreskin of the heart (Colossians 2:11). He can redeem from spiritual servanthood. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. (John 8:36). Therefore Paul says rightly: For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, not uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love (Galatians 5:6).

2. *Is Christ all in all kinds of people?* Then there is no distinction between Jews and Gentiles, between free and bond, but in him there is only a new creation (Galatians 5:16).

TO BE CONTINUED

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## JERUSALEM AND HER CHILDREN

*'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!' (Matthew 23:37)*

by JOHN HOOPER (Saltash)

THESE words form the closing climactic statement of our Lord Jesus Christ following his lengthy denunciation of the scribes and Pharisees. He has pronounced upon them woe after woe, no fewer than eight in total (vv. 13, 14, 15, 16, 23, 25, 27 and 29), denouncing them as hypocrites, fools and blind guides. Christ does not hold back and the words that follow v. 37 are in the same vein, 'Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord' (vv. 38-39).

It is in this context, then, that we find the familiar words of v. 37. How do they fit in?

What is Jesus saying here? It would seem, on the face of it, that he is suddenly changing tack and is now pleading with the people in an emotional entreaty as though he is addressing a people whom he dearly loves and desires to save but is thwarted by their intransigence. He calls but they will not come. His overtures of love are spurned: 'O, how often would I have gathered you, but you would not come!' If this is how we understand Jesus' words, then certainly they represent a dramatic change of direction in his train of thought. But is this really the case?

As we try to understand what the Saviour is saying here we must not forget to hold

them in their context, as always when interpreting Scripture. The Lord is calling out to 'Jerusalem, Jerusalem,' an appellation that we learn from that wider context to mean the scribes and Pharisees, the religious leadership of the city. In the first instance it is to them that these words are addressed. But they have a wider connotation because the scribes and Pharisees are not alone in the city. They are merely the current representatives of a people and its leadership that can be traced back throughout the long history of Judah and Israel. Centuries previously the LORD had said, 'Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm' (1 Chronicles 16:22), and yet we find the Old Testament replete with examples of the harm done to the Lord's prophets. Take this passage from 2 Chronicles 36 as an example:

And the LORD God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place: But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against his people, till there was no remedy (v. 15-16).

Consider too the treatment meted out to Micaiah (1 Kings 22:24-27), Elijah (1 Kings 19:1-3), Zechariah the son of Jehoiada (2 Chronicles 24:20), Jeremiah (eg. 11:20-23; 20:2; 40:1), Urijah (Jeremiah 26:20-23), Ezekiel (eg. 2:3-8), Amos (7:10-13) and John the Baptist (Luke 3:19-20, Mark 6:21-29). The word of the Lord brought through these men was rejected and their presence was resented. In the words of Calvin, Jerusalem is a city whose history is 'stained by the blood of the prophets' and had 'a continuous and age-long tradition of cruel and sacrilegious

slaughter of the prophets.'

Not many years hence Stephen would denounce Jerusalem in the same terms as His Lord does, 'Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? And they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers' (Acts 7:51-52). Before the day was out Stephen too would be numbered among the martyrs.

From verse 13 of Matthew 23, where we find the first 'woe unto you,' Jesus has been addressing 'Jerusalem' and still it is 'Jerusalem' that is on his mind as he describes her guilt. In all the hatred that she has shown to the prophets of old and would yet display in the crucifixion of Christ and the murder of Stephen, she has been resisting the work of Christ in the gathering of Jerusalem's 'children.' In their rejection of the prophets the scribes and Pharisees and their forebears resist Christ himself in his work of gathering his people to himself.

Who are these people, Jerusalem's 'children'? They are poignantly portrayed in the illustration Jesus uses of a hen gathering her chickens under her wings. The mother hen has a brood and she gathers them under the protection of her wings. There they are safe. And so it is with Christ as he gathers a people to himself. He is bringing them to a place of safety, the *only* place of safety, for he alone is their Saviour, their Redeemer and their Strength. In him, under the shadow of his wings, is the only protection from judgment to come. The people he must gather have been his from eternity by gift from the Father and by their election in Christ, and they must be gathered from out of every nation, tribe and tongue on the earth, starting

at Jerusalem. The gathering is his work because he alone is able.

Notice that the people to be gathered are not the same people as those being addressed. Jesus is addressing Jerusalem but it is Jerusalem's 'children' who are to be gathered. If I can be grammatically technical for a moment, Jerusalem is the object of the sentence while Jerusalem's children are the subject. These are the Mary Magdalenes, the Matthews and the Zacchaeuses, the blind Bartimaeuses, the publicans and sinners. They are not the proud, the rich and the self-righteous who think they have no need for a physician, but the humble, the sick and the poor (Matthew 9:9-13; Luke 19:7). These are the ones whom He came to save, came to gather to himself, but always Jerusalem resisted him, always Jerusalem condemned and opposed him: 'And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them' (Luke 15:2). Jerusalem's hostility is encapsulated in those three words, 'ye would not!' They are words of stinging rebuke and condemnation.

What we see here in Matthew 23:37 is Christ denouncing the resistance of religious officialdom to the work of the gospel. In that gospel work Christ himself is present. It is *his* work. Still today is he, by his Spirit, who calls and gathers his people to himself and builds his church. He gathers them just as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, drawing them to herself for their protection and eternal safe keeping, but it is a work that continues to be opposed and resisted. It is resisted not only by the world but also by 'Jerusalem,' by church leaders who themselves have no saving knowledge of the gospel, no saving relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

There is a clear reference to this opposition a few verses earlier in Matthew 23: 'Wherefore, behold, I send unto you

prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar' (vv. 34-35).

In the early days of the New Testament church Jerusalem is still there and still resisting: 'And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him, Saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them' (Acts 11:2-3). Where the work of the gospel goes, the spirit of Jerusalem is never far away.

Our minds might turn to the resistance of Rome to the gospel work of Reformation in the sixteenth century. Or we might think of the Laudian resistance to the Puritans in the seventeenth, or the high church resistance to non-conformity in the eighteenth and nineteenth. In our own times there has been, and continues to be, the resistance of Eastern Orthodoxy to the work of the gospel in Russia and elsewhere in eastern Europe. Always there is not only the world but Jerusalem too opposing the true gospel, resisting the Holy Ghost and persecuting the sent servants of God. Still Christ is saying, 'I would have gathered, but you would not.'

But is Jesus saying that Jerusalem is successful in her resistance? Is he saying that Jerusalem's persecuting hand thwarts the Holy Ghost in his saving work so that her children are not gathered? Not at all! Despite the hypocrisy and opposition of religious authorities, despite the persecution experienced by those whom Christ sends to preach the gospel, even at the hands of those who call themselves Christian, he will not fail in

the gathering together of his people, 'even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings.' Whether in Jerusalem in the time of our Lord or in any other time and place since where the gospel is to be preached and the elect gathered, Christ by his Spirit never fails. The proud forces of opposition to the gospel have never and will never succeed, even those that wear a religious cloak.

If we understand Jesus as saying in effect, 'O, how often would I have gathered you, but you would not come!', then not only do we have a wrong understanding of the text of Scripture, but also a mistaken and low view of him. It portrays a weak and frustrated Christ, a portrayal that is not worthy of the Saviour of God's elect. He says elsewhere,

'All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out' (John 6:37). In that same discourse he goes on to say, 'No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me' (vv. 44-45). On that last day none will be missing for all will have been gathered. On that day the enemies of the gospel, including the religious hypocrites in every place and generation, will bow the knee and confess, 'How often would we have resisted and frustrated thee in thy gathering work, but thou wouldest not!' ¶

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## THE LORD, THE SHEPHERD OF HIS PEOPLE

by JAMES NORTH (Totton, Hants)

*'Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.'* Psalm 23:5

AS we come to the penultimate verse of this precious psalm we have seen much of the Lord's goodness to his own dear people. No matter how far they may roam the Good Shepherd always brings them back to the fold. Not one of his sheep will be left to roam but he will go out into the wilderness and find the lost sheep of the House of Israel. He carries them back to the fold, and as the psalm concludes the lost sheep, added back to the whole of the flock will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. But before we come to the consideration of that final dwelling place and the blessings that attend we

must consider something of the preparation made for the sheep, the Lord's people.

This verse of Psalm 23, then, deals the fellowship and communion the child of God has with his Shepherd, Saviour and Lord.

In biblical times the shepherd would keep his lambs and sheep almost as pets, as if the sheep were part of the family and not just a commodity to be used for its wool, or its milk, or for the slaughter and eating thereof.

The shepherd and his sheep is a wonderful picture of the Lord and his care of his flock. He loves his people. He has always loved them ere time began. Loved with an

everlasting love: 'Yea,' he says, 'I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee' (Jeremiah 31:3). An everlasting love has neither beginning nor ending. How is this so? Because of the nature of Almighty God: 'I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed' (Malachi 3:6); also of the Lord Jesus Christ, for Paul writes; 'Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever' (Hebrews 13:8). Because the Triune God is unchangeable in his nature and attributes, so the love of God (one of his attributes) cannot change. If God set his love upon his people in eternity past, he cannot, he will not turn away his love from them. Oh, he may chastise them when they turn their backs on him but that chastisement is an expression of the love of a parent towards its child, and 'Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful' (Proverbs 27:6). And the child of God will be eternally preserved and presented before the throne of God on high. What a thrill and what a mercy!

There are four things I would like to consider from this verse:

1. The Prepared Table
2. The Presence of Enemies
3. The Pouring out of the Anointing
4. The Plentiful Cup

### 1. The prepared table

*'Thou preparest a table before me'*

First of all, can I say that this table has nothing to do with the communion table and the Lord's Supper. I say this because the Roman Church base their doctrine of transubstantiation in which they teach that the bread and wine in the communion service are changed into the body, blood, soul and divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ upon a whole host of misinterpreted verses of Scripture.

This verse of Scripture has nothing to do with the communion service and table. It is purely a table which speaks of the Shepherd's provision for the sheep. It speaks of the provisions made for the Lord's people for we read in Paul's Epistle to the Philippians, 'But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus' (4:19). What a mercy it is that the Lord, the Good Shepherd of his sheep and not an hireling provides all things necessary for his people in the same way in which the shepherd leads his flock to the green pastures.

If we look back to the Children of Israel being led in and through the desert towards the Promised Land, we see that the Lord provided for the people. In Psalm 78 we see the provision made by the Lord for the Children of Israel as they crossed the desert. We can say that this was a full and prepared table—it lacked nothing that was necessary for their pilgrimage. Day by day they received the manna, angels' food. Six days of the week it was provided and on the sixth day they gathered double, for on the seventh day there was no manna. The Lord provided water for them. Water from the rock. The bitter waters were sweetened by the tree. These three incidents speak so sweetly of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Rock of Salvation from whom all spiritual blessing flow. The bitter waters of sin and life are sweetened by the tree, the cross of Calvary.

But the Children of Israel still murmured and complained: 'Yea, they spake against God; they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? Behold, he smote the rock, that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed; can he give bread also? can he provide flesh for his people?' (Psalm 78:19, 20). In another place we read of the Children of Israel longing for the food of Egypt: 'And the mixt multitude that was among them fell

a lusting; and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat? We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick: But now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes' (Numbers 11:4–6). And again, 'And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread' (Num 21:5). So the Lord in his mercy provided them with flesh—quails, but they 'lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert. And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul' (Psalm 106:14, 15).

There are a number of lessons that we can learn from these happenings in the history of the exodus:

(i) As Christian people we should be thankful for all the Lord has provided for us both in material benefits and also spiritual blessings. 'I have learned' says Paul, 'in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content' (Philippians 4:11). Jeremiah Burroughs, the Puritan Divine, calls it 'The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment.' It is a rare thing to be content with our situation, but here was Paul. He was imprisoned for the cause of the gospel and took advantage of his situation to preach the gospel and maintain his testimony. He says, 'Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace' (Phil. 1:7). We should examine ourselves as to our state of thankfulness or otherwise.

(ii) We should also consider that there are others who are not so temporarily blessed as we are. 'For this ointment might have been

sold for much, and given to the poor... For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always' (Matthew 26:9, 11). We should therefore be thankful to Almighty God for his goodness towards us, for '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), and try to help others who have less than we.

(iii) We should not be envious of those who seem to be more affluent than we are. In his Epistle to the Philippians, Paul is comparing his lot with other Christian believers. He writes, 'And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel' (Phil. 1:14–17). In his situation, Paul was in prison for the cause of the gospel but he was thankful that there were others in Rome who had the liberty to continue preaching Christ in the gospel.

Elsewhere Paul speaks about the contentment of the Christian: 'But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content' (1 Timothy 6:6–8), and again, 'Let your conversation be without covetousness; and *be content* with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee' (Heb. 13:5) (My emphasis – JEN).

We also notice that this table is a SWEET TABLE: 'As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with

great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste. He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love' (Song of Solomon 2:3, 4). Oh, when we look at and consider our Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ, when we consider the work he accomplished in his life, his obedience, his death (which he accomplished cf. Luke 9:30, 31), his resurrection and his now intercession for his people we cannot but say that that table is a sweet table to everyone of his people. Even if there are some not too likeable 'dishes'; those of the application of the law (Romans 7:7), chastening (Hebrews 12:6) etc.

But this text from the Song of Solomon speaks of the fruit being served at this banquet.

There is the fruit of his love

There is the fruit of his atonement

There is the fruit of his redemption

There is the fruit of his intercession

There is the fruit of his return for his people, of whom not one will be left behind. No! The Good Shepherd seeks all his lost sheep.

O what a feast is this!

But how is the feast prepared? Oh, this feast was prepared in the mind of God in eternity past. The first indication of the gospel Feast is given as the serpent in the Garden of Eden receives the words of condemnation (Genesis 3:15). All the guests were loved by him with an everlasting love and drawn by the Spirit's work to partake of this glorious feast (Jeremiah 31:3). The child of God is brought by the Spirit of God to partake in his atoning work.

What a mercy that the table has been spread by the Lord of Hosts. But for whom is the feast spread? The Lord Jesus spoke a parable which is recorded in Luke 14 in which he spoke of a certain man made a great feast for his friends. His servants were sent to call those who had been invited to the feast. They

all decline that summons. So for whom was the feast prepared; certainly not for those who refused, but the servants were sent out into the highways to compel others to attend. 'Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled' (Luke 14:21-23).

How do we compel the outcasts from the gospel to come to the gospel Feast? Only by the preaching of the everlasting gospel. Charles Wesley writes in one of his hymns:

Happy, if with my latest breath

I might but gasp His name.

Preach Him to all, and cry in death,

Behold, behold the Lamb.

Joseph Hart writes:

Come, ye sinners, poor and wretched

Weak and wounded, sick and sore;

Jesus ready stands to save you,

Full of pity, joined with power;

He is able,

He is willing; doubt no more.

## 2. *In the presence of enemies*

*'Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies'*

In medieval times when a king went out to war, before the battle he and his generals would not only discuss the tactics of the battle, but before-hand they would feast themselves to strengthen themselves and to give them energy to undertake the battle.

The child of God is engaged in warfare, spiritual warfare. 'For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities,

against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places' (Ephesians 6:12). To do this we must be 'strong and in the power of his might.'

What is it, then, that we need? We need the Bread of Life, the Scriptures of Truth. Daily reading of the Scriptures is essential to the Child of God. That most wonderful of Psalms, the 119th, speaks in nearly all the 176 verses of the Word of God. Just a few verses therefrom: 'Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee' (v. 11); 'I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart' (v. 32); 'Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path' (v. 105), etc. We need the Spirit of grace and supplication (Zechariah 12:10).

We cannot, we dare not go forward into spiritual battle against the world, the flesh and the devil in our own strength and ability, for we will always fail. Charles Wesley exhorts and encourages the child of God:

Stand then in His great might,  
With all His strength endued,  
And take, to aid you in the fight,  
The panoply of God.  
From strength to strength go on,  
Wrestle and fight and pray;  
Tread all the pow'rs of darkness down  
And win the well-fought day.

Leave no unguarded place,  
No weakness of the soul;  
Take ev'ry virtue, ev'ry grace,  
And fortify the whole.  
That, having all things done  
And all your conflicts past,  
Ye may o'ercome through Christ alone  
And stand complete at last.

Another way in which we can look at this phrase from Psalm 23 is that of the victorious

king. His enemies have been subdued and after the battle he sits down at the feast with his warriors. The leaders are brought forth before the king and made to prostrate themselves before him whilst he places his foot upon their necks: 'And it came to pass, when they brought out those kings unto Joshua, that Joshua called for all the men of Israel, and said unto the captains of the men of war which went with him, Come near, put your feet upon the necks of these kings. And they came near, and put their feet upon the necks of them. And Joshua said unto them, Fear not, nor be dismayed, be strong and of good courage: for thus shall the LORD do to all your enemies against whom ye fight' (Joshua 10:24, 25). And again, as a sign of victory the Psalmist writes, 'Thou hast also given me the necks of mine enemies; that I might destroy them that hate me' (Psalm 18:40). It is a sign of the victory of battles lost and won in ages past.

Now, we have our own enemies which have to be dealt with. Sin is the greatest enemy of all. It causes the Christian believer to take his eyes from off the Lord Jesus Christ (Hebrews 12:2) and to wander into by-path meadow. And the problem is that we continue in that pathway of continual conflict. The Apostle Paul speak of this in Romans 7. He sees his corrupt nature and that the old man of sin never dies in this life and out of the very depth of his heart he cries out in sheer desperation, 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' (Romans 7:24). And then he writes of the victory that is only found in the Lord Jesus Christ: 'I thank God through our Lord Jesus Christ' (Rom 7:25).

However the conflict will continue for the remainder of our days until we land on the shores of glory when and where sin, Satan and the old man shall be done away with for

all eternity and we will join in the chorus of the saints of God through all eternity singing ‘Worthy is the Lamb that was slain ...’

### 3. The pouring out of the anointing

*‘Thou anointest my head with oil’*

What a mercy it is that the child of God has not been left to battle his own way to the glory of heaven. If that were the case, none of us would ever attain to the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ in heaven. We would fall by the wayside; we would stumble and fall and there would be no remedy to pick us up. Ah, but the mercy of it all is that the Shepherd not only seeks out and finds the wandering sheep who have been lost from the fold and brought back, but he also anoints them, the purpose of which is to use the oil as an emollient to heal the sheep and the lambs from cuts and bruises.

The Lord’s people are frequently in need of a spiritual emollient. The question is asked, ‘Is there no balm in Gilead; the there no physician there’ (Jeremiah 8:2), and such is the nature of the rhetorical question that the answer is provided by the question itself, that there is a balm in Gilead. There is the balm of the covenant in the gospel of Christ, the one who gives comfort in times of distress and temptations.

In his final discourse recorded in chapters 14 to 16 of John’s Gospel the Lord Jesus spake of his going away and sending another comforter, even the Spirit of Truth which the world cannot receive. In Scripture oil is a symbol of the Holy Ghost, the third Person in the Holy Trinity. Also, in the Old Testament oil was used to anoint persons who were called of God to undertake one of three offices, that is, the priest, the prophet and the king. The Lord Jesus was anointed when the dove, a symbol of the Holy Ghost, descended upon him at his baptism by John

and the Lord Jesus was to say in the synagogue ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord’ (Luke 4:18, 19). As the second person in the Holy Trinity, the Lord Jesus Christ was anointed by the Holy Ghost as the Prophet, Priest and King not only of and to his people, but also he is the King of kings and all peoples and nations will bow down before him and acknowledge his authority whether it be in this life or in eternity all will acknowledge his sovereignty: ‘That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth’ (Philippians 2:10).

The Lord Jesus promised the sending of the Holy Ghost for which the disciples were to tarry in Jerusalem. ‘Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord. Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained’ (John 20:21–23). We are also told in Acts 2 that the Holy Ghost descended from heaven upon the disciples anointing them to enable them to undertake the work of the ministry. Such was the power given to the apostles on that day that three thousand souls were added to the visible church.

Paul also speaks of the anointing of the people of God: ‘Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts’ (2

Corinthians 1:22,23). ‘Thou anointest my head with oil.’ That anointing is the sealing to us of the assurance of faith in the gospel unto the final day of redemption.

#### 4. The plentiful cup

*‘My cup runneth over’*

There is an abundance of blessing in the gospel for the child of God!

The shepherd is ever caring for his flock in the semi arid desert where there is almost continual drought and scrub-land leading them from the scarce places of lush grass and little pools of water. The shepherd seeks water for his flock so that they can be refreshed.

Well, says David, ‘My cup runneth over.’ For the people of God there is an abundance of the Bread of Life and spiritual refreshment. Every Lord’s Day when they enter into the courts of the Lord there is that spiritual refreshment. Isaac watts writes:

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

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

O, the abundance of blessings for the Lord’s people! Truly this is Beulah land!

In his final blessings recorded for us in Deuteronomy 31 Moses says, ‘The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy them’ (v. 27).

When Moses crossed the desert and came into the land of Midian, he sat by a well. This

was the well at which Jethro’s daughters came to draw water for their flock, however, other shepherd drove Jethro’s flock away so that they could have the water at first—I imagine that the water supply was a little trickle of water from a deep spring and thus the well was slow to fill up and provide sufficient water for more than one flock of sheep—but Moses drove the other shepherds away so that Jethro’s daughter could water his flock. There was a plentiful supply for the flock and I presume that because Moses dwelt with Jethro and married Zipporah, the other shepherds never made an attempt to steal their water. (See Exodus 2:15ff.)

What a mercy there is an abundance in the gospel of grace. We have noticed above that Moses uses the phrase, ‘Underneath are the everlasting arms.’ This tells us that no matter how much we need, there will always be a provision for his people. An abundance! Benjamin Fawcett writes:  
A fulness resides in Jesus our Head,  
And ever abides to answer our need;  
The Father’s good pleasure has laid up in store  
A bountiful treasure, to give to the poor.

Charles Wesley writes:  
Plenteous grace with Thee is found,  
Grace to cover all my sin;  
Let the healing streams abound;  
Make and keep me pure within.  
Thou of life the fountain art;  
Freely let me take of thee;  
Spring thou up within my heart,  
Rise to all eternity.

What a mercy! There is an abundance of blessings for the people of God. Is there any wonder, then, that the Psalmist says ‘My cup runneth over’?

# BOW HUMBLY TO THE SOVEREIGN FREE WILL OF GOD IN ALL THINGS

by W. T. FOLEY

THE church of today needs to bow humbly before God's sovereign free will. God has a secret and a revealed will. We need to trust God and the scripture and what he reveals about his titles, character and attributes. Key to spiritual growth and understanding is to seek knowledge of God's will in and for our lives. Rest in God's sovereign will! Our God is omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient and above all holy. We need to believe and worship the true and living God who cannot lie. He is the embodiment and essence of truth and justice. He is unchanging and unchanged in his will.

Salvation is God granting freely a gift without any consideration of man's contribution, goodness or merits or deservings, but according to his eternal will. Some key scriptures clearly bring this point out, such as: Ephesians 2:8,9; Acts 4:12; John 14:6; Titus 3:5, 6. 'Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures' (James 1:18). Always keep in the foreground that we are as believers 'predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will' (Ephesians 1:11). Always look for God's will in our salvation and circumstances, in our brief time, as pilgrims and strangers in this world. Everything and everyone created is 'according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord' (Ephesians 3:11; see also Colossians 1:9-20).

However, much of today's preaching seems to dwell unhealthily on the so called

'free will' of mankind. Luther called 'free will' an empty term. But what about the 'will of God'? Does God have a say in this matter? Whose will ultimately determines everything and continues to control all things? Most assuredly, God is on the throne—we don't run things, he is always in control and in the full management of his universe. God will do what he has determined according to his will.

It is God's will to save sinners and Christ is the only mediator between God and man. He is the Prophet, Priest and King. He is the incomparable Christ. It is God who makes saints or Christians, at no point does God seek out the help of the sinner or look for his aid in regenerating the fallen will of the sinner. The sinner is brought to Christ by the Father, working by the Holy Spirit. Those who are teaching so called 'free will' salvation are usurping the role of the Holy Spirit and robbing God of his exclusive and most excellent work and his glory.

Since being born again (John 3:3,5,6; 1 Peter 1:23) I would always want to worship God as revealed in holy scripture, for he is always holy and right and invariably I am wrong. I'm a worm. God be merciful to me a sinner must always be my disposition, yet I am joyful because I am 'in Christ' forever. Give God the glory always. No boasting is allowed. Boast only in the cross (Galatians 2:20 with 6:14). Glory in the Cross of Redemption and Atonement. Magnify the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ in body and spirit. Rejoice in Christ for his shed blood

and glorious resurrection. Think of his ascension and intercession in heaven at this time. Look for the blessed hope, his Second Advent (1 Thessalonians 4:13–18; Titus 2:13, 14; 1 Corinthians 15:51–58).

Always ponder humbly and joyfully the fact that your salvation is of the Lord from start to finish. John writes: ‘That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the spirit is spirit’ (John 3:6). It is the Spirit’s work. God’s work in the soul is of the Holy Spirit and is fundamental and explicitly and exclusively of God. We are not born spiritually by our fleshly will. We make no contribution towards our new birth, no more than a new baby from the womb is able to contribute to their birth. We are helpless. Without the Holy Spirit we are hopeless. Jesus said, ‘Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again’ (John 3:7). This is not an optional event, but a compulsory work of the Holy Spirit. It is a mysterious work, and it is not of our will (John 3:8). It is God’s will at work making me willing and granting me new life. Again, John (1:12, 13) says, ‘we must be born of God, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, not of the will of man.’ This matter is absolutely and abundantly clear. The new birth is compulsory, and this aspect cannot be bypassed. What we are seeing today is will worship (Colossians 2:23). Listening to some preachers one would conclude that God doesn’t really have a say in our lives. They sound as if they are negotiating with God. They portray things as if God operates to our agenda, whims and fancies. Nothing could be further from the truth! God is involved in all the peoples and nations of the earth, the government of the planet is his work, the different tribes and races of the earth are under God. God is involved in current affairs, our theology, and our economics, our education and our culture. God is

working his will in the rise and fall of international politics and the performance and state of financial markets. God is involved in things at a micro and macro level.

God is never taken by surprise either by the devil or false religions and fallen humanity. Floods and wars, earthquakes and famines are under his sovereignty. The rising of the moon and the setting of the sun is of his will and doing. Humans may think they are thwarting God’s will by the exaltation of their own will, but they are in the process fulfilling God’s will. Academia, scientific research and development and the discovery of new ideas may give the impression that God’s intentions are being frustrated, but in reality, God is bringing all things to pass according to his determination. Nothing escapes his attention or his scrutiny.

In terms of salvation, no person has ever accessed heaven without the Lord Jesus (nor can they do so according to their will) and it is always according to God’s will. God efficiently and effectively runs everything and everybody. The whole of the universe is under the sovereignty of God. The nations are but a drop in the bucket in God’s eyes. We are the dust of the earth and to dust we shall return. Rightly understood this is liberating to the child of God. God’s will is perfect in everything. Who can resist his will? ‘Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?’ (Romans 9:19). God’s will is irresistible in salvation. For example, God will always triumph, as Pharaoh discovered to his cost.

Glory in the Lord and forsake the nonsense of man’s so called ‘free will’ which is totally fallen and in bondage. This is the doctrine of ‘total depravity’. The Lord must ‘open’ the door and circumcise and renew our heart and grant the power to ‘receive’ Christ. A spiritually dead soul cannot

make himself alive. Jeremiah understood the fallenness and wickedness of the heart (Jeremiah 17:9).

The Holy Spirit alone must grant the miracle of regeneration. Our eyes are blind, and our ears are deaf: the physician of our souls must grant in his mercy and goodness spiritual eyes to see and grant new spiritual ears to hear. Salvation is of the Lord from beginning to end. He is the author and finisher of our faith. This faith is given to us (Romans 10:17). It is a gift. Repentance is granted to us as a gift, too. Divine faith is supremely of the Lord and is granted to all God's elect people both in the Old Testament and New Testament times. In my flesh there is no good thing (Romans 7): there is no spiritual strength in my will to decide for Christ. There is no spiritual strength in my will to come to Christ. The Holy Spirit must visit our soul. The Holy Spirit must start and finish the work. I am sinful in every aspect of life in the totality of my being. We are sinners by nature and sinners by choice. Because there is sin in my motives and in my will, and it has totally affected my ability and reasoning, it is impossible for me to choose the Lord, and I cannot walk in paths of righteousness in my own mind. Left to myself I would not and I could not save myself or persuade God to save me because of some merits, some goodness in me. I need Christ because the Holy Spirit has put that desire in my heart to seek the Lord. The hunger and thirst for God comes by the work of the Holy Spirit. It is all of sovereign free grace alone. I am what I am by the grace of God. Anyone who adds any aspect such as merits, performance of rituals, fasting, deservings, works, humblings to earn salvation are gravely mistaken.

The gospel is revealed from heaven, and it is not the gospel of man's devising or development (Paul outlines this in Galatians

1.) Man effectively seeks to create another gospel, but it is under God's anathema. It is a cursed gospel when a man is led to believe that there is partial or full ability in the sinner to contribute to their salvation, or, that man can make his own way to heaven by good works, or by the notion of so called 'free will'.

It is impossible with man, but with God taking the initiative we can be saved. Confusion comes to the consciousness when a man is led to trust their own so called 'free will' to aid them in their salvation. The so called 'free will' is propounded and worshipped as a doctrine to bring about salvation and it takes away from the Holy Spirit's exclusive and only work in the soul of the sinner in granting new life. This is seriously defective theology. The Holy Spirit is strong enough to give new life in his time and power. He does not need the assistance of the sinner who is filthy and vile and is wretched, miserable and evil in the old nature, in thoughts, words and deeds. God does not patch up the old nature, he grants a new one!

The so called 'free will' of man is opposite to God in every aspect since the fall of Adam and Eve. It has no inherent desire that is acceptable to God. It is fallen in every category. There is nothing in the flesh that can please Almighty God. We need Christ and Christ alone and the riches of Calvary to save our soul. There is prevalent resentment and infinite distance in human understanding to the ways and things of God. If there was anything in our flesh that would make us feel better and appreciate God, then the Fall in the Garden of Eden was not total. But, as we can see from history and personal experience, it is a total fall and we are prisoners to our will and ways, all of which are opposed to God and pride underpins so many things in our lives.

God is seldom a consideration and indeed is an inconvenience, and we do not like or need God because of our sinful nature, and the history of our lives testifies to our total rebellion against God and our most awful resistance to God. Every person who ever lived knows that there is a God, but they do not want to be godly. This is the integrating argument of Romans 1. The Bible begins in Genesis 1 with the statement: 'In the beginning God...' yet we devise ways to sideline God in our lives. Everyone knows too that God created everyone and everything in heaven and earth. Again, the statement in Genesis says: 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.' So, God exists. This is a fact that cannot be ignored. 'I think, therefore I am,' someone has said. Also, God is the Creator and there is a Creation; evolution is wrong. Indeed, theistic evolution is a misinterpretation and twisting of scripture. Everything and everyone show by their very

existence that they were created and designed. Our sin causes us to deny the truth together with the deception and work of the devil. Every one of us knows that we are responsible for our thoughts and actions, yet we prefer to live Godless lives. There is no fear of God in our minds, nor do we want to be accountable to God. We have defiant wills. Our fallen will—which many strangely reason is a free will—wants us and needs us and likes us to deny the very existence and the very being of God. People want to deny that there is any value in the being of God. They argue within their own self-defined boundaries that evolution adequately explains our existence. Our morality exists within us and this is God-given. We know the difference between right and wrong, yet our will fools us into thinking and believing that God is not necessarily needed in our world, despite the Bible clearly teaching that 'in him we live and move and have our being' (Acts 17:28).

### TO BE CONCLUDED

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## FORMER DAYS

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

### 250 years ago: September & October 1773

The month of **September** sees the continuation of the series on Typical Persons, Places and Things. The high priest is the first on this occasion, then the strangers who joined themselves to Israel. The Harmony of Scripture Prophecies concerning Medes and Persians is continued, and as usual is followed by a historical survey to show how these have been fulfilled. The prophecies concerning the Romans is begun.

Universal Practical Atheism is the title of

the next article, in which the author demonstrates his contention that all sin is evidence of atheism. The article on The Glory of the Church, begun in the January issue, is continued. The Last Hours of Madam Baure, of Frankfurt (d. 1684) is a translation from German of the testimony of a godly woman.

John Ryland provides a lecture on The Insufficiency of Reason to show us the Godhead, what true worship is, and a number of other matters. A request for help in identifying the title of a book, and poetry,

conclude the month.

The **October** magazine opens with the first part of a personal testimony, in which the writer recounts their life from childhood, to show the dealings of God with them until their conversion. The title is *A Mirror of Mercy*.

A writer attempts to set the accounts of the crucifixion and all that followed in chronological order, including the post-resurrection appearances of our Lord. This is done by harmonising the Gospel accounts. The involvement of Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus in Christ's burial is overlooked.

The article on *Universal Practical Atheism*, begun the previous month, is concluded. The limitation of human reason is exposed once more. William Mason writes on *Believers being made meet for Glory*. The series on *Typical Things* takes Noah's ark as its subject, then Jacob's ladder, the Burning bush, and the Pillar of fire and cloud. The *Harmony of Scripture Prophecies* considers what is said about the Romans, with the fulfilment of those prophecies, is continued.

An account of the *Life and Writings of John Hurrion (1675–1731)*, a godly Independent minister, is reprinted. Poetry concludes the issue.

### **200 years ago: September & October 1823**

An *Address to the Household of Faith* opens the month, followed by a letter read at the Association meeting from the Particular Baptists at Beccles.

Isaiah 40:1 provides the text for a piece on *Comfort for the Afflicted*. Some words from Myra (a frequent contributor) draw a strong response from one calling himself *Less than the Least*. Myra has stated that God the Son 'in assuming humanity, was to expostulate, and, contend with God the Father, for the rights of the church.'

William asks, 'First, Whether there is any real cause for the saints to doubt and fear; Secondly, If not, Whether it is not possible for the saints in the days of their pilgrimage, to arrive to that state in which they can say they neither doubt nor fear?' Answers are invited.

An account of the sufferings of believers in Provence during the middle part of the sixteenth century is begun. A writer answers an earlier contributor who had contended that there is such a thing as a sinless state here for believers. The article is incomplete as there appear to be a number of pages missing from the scanned volume. There are also a number of duplicated pages. The beginning of the next article (and possibly other material between) is missing, although it is more *Sermon Skeletons*.

The *Attempt to Rescue Scripture from Ridicule* is continued. The writer provides an interesting interpretation of Exodus 4:24f, whereby he makes Zipporah to be speaking to the Lord God, and declaring that the act of circumcising her son has brought her into a family relationship with God. Whether this is the true meaning is another matter.

A notice of the opening of a chapel in Islington, and poetry, end the month.

The **October** issue begins with a consideration of what it is to be carnally minded. This is a timely warning, as applicable to our day as any. Another warning is issued against those who teach man's ability to turn to God through his own efforts. The impossibility of this is demonstrated well and clearly.

Part of a letter from Augustus Toplady is reprinted, with comment, in order to show the necessity of holding back nothing that is profitable in the ministry. Toplady confessed that he had held back in the beginning of his ministry.

A writer answers a query on the extent of the atonement. This is a perennial problem for many, and the wisdom of this brief writer would assist many in the matter. Another writer sets down some thoughts on the Believer's Security at all Times.

Myra writes to defend his critique of a paragraph in 'Portrait of the Church' from that author's response. Under the heading, 'Thoughts on the Decrees of God', Myra argues from Scripture that if God decreed the manner of redemption from sin, he must also have decreed the cause for which redemption is revealed. The point is briefly but well argued.

A letter addressed to a clergyman of the Church of England, who has preached against predestination, invites him to demonstrate the truth of three propositions: 1. That predestination is not a doctrine of God's word. 2. That it is not a doctrine of the Church of England. 3. That the espousers of this doctrine are, in general, immoral and ungodly persons (the last point being part of the preacher's repeated claims).

A Dwarf writes against the assertion of an earlier writer about the possibility of our being in a sinless state. Such will never be ours until we are in heaven, he rightly argues. Another writer offers his thoughts on the Advocacy of Christ. Yet another sets down four short papers, each intended to prove that neither the disciples, nor the apostles, nor Christ, ever issued a general invitation to their hearers.

Correspondence, including some new questions, is followed by poetry.

### 100 years ago: September & October 1923

That ours is God who remembers is the subject of the opening sermon in **September**, from Genesis 8:1. There is much comfort to be had in this truth.

Liberal Evangelical views of the Atonement are displayed as warnings to readers. Illustrated with quotations from the exponents of that school, the author shows that the Liberal Evangelical accepts the theory of evolution and therefore rejects any view of the Atonement that relates it to the universal Fall. The same Liberal Evangelical also rejects any view of the Atonement that maintains a forensic, or legal (in the sense of God pronouncing judgement on his elect) view. This is because the Substitutionary nature of Christ's Atonement is also denied.

'Wellsprings' takes the reference to Damaris, from Acts 17, and speaks about the number of people whose names are in the Lamb's Book of Life but often unknown on earth. Many of these are, from the Scripture record, women.

An interesting and timely article on the craze for 'spiritual healing' follows. The claims made one hundred years ago are still being made today: Christ healed the whole person, body and soul; the apostles healed the sick; the gift of healing was passed on to the church; the use of the gift died out; the gift is being revived; the results prove this revival to be genuine. Each element of the claim is critiqued in the light of Scripture, and found wanting.

Herod's question, Luke 9:9, is given three answers, all from the same chapter. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's comments on original sin and eternal punishment (he denied both) are used to show the true nature of Spiritualism (he was a keen proponent). Another writer takes parallel phrases, where the same words are spoken in two different places, and uses them to illustrate gospel truth. Three occurrences of the word 'Hearken' are commented on by another writer. A further contributor considers what Paul lost for Christ and compares

it with what he gained, to teach us to become unworldly.

The first of what should prove to be five extracts is printed, with the aim of showing that the formularies of the Church of England are to be understood Calvinistically. That this is the case is further demonstrated with extracts from the writings of the chief Reformers. The first is on the Corruption of Human Nature.

An extract from *The Gospel Standard* considers the ministry. A summary of a sermon Romans 8:1, No Condemnation, is followed by various short pieces. The only substantial entry is the Protestant Beacon, which exposes the errors of the Anglo-catholic view of the ministry.

The Editor's **October** sermon is on Divine Leading, from Psalm 78:53. Liberal Evangelical views of the Substitutionary Atonement are dealt with further. 'Wellsprings' meditates on Isaiah 16:1. The first part of a sermon from Mark 13:37,

preached by the late Rev James Ormiston, is followed by thoughts on Onesiphorus. We are commended to Look Up. The Nature, Necessity and Effects of the New Birth are set out. Thoughts on the words 'Tomorrow about this time' offer comfort to believers. The significance of Adam is set out to good effect, and notice of a mission-field marriage is given. The second part of the series on the Calvinism of the Church of England takes Justification by Faith. God's guardianship, from Psalm 121, and several notices (including obituaries) lead to the Protestant Beacon, and to the question, Shall the Church stand by God's Word? It shows that the proposals from the National Assembly for Prayer Book revision amount to an attack on the Old Testament in particular. References to the Fall, to God giving the Ten Commandments, and various other phrases associated by the Liberals with 'Hebrew folk-lore' are proposed for removal from the Prayer Book.

Notices and reviews conclude the issue.

**TO BE CONTINUED**

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## The Protestant Beacon

### The necessity of Protestantism

THE demise of the *English Churchman* is a cause for sorrow. That newspaper has been in print since 1843, and incorporates the *St James's Chronicle*, which dates from 1761. Our own *Magazine* has been going since 1766, albeit with a ten year hiatus from 1785 to 1795. Like the *English Churchman* we are experiencing declining subscriptions. Our costs may not be as affected by current pressures as theirs, but we know the impact on printing and postage rates all too well.

Anyone who has read the *English Churchman* for a number of years will be aware of changes in direction, sometimes associated with changes of editor. We may have our opinions about the effect such changes might have on readership and so on. For all that, it has continued to call itself a Protestant family newspaper, and such publications are few and far between these days.

Readers of *The Gospel Magazine* of a hundred years ago will know that the Editor

often quoted reports from the *English Churchman* with approval. It publicised matters that needed to be aired, and it drew attention to what was actually going on in some of the supposedly Protestant societies and churches. What is happening to the Protestants of this nation to cause such a publication to fail? Indeed, one might ask, Where are the Protestants of Great Britain? Anecdotal evidence from representatives of a well established Protestant society suggests that the very word 'Protestant' is an offence to the people who ought to be proudly using it. How have we come to this pass?

It might be tempting to blame some Jesuit plot, to suggest that the forces of darkness have infiltrated the strongholds of truth and poisoned them from within. One fears the true explanation is less exciting, and rather more depressing.

*For one thing, the common view of the Bible is faulty.* I do not mean that unbelievers have a faulty view of the Bible: we expect nothing else. I mean that very often among professing Christians there is a faulty view of the Bible. The Bible is the inspired, inerrant word of God. It is accurately transmitted to us, not only in the original autographa, but in the copies made from them, the apographa. While we acknowledge the existence of variations between manuscripts, we confess that most of those variations can be explained by local usage and vocabulary. When it comes to the immense and problematic differences between the Western text-type (of which the Textus Receptus is an example) and the Eastern or Alexandrian text-types (of which Vaticanus and Sinaiticus are examples, among others) a different explanation must be sought. It is found in the dating of those minority texts, which come from the era when the heresy of Arianism was in the ascendancy. That certain wealthy individuals

chose to have texts prepared for them to reflect their heretical views cannot be taken as evidence that the church in general used such corrupt texts. Yet the scholars of the last 170 years have tended to latch on to these disparate manuscripts as if they were the very words of the Evangelists and Apostles. They are treated as though they had full authority, and the plethora of new versions that has arisen from them (to say nothing of the so-called paraphrases that were produced to 'simplify' eternal truth) has tended only to confuse rather than to clarify. People are left wondering what the next translation will say, and they assume that the process of translation will remove all the difficulties they encounter as they read the word of God.

Worse, there has been a huge decline in trust in the Bible as the authoritative word of God. The Bible is witness to a tradition that existed, most recently, 2,000 years ago. The world has moved on since then. Man has evolved. Society has changed. We must learn, they tell us, to recognise this truth and let go of confidence in the Bible as any final authority. It is evidently wrong on the question of creation, it portrays the Israelite nation as racist and nationalistic, and it has a terrible view of women. As for that Paul, he never once condemned the institution of slavery, and if he had been any sort of Christian he would have called the authorities to account for its existence among them. These are the kinds of complaints brought against the Bible, if not in words then in attitude, by far too many modern Christians.

With this there has been an elevation of human reasoning above revelation. We live in a post-Enlightenment world. That is not news: the Enlightenment was really an eighteenth century affair, so of course we are living after it. The problem is that society, scholarship, the church and almost every

branch of life, was affected by it. Whatever the supposed benefits might be the problems outweigh them. The first effect of the Enlightenment was Deism, which denies a personal God and a personal Saviour. The second effect was the denial of special or supernatural revelation: reason is able to arrive at truth, and anything that requires the intervention of a Supreme Being is automatically to be rejected. Miracles cannot be true since they are impossible according to science, and so parts of the Bible are reduced to nothing more than folk-lore and superstition. The histories, particularly of the Old Testament, are dismissed as inventions, or at best the misconceptions of a primitive people cut off from the mainstream of intellectual and scientific development.

All in all, the Bible has some nice psalms (as well as some awful ones) and some good advice in the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, but otherwise has little to say to us today. Anyone who quotes from it as though that were the final word on the subject is clearly a fundamentalist or a fool—or both.

We may draw back in horror from such a description, and affirm that such thoughts are not ours. The cumulative effect of decades of such opinions does, sadly, take its toll. We need to examine ourselves, and purge ourselves of all such opinions, no matter how lightly held. Let us view the word of God as the sword of the Spirit, as the lamp to our feet and light to our path, and as the word of God by which we live.

*For another thing, the common view of the gospel is faulty.* It was faulty during the long centuries of the Middle Ages, when works and superstition stood for faith and righteousness. The true gospel was recovered in the sixteenth century, when our Protestant Reformers, through study of the true text of holy Scripture, were confronted with the

great doctrine that the sinner is justified by faith. They saw that faith is a gift from God, given to those whom he will save. They understood that righteous works are the effect of faith and not the cause. They learned that we are sons of God by adoption, and heirs of heaven through our union with Christ. They learned many other wonderful things, and they began to teach their families, their friends, and their students. Those who had pulpits began to preach, and many were wonderfully converted. The gospel was resisted by those who clung to the old superstitions, and when they were in power they sought to burn the gospel out of the land, sending men and women, and even children, to the stake. By the grace of God that wicked regime was brought to a sudden end, and gospel liberty was granted to the nation.

In time a new enemy arose. First in the Netherlands, then into other parts of Europe, the insidious errors of Arminius and his students began to be felt. After the death of Arminius his students presented their remonstrances, their complaints against the generally accepted doctrine held by all the Protestant Churches. They denied that election was unconditional, affirming instead that the individual prepares themselves to receive the work of grace. They denied that man is totally depraved, so that he can function as a human being but cannot know, worship or serve the Lord as he ought, affirming instead that the effect of the fall on us is slight, and we can turn ourselves to do good works if we so choose. They denied the limited extent of the atonement, that Christ died for the sins of his people, affirming instead that Christ died equally for all people. They denied the irresistibility of grace, affirming instead the autonomy of the individual to accept or reject the gracious call. They denied the eternal security of believers,

affirming instead that a person can come in and out of a state of grace and therefore of assurance.

After the Remonstrants came the Semi-Pelagians, the Pelagians, the Socinians, Sabellians, and others. The Deists were the final group, before outright atheism became the default position of many.

For after all, if the Bible is no sure guide to anything except how primitive people thought 2,000 and more years ago, and if the gospel is more about what a person wants than what God does, then what is the point? What of that person wants something else, another religion or none? Can it make any difference?

Our society has imbibed so much of this thinking that it now views morality as a matter of adhering to its norms and not to God's divinely revealed standard of holiness. Such thinking affects the church, because we all live in this corrupt society, no matter how much we try to keep ourselves apart from it. Our theological colleges must expose students to these ways of thinking, but if they cannot effectively show where those ways are wrong, what good are they doing? They turn out candidates for the ministry who, but for the grace of God, are going to worsen rather than improve their congregations.

The answer is not, as some think, to effect a sort of counter-intellectualism. We need to read, to study, to learn. We need to be fortified against error, and be able to counter it when we meet it. Pretending it does not exist is ostrich-like behaviour, and does nobody any good in the end.

We need to regain absolute confidence in the authentic gospel, and in the Scripture of truth. It may be that some reading this will affirm that they have never departed from such things, and in some cases this might be true. In others, however, it requires turning a blind eye to certain facts. Let us not assume that all is well because we are not as far along the path of error as some. Let us look to the landmarks, and see that we are standing where we think we are standing, and not somewhere else entirely. Let us seek out the old paths, and be sure that we are walking in the way we think we are walking in, and not upon some other path. Let us look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, and press towards the mark, knowing that a crown of righteousness is laid up for us. Let us finish the race we have begun, and perhaps finish it better than we have been running of late. Let the word of Christ dwell in us richly, and may Christ have all the glory. ¶

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## BOOK REVIEW

### **Scattered and Kept: Twenty Eight lost Sermons of Thomas Boston**

*Ettrick Press, 98 The Brow, Brighton, BN2 6LN, 2022. 461pp hbk £24 + p&p*

We welcome the publication of these sermons which have been 'lost' to the Christian world since the eighteenth century. They were not included in the *Complete Works of Thomas Boston* edited by S. McMillan and published in 1852 (and re-issued in the twentieth century). In addition to the previously published sermons, this volume also contains three previously unpublished

sermons from a Thomas Boston manuscript held by the library of Aberdeen University. (It would seem that other unpublished manuscripts held in other libraries.)

Thomas Boston is widely known for his book *The fourfold State of Man* which has frequently been published and is still in print with the title of *Human Nature in its Fourfold State*. Boston (1676–1732) was a Presbyterian minister serving the parishes of Simprin (1699–1707), and Ettrick (1707–1732). His other more well known works are *The Crook in the Lot* and *A View of the Covenant of Grace*. His books were written, in the main, from his pulpit ministry.

The first series of sermons ('A Collection of Sermons showing the grounds of the Lord's controversy with this Church and Land') is very appropriate for the days in which we live. He commences with the Christian duty of Redeeming the time in evil days. He writes: 'labour to be experimental Christians, to feel the power of truth in your own souls, to 'know Christ, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformable to his death... Raw unfelt notions in the head are easily parted with in a day of trial; but experience of the power of truth rivets it in the heart' (p 37).

Other subjects covered include the help given in the recovery of sinners from the fall in Adam. Speaking from the text, 'I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people' (Ps 89:19), Boston writes, 'The revelation itself: in which we may notice... The Father's eternal designation of help for a lost world... It looks to the covenant which passed from eternity betwixt the Father and the Son. God foresaw mankind ruined, and having eternal thoughts of love to the elect among them, he provided help for them in their helpless condition' (p 239).

These sermons are full of gospel truth and can only be of benefit to those who read them. I recommend this volume to the readers of *The Gospel Magazine*. I understand that Ettrick press specialise in publishing books in short print runs. I doubt very much that this volume will be in print very long. Get it while you can!

JEN

## **Jonathan Ranken Anderson, The Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland and the Gospel Standard Strict Baptists**

**Roy Middleton**

*The James Bourne Society, Rivendell, Popes Lane, Upham, Southampton SO32 1JB, 2023. 126pp hbk £13.50*

The contents of this volume is the substance of the 11th Annual Lecture of the James Bourne Society. This society exists 'primarily for the preservation and advancement of the study of the history of High Calvinist Churches, ministers and adherents...'

Jonathan Ranken was a Church of Scotland (Presbyterian) who left that church in 1843 at the Disruption and became a minister of the then Free Church of Scotland. However, he became unhappy with what he considered as errors of doctrine. This led to his leaving the Free Church and continuing as the minister of an independent presbyterian congregation.

This lecture considers and traces the connection between Anderson and the Gospel Standard Strict Baptists. The lecture is divided into three sections: Jonathan Ranken Anderson,

tracing his life and pathway he took in his ministry; The Free Presbyterian Church's connections with the Gospel Standard Churches and how that connection/fellowship came about, and thirdly, The part played by Herbert Pitt of Trowbridge who published a small number of books by Anderson in the 1930s. The editor of *The Gospel Magazine* wrote in the January 1935 issue, 'What we have read indicates that Mr Anderson was really sound in his teaching...'

The lecture is thoroughly researched and has a number of appendices which further enhance the lecture. Mr Middleton has written extensively on Anderson in the Scottish Reformation Society Historical Journal, and this lecture, which stands alone, adds further details of the life, ministry and witness of Jonathan Ranken Anderson.

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

JEN

### **The pearl of Christian comfort**

**Petrus Dathenus**

*Reformation Heritage Books, 2005. 102pp pbk ISBN 1892777428 £8.73-£13.16, from various sellers*

How do we distinguish law from gospel? Is Christ another Moses? Does the New Testament believer labour under a burden similar to that of the Old Testament saint? Presented the form of a dialogue between the author and one 'Elizabeth', a young convert, the conversation recorded here is a pastoral examination of something that affects many Christians. Christ has delivered us from the law, but into what have we been delivered? Petrus Dathenus (1531-88) shows that we have been delivered into Christ's liberty. Our Saviour is not another Moses, another law-giver, but is the one who alone frees his people from subjection to law. This is because Christ has, by his atoning death, paid the price of our sins and freed us from the curse of the law. This is by the imputation of Christ's righteousness to the believer.

'Elizabeth' is slow to understand this, and Dathenus takes her back over the subject, repeating lessons and adding new arguments, to convince her – and us – of the extent of our evangelical liberty. The whole argument, including her objections and acceptances, are illustrated with Bible references, adding to the value of the work.

Having settled the main question, Dathenus must then deal with his interlocutor's other concern, that of sin committed after conversion. How is such sin atoned for? The answer is the same: Christ's blood cleanses from all sin. This is illustrated from the Old Testament, where the sins of all the most godly and righteous people, including Moses, Job, Jeremiah and Solomon, were not held against them because they were all justified by faith.

This short work is a rich feast for any who struggle with the difference between law and gospel, or who are unclear about the glorious truth of justification by faith. Dathenus clears the connection between Paul and James on faith and works, and shows the justice of God in requiring law obedience even from fallen man, and of punishing those who do not keep it. Occasional footnotes explain a few helpful things from the text. Read this work, and be greatly encouraged.

EJM

## 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. Holy Communion as notified. AV and BCP, *Christian Hymns* and *Anglican Hymn Book* used. Contact Paul Hooper, 07477 704921.

## AUDIO MINISTRY

**FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND (CONTINUING)** *Audio ministry*. For the latest CD list contact Donald Morgan, 7 Cearn Sheileidh, Stornoway, Isle of Lewis, HS1 2YW, or email donaldmorgan186@googlemail.com

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