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Publishing the Truth since 1766
"Charge Joshua, and encourage him, and strengthen him" (Deuteronomy 3:28).

THE Lord is speaking to Moses. The Bible is not just the general thoughts of God. Here is a word to us from God Himself. God’s thoughts never change. So what is said to Moses, is said to us. We are to encourage our successors.

Moses is near the end of his long life. He needs to replace himself, and our elderly churches have the same need. The command is to “strengthen, harden, fix”. So one translation of this text says, “Command Joshua and strengthen him, and make him bold”. To encourage his successor is the Christian’s later life’s work.

God has just refused Moses’ prayer to be allowed to cross the Jordan and enter Canaan. Most Christians are not allowed by God to see the completion of their life’s work. God keeps the glory by this. Neither Moses nor Joshua can say, “I did it all”. The temptation was and is to say, “If I cannot have the recognition, I walk off”. It tested Moses’ obedience. That was the very point Moses had failed in when he smote the rock, and the cause of his not being allowed into the Promised Land. The successor takes on where you and I failed.

Moses needed faith to comply. Joshua was not up to Moses’ standard, in faith, natural force, and mental or legal ability. The man Moses was very meek, above all the men that were upon the face of the earth, but meekness is not underrating one’s self. He alone spoke to God face to face. He was an inspired writer and orator, leader and general, “king in Jeshurun”. Above all, he was thorough in every detail. Further, Moses was a good judge of character, and not at all starry-eyed about the future of disobedient Israel. He could see Joshua was a lesser man
than himself, the first step downwards of a disastrous future. By faith, Moses obeyed God.

The Apostle Paul, facing the end of his life, had the same temptation when encouraging Timothy, “my son in the faith”. Timothy was timid, retiring and bodily weak, quite despised by the churches. The situation called for a strong, capable leader to answer and deal with heretics, and face “the lion’s gory mane”. Older Christian, it is hard to encourage what looks like a walking disaster waiting to happen. It takes faith.

Moses’ faith was in the Holy Spirit, not in Joshua. He knew that God had taken of the Spirit resting on Moses and placed it on the seventy elders, including Joshua. So he trusted the Holy Spirit to do the miracle of equipping Joshua to succeed. This realization grew upon Moses throughout the journeyings of the children of Israel. Joshua alone had been up Sinai with him, led the forces of Israel against the Amalekite host, and had stood by him twice when the people were ready to stone him. It was not sudden a leap of faith Moses took, but the next step in encouraging reliable, loyal Joshua to succeed him.

Boldness is not natural to most Christians. Rashness, fleshly leadership, intemperate zeal, and unreliability, tend to be. Christian boldness is the gift of God. The next generation needs encouragement to dare to cause the people of God to inherit the land. We do not become bolder in life. As we grow older we tend increasingly towards caution. But boldness is a gift that grows with use. Moses was working on fertile ground in Joshua.

Humility accepted this without bitter thoughts, laid aside doubts, and put its weight behind a replacement. The secret was implicit trust in the Holy Spirit’s working. Faith may be disappointed and tested many times, but it perseveres.

Joshua waiting in the wings may have felt he was being treated unfairly and kept waiting unduly. He used the time. Reliability, diligence, holy boldness and loyalty are marked by God. Promotion comes from God, in His time.

Is not Christ our great example and teacher? He spent three years choosing and training twelve unpromising recruits, often reduced to their slow pace. Yet afterwards they conquered the world. Yes, they made plenty of messes in those three years, but whoever brought up a baby without embarrassing incidents?

Moses didn’t just go on to the end refusing to face this problem. (But he did go on to the end.) Disaster would have resulted if no one was trained to replace him. It is twice the trouble to train a Joshua and share our work with such an one. Much easier to do it all alone and keep the glory. The way they usually learn is by being with you. Start now.

Do you say, Oh, I am such a sinner! Well, supposing all the sins that ever were committed since the fall to this present time were charge upon you, Christ can as easily pardon them as if they were but one.

Mr. Peckwell
"He is the image and glory of God" (1 Corinthians 11:7).

This passage is about women's heads and coverings. In the midst of it comes this wonderful statement of Christian doctrine, that man is the image and glory of God. Both men and women are created in God's image. That is plain in the verse Paul is quoting, Genesis 1:27: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him: male and female created he them. And God blessed them." What a wonderful book the Bible is. Its apparent side-statements are of immense weight and importance. Man lives by every word of God.

"Image," what is it? There is hardly a play, film, TV soap or novel which does not have the question "what is man?" as its central idea. The whole of modern life is decided by what answer is given. Is man an accident of evolution? The answer given today is "yes". Man evolved by chance selection of the fittest. It follows then that man's existence is more important than his origin. Then control him, for his life is meaningless, morality a mere convenience. Technology reigns supreme, and with it bureaucracy grows relentlessly. Man has the right to manipulate man in the interests of the human race. Designer babies, abortion - now approaching seven million babies in this land - stem cell research to get rid of hereditary disorders, and euthanasia of the suffering elderly and the weak, all follow on logically. Man can do what he sees best for the future of the planet and its population. It is now at about six billion seven hundred thousand million, and rising. Man even feels ecology is within his control.

It also follows that what makes a man, is more important than his relationships with others. A great increase in racism, home break-up, violence and suchlike, follow naturally on. Thus what man is, has become an urgent problem which many are trying to solve.

Answers include, first, the idealistic view. The real man lies in his intellectual freedom, an idea at least as old as Plato. Man is his intellect or reason. As his mind reigns supreme, he can be educated out of, or induced to change, his anti-social tendencies.

The second is that man is simply material, the emotional and spiritual being just side-products of his material make-up. This idea is central to Marxism, that the goal of a perfect society overrides all else. All evil is a result, not of man's nature, but the make-up of society. A human being is not important as an individual, but as a member of society. The idea goes far beyond communism. It is behind much thinking on ecology, education, housing, jobs and crime. If the environment is manipulated, all will come right.

What does the Bible say? It is necessary to understand exactly. First, the Bible says that man is the image and glory of God. At once we have to ask, what does
“image” mean? We saw that it is from Genesis 1:26, “in our image, after our likeness”. Note there is no “and”. They are essentially one idea. There is a direct likeness to God. Further, man exercises dominion over the world like God’s dominion. Again, man includes woman who compliments him in making up “man”. In this he resembles the Trinity of divine fellowship. God is not solitary, but Three in One. And last, as God is a Person, so man and woman are persons. They are responsible beings, owing account to God.

Man then sinned and fell, becoming corrupt, perverted and sinful. Man is totally responsible for this. He was in a state of integrity, but is now depraved. So it is significant that after the Fall, Genesis 5:1-3 states: “This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him; male and female created he them, and called their name Adam, in the day they were created. And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image.” The word “image” is not repeated here in 5:1. And in verse 3 when Adam begot a son, Seth, “in his image, after his likeness”, the two words are in reverse order, “image coming first in chapter one, and second here. That all shows they are interchangeable, not two different ideas. We also see that God’s image remained in man in spite of the Fall.

The third reference is in Genesis 9:6: “Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.” To preserve earth’s inhabitants, in 9:1-6, after the Flood, God clearly stated three things. That man is to “Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth”. That animals are to fear man, “and the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth. . . . Into your hand are they delivered.” The third is, a command to execute anyone shedding man’s blood, because in spite of the Fall, in spite of the judgment of the Flood, man still bears God’s image.

We see that man was made “very good”, but by his deliberate fault threw it away. But God still says man is in His image, even though that image is now perverted.

If it is asked why God made man in His image, the reason found is in the New Testament. Colossians 1:15: “Who [Christ] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature.” It is because God intended to come in human form to earth, and restore that image in man. So the image had to be there. Christ claimed to be the perfect image of God, John 14: 9: “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.” Hebrews 1:3 says of Christ that He was the exact image of God, “Who, being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person”. The reason man is made in God’s image is that God’s counsels in eternity were to come in Person as a man to earth, so man must be in the image of God.

What then did the Fall do to man? We must start with what it did not do. It did not remove “superadded grace”. The Roman Catholic Church teaches this. Whilst the Roman Catholic Church claims to get all her beliefs from the Bible, she adds, only through the Early Fathers. It was on that point she and the Reformers fell out. The “Fathers” followed after the New Testament, for the first four centuries.
One of them, Irenaeus, taught that “image” and “likeness” are two different ideas. He taught that at the Fall into sin, man lost God’s likeness. At creation the Spirit had given Adam God’s likeness, but he lost it. However, man retained his reason and intellect after the Fall.

Thomas Aquinas took this further, and equated intellect and reason with “image”. Image thus being intelligence, ability to understand, the mind, or “man’s natural aptitude for understanding and loving God”. In this Aquinas followed Aristotle and Plato, adding them to the Bible. Thus to know God savingly, a man must have “superadded grace”. So man always had weakness and a lower side to his nature, but before the Fall man had “superadded grace”. This he lost at the Fall. So salvation is that man earns merit to recover superadded grace.

Liberal theologians say the first eleven chapters of Genesis are not factual, but “myth”. To them, as no real Fall took place, no actual, concrete image was lost. There was no space and time fellowship between man and God in the first place. They talk of concepts.

We reject all that because the Fall in Genesis was actual, historical, and a much more serious matter than Aquinas allowed. We ask again, what did the Fall do to man? The Bible replies that man was created in the perfect image of God. He was sinless and obedient. He had the possibility of sinning, but not the necessity. It was necessary for man to advance beyond that stage, so God allowed him to be tested, by placing the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the garden, forbidding him to take the fruit and eat. Man took, ate and fell.

The Fall did not annihilate the image, but perverted it. Man did not become a devil. He remained in the human image. But although he still had all his human faculties, these changed direction. Instead of God-ward, they became flesh-ward. Man was ruined.

He turned to worship idols. This is perfectly clear in Romans 1:22-23: “Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like unto corruptible man, and to birds, and to fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.”

So instead of using his powers to glorify God, he used them to glorify man. This is shown in these ways. In idolatry he used his power of speech for ritual prayers. Then instead of obedience, he revolted against God. Third, instead of using his powers to help his fellow man, he used and manipulated man for his own selfish purposes. In Jean Paul Sartre’s words, “hell is other people”. Man uses his powers to exploit resources with no thought for the future. He pollutes earth and kills nature.

The threefold image is still there, but diseased and malfunctioning. The question is, what is to be done about it? The image has to be renewed, not like Aquinas and his idea that only the intellect is perverted by the Fall. First, the problem must be understood. The image of God in man is indelible, inescapable. This is clear as man can distinguish right and wrong. Man can and must live in a community. Man can be ashamed or honoured, and can still understand God’s law.
This means when we handle man we are always handling God’s image, someone who will live for ever. However obnoxious, he is still human. We are to love the image of God, even though the man we deal with may deserve nothing from us. This is a terrible responsibility.

We must recognize the perversion in man is especially in the will. By a deliberate act of will he sinned. So, though his nature is ravaged at every point, his willpower bears the most ravages of sin. He cannot return to righteousness. Luther called it, “the bondage of the will”.

We also recognize that whilst the sins of the flesh are bad, the worst sins are spiritual. C. S. Lewis wrote: “If anyone thinks that Christians regard unchastity as the supreme vice, they are quite wrong. The sins of the flesh are bad, but they are the least bad of all sins. All the worst pleasures are purely spiritual: the pleasure of putting other people in the wrong, of bossing and patronizing and spoiling sport, and backbiting; the pleasures of power, of hatred.” That is borne out by Matthew 21:31-32: “Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and harlots believed him.”

The image must be restored. Redemption is renewing that image. God works in man to set those powers right again. This is God’s act, to change a man into the perfect image of Christ. God renews a man’s nature. We must be conformed to that image, till we all reflect the glory of Christ. Christians are being transformed “from glory to glory” (2 Corinthians 3:18). This is the new birth, the putting off of the old man and putting on the new (Colossians 3:9-10). This comes about when we bow our wills in repentance for our pride, sinfulness and self-centredness. We turn from dependence on self, to dependence upon God. Some have too low an opinion of themselves, but most too high. The answer to both is the restoration of God’s image in man. It is the answer to the huge problems in our world today. Not changing light bulbs, however laudable, but changing man. The need is not endless new laws, but repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

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• FOR YOUNGER READERS •

CARINE MACKENZIE

FAMILY GATHERING

FAMILY life is a great blessing from God. Brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles and cousins all have special place in our lives.

Recently we had a very pleasant afternoon with several cousins and their children and grandchildren – a family get-together for about 40 people. Some folk we had never met before but we all had one thing in common – a connection
either by birth or marriage to a couple who had been born in the late 19th century and married in 1901. It was interesting to see the family resemblance between cousins and second cousins. We showed old photos and the similarities were obvious between some young people and a great-uncle or grandmother.

It is a privilege to belong to a family. It is an even greater privilege to belong to the family of God. “As many as received him (Christ), to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name” (John 1:12). Those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ are adopted into the family of God and as children can truly call God “Our Father”.

Philip the disciple said to Jesus one day, “show us the Father”. Jesus replied, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father. . . . I am in the Father and the Father in me” (John 14:9, 11). There is a family resemblance between the believer and the Lord Jesus Christ, our elder Brother. When Jesus was born into this world He became like us with a true body and a reasonable soul. “Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren” (Hebrews 2:17).

As we grow in grace we should be growing more and more like Christ. “Now we are the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him: for we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2).

There is a special common bond among members of a family. They look out for each other in times of trouble. The members of God’s family are bound together with ties of love. “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (Galatians 6:10).

Family ties in this life are eventually broken by death. We are just left with a memory. The family of God is never broken up - those in the world and those in heaven are still joined together in Christ. “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named” (Ephesians 3:14-15).

**BIBLE SEARCH**

Find the missing words from the verses. The initial letters of your answers will spell out a word from the story.

1. I have called you __________; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you (John 15:15).

2. Having predestined us unto the __________ of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will (Ephesians 1:5).

3. Now ye are the body of Christ, and __________ in particular (1 Corinthians 12:27).

4. (God’s Son) Who being the brightness of his glory and the express __________ of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power (Hebrews 1:3).
5. God, sending his own Son, in the ______ of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh (Romans 8:3).

6. To an inheritance ______ and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you (1 Peter 1:4).

7. But the mercy of the Lord is from ______ to ______ upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children’s children (Psalm 103:17).

8. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one ________. (1 Corinthians 6:17).

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**STUDIES IN NUMBERS - 21**

**Concluded**

PETER KING (Hailsham, Sussex)

Chapters 35:9-34 and 36

ROCK OF AGES, REFUGE FOR ME!

THE cities of refuge described in the rest of this chapter give a vivid picture of Christ our refuge. We discover excellent law in this passage that all world governments would do well to copy. Sadly murder is not important enough to have a death penalty, but God has not changed His mind!

*Thou shalt not kill.* The sixth commandment remains in force today, but politically correct nations ignore it and those who take life are often free within a few years. Planned murder, under Israel’s laws demanded the death penalty with no exceptions. Manslaughter, or accidental murder came into a different category and this is where the cities came in.

A *refuge from the avenger of blood.* The murderer needed to run away from the angry relatives because the law clearly said “he shall be surely put to death” (verse 31) but the fugitive has nowhere to go unless he can reach the city of refuge. Those in our society who downgrade the seriousness of murder will eventually face the judgement seat of Christ!

*Christ our Hiding Place.* As we read through the chapter it is clear the avenger of blood is intent on revenge, and the only safe place is a levitical city. Adam and Eve, created in the image of God, sinned away the protection they enjoyed in Eden, and we have not only inherited that sin, but added to it ourselves, and now resemble the fugitive of this chapter. As Adam tried to hide, so does the guilty sinner today, by indulging in activity that takes his mind away from a troublesome conscience. There is no hiding place outside our Lord Jesus Christ, the refuge for sinners, and as the murderer ran to Golan so the unbeliever may run to Christ and,
having done so, will be safe from the wrath of God which hunts him. The guilty conscience gets no rest outside the confines of Christ’s redeeming grace as the frightened criminal would always be on the run outside the city of refuge.

Safe in the arms of Jesus. There is perfect safety in the Lord Jesus Christ because, like the cities of refuge, He is our great High Priestly protection. These cities were not Israel’s idea, but set up by God’s command (verse 11). So Christ came to save His people from their sins as part of the plan of salvation.

“Hail, sovereign love, that first began
The scheme to rescue fallen man!
Hail, matchless, free, eternal grace,
That gave my soul a hiding-place!”

Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden

ALMOST THERE!

The only hurdle between the wilderness (the plains of Moab) and the Promised Land is the book of Deuteronomy, for a study of that book will show the people in need of some basic lessons once again. Back in chapter 27 we learned of the problem with the daughters of Zelophedad. You will remember they felt left out of the inheritance, now Manasseh expresses concern that they could lose their own inheritance.

God’s promise is sure. if these daughters married into another tribe, the inheritance, the portion allotted to the daughter, went to that other tribe. The establishment of tribes meant everything to the Israelites and seeing it eroded prompted Manasseh to speak with Moses. The case heard and an arrangement agreed the matter is settled, and the daughters could now marry whom they pleased from their father’s tribe. What do we learn from that? God does not go back on His promises. The earlier agreement remains intact and believers can be sure that God, who gave His only Son, will honour His perfect sacrifice – salvation is certain! “Neither shall the inheritance remove from one tribe to another tribe; but every one of the tribes of the children of Israel shall keep himself to his own inheritance” (verse 9).

Summary of teaching. This ancient record of a people wandering about in the desert has provided us with an insight into God’s purposes for us. It should help us to ask questions about our Christian living – where has God brought us from, and where are we heading? Do we now know more of God and His ways than we did at our conversion? If not we are spiritually sick and in need of urgent attention. Does Christ mean more to us now than a year ago? Atonement, mercy, grace, worship, sacrifice, and much more, streams from the pages. Redemption sits alongside disobedience as mercy triumphs. Where would we be if God marked iniquity or
punished us according to what we deserve? The key word is “wandering” and such is our pilgrim journey, for the people could have been in Canaan 40 years earlier. Is it not true we miss out in so much because of our wayward thinking? Let the lessons taught in these chapters draw us closer to the One in whom we have believed. Moses lost his right to enter Canaan through disobedience, but Caleb and Joshua gained the victory when they trusted God’s promise.

“When we watch, then may we pray,
And in prayer watch every day;
And with pleasure ever prove
All our strength is from above.”

_The Lord spoke to Moses and He speaks to you today_

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**THE HOPE OF GLORY •**

Concluded

D. N. SAMUEL (Devizes, Wilts.)

WE now turn to consider what happens to the souls of the righteous after they are set free from the body.

**First,** they are with God and Christ in glory, and they find an incredible rest to their souls in that gracious presence of God and of Christ. The greatest nearness we are favoured with in this life is mere distance from God, compared with the future state of the soul. “Whilst we are at home in the body,” says the apostle, “we are absent from the Lord” (2 Corinthians 5:6). For this reason Paul had “a desire to depart, and be with Christ” (Philippians 1:23).

**Secondly,** being in the presence of God, we shall see Him in the light of glory. We shall attain a knowledge of God, compared with which our knowledge in this life is mere blindness and darkness. We shall see God in His works of glory, which outshine His works both of nature and grace. Also, we shall see God in the face of Jesus Christ. In John 17:24 Jesus asks, in His prayer for his disciples, “that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me”. And, also, they will know God immediately, in Himself, in so far as man is able to approach God, to a degree incomprehensible to us now in our present earthly state.

**Thirdly,** this vision of God will be accompanied with the most delightful love of God — a vision of love so incomparable and wonderful that it makes the soul feel neither weariness nor uneasiness in the presence, contemplation and fruition of God. One is reminded of the words of Charles Wesley’s hymn which expresses a longing for this consummation:
"O love divine, how sweet thou art!
When shall I find my willing heart
All taken up by Thee?"

New pleasures will arise one after another, from the intimate possession of our chief good. This is the love which, the apostle Paul says, abides for ever, when faith and hope are no more (1 Corinthians 13:8).

**Fourthly**, to perfect love is joined perfect conformity of the soul to God. Moses' face shone when he conversed with God in the mount, yet this will not compare with the intimacy and access that we shall have with God in heaven, when we enjoy the glory and presence of God. We shall be the objects of His perfect love, and we shall perfectly love Him.

**Fifthly**, in the state of glory we shall be so equipped in faculty as to enjoy more fully the greater glory of God. This state is called in Scripture, "the joy of the Lord" (Matthew 25:21) (where the Lord says to the faithful servant, "Enter thou into the joy of thy lord"), because it proceeds freely from the Lord; because it has the Lord for its object, that is, it is joy and rejoicing in God; and because it is most excellent and worthy of Him.

Now, as if this were not enough, there is yet more for the fullness of joy and glory is put off until the glorious coming of the Lord. There is a difference between the measure of glory which believers will enjoy while separated from the body after death, and that glory which will be theirs in the last day. The one is preliminary, the other the consummation of joy. Bernard of Clairvaux, in a sermon, distinguished the three stages of the Christian's experience as, first, the tabernacle (our present state), secondly, the hall (the separation of soul and body at death), and thirdly, the House of God (the reunion of soul and body at the resurrection).

We must now consider the things which the last day will contribute to the fullness of happiness of God's people.

**First**, the bodies of believers will be restored to their souls - the same bodies, like a familiar home. You know the feeling you have when you have been away from home for some time, perhaps on business or on holiday, and you return. You turn the key in the lock and enter once more the rooms which have so many treasured memories and associations. What a wonderful feeling it is to be home again!

But there will be this difference - the body will be the same as to substance but changed as to quality. It will be a glorious body. "It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; and it is raised a spiritual body" (1 Corinthians 15:42-44). There will be a great and mighty change.

This change is necessary for our participation in the heavenly joy. "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." They were incapable of heavenly joy and experiences; incapable of heavenly glory. God will change the nature of our
bodies from being animal to being spiritual, from being earthly to being heavenly. We are to look for this change from the Saviour “who shall change our vile body ["vile" does not mean polluted but of low or humble condition] that it may be like unto his glorious body” (Philippians 3:21 – Coverdale version) in order that we might shine forth like the sun in the kingdom of our God and Father (Matthew 13:43).

The second thing that will contribute to our blessedness is the great effulgence of the divine perfections in works of glory. We shall see the vast universe delivered from the bondage of corruption to which it has been subjected as a result of sin and disobedience, and brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God (Romans 8:19, 21).

We hear a great deal these days about saving the planet. We are told that man is destroying the eco-system, polluting the planet, and wasting its natural resources. Greed and consumerism are held responsible for this. But people do not then go on to draw the real lesson from this: that this destructive process and devastation of the planet is the consequence of man’s sin and the fall; that mankind’s alienation from God, his Maker, is at the root of it all. The Bible teaches that the deliverance of the people of God from sin will mean the deliverance also of the creation from futility and corruption. All this is clearly set out in Romans 8.

“For the [creation] was made subject to vanity [or futility], not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope. Because the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God” (Romans 8:20-21). That is the only way to save the planet! This is such a glorious hope, Paul says in Romans 8, that the creation waits in earnest expectation of its deliverance. “For the earnest expectation of the creation waits for the manifestation of the sons of God.” Our glorification (that is, when our bodies are raised and glorified and made like Christ’s glorified resurrection body) will also be the occasion of the transformation of the whole creation. We need to keep in mind the cosmic scale of redemption and salvation. There is grandness of scale and boldness of depiction of the hope of glory in the Bible.

In this picture is included also the general assembly of the elect who shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. We shall look upon our bodies which have been subject to so much infirmity and weakness and they will be a blaze of light, resembling the glorious body of Christ, after He was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father; for John says, “we shall be like him”. “When he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2). And David also declares, in Psalm 17:15: “As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness. I shall be satisfied when I awake, with thy likeness.”

And thirdly, that day shall bring to fruition the purposes of God. “As long as there are some believers who are still in a miserable state; as long as the bodies of the elect, who are departed out of them, lie in the dust,” says Witsius, “the power of sin still subsists, and the full perfection of joy cannot be realized.” And that is
why God has to communicate Himself to His people by the intervention of a Mediator. But by the resurrection, death itself, which is the last enemy, shall be abolished (1 Corinthians 15:26) and destroyed in the lake of fire and brimstone (Revelation 20:14). When all the effects of sin shall be destroyed, nothing shall prevent God from communicating Himself immediately to man without the intervention of a mediator, which seems to be the meaning of Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:28. "And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all."

To this happiness there belongs a boundless and unchangeable eternity, without which it would be no happiness at all, for we would be in constant fear of losing it. But because it is secure it is called "eternal life", and "a crown of glory that fadeth not away" (1 Peter 5:4), and again "an incorruptible crown" (1 Corinthians 9:25). And the apostle Paul declares regarding the righteous, "they shall ever be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

**Finally, will there be different degrees of glory amongst the redeemed?** The Roman Catholics claim so on the ground of personal merit. Setting aside such a mistaken view, it would appear that God will crown the unequal measure of gifts of grace with a disparity of gifts of glory. Those Scriptures such as Romans 2:6, "who will render to every man according to his deeds", and 2 Corinthians 5:10, "that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done", seem to point to this, for the words signify more than a free reward, but rather something answering to the proportion of their works. This seems to be clearly stated in 1 Corinthians 3:8: "He that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour."

Similar to this is Paul’s discourse concerning the resurrection of the dead (1 Corinthians 15:40-41), "there are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also," says the apostle, "is the resurrection of the dead." It would appear from this passage that the principal leaders, the patriarchs, prophets, apostles and martyrs shall have some greater glory. For example, what Jesus said to the apostles was not said to all (Matthew 19:28). "When the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel". As Grotius explains, these words are intended to say, "You shall occupy the next places of honour to me your King". To judge means to be set over or to preside.

Again, John in the Book of Revelation, says that he saw twenty-four thrones and twenty-four elders sitting on them, that is, the patriarchs of the Old and New Testaments. It seems clear, therefore, that we are meant to distinguish between the happiness that will be the portion of believers, as believers, and the commendation, which, in the last day, shall be given to every believer in proportion to the diligence and success in serving Christ and His kingdom. And
when we think of the labours of one such as the apostle Paul, we see how fitting and proper this is.

So this is the Christian hope, the hope of Glory which we should be making much of when we see the hopelessness of the world at the present time. Matthew Parris wrote an article quite recently in The Times with the title “So much for world progress. We have failed. We’re stuck,” in which he reminded his readers that, until quite recent times, there was a belief “that human society was, if not perfectible, then capable of huge improvement; that that old devil, human nature, could be tailored and trimmed, rebalanced and enlightened.” That was what the “cold war” and the clash of ideologies was all about, for some believed that the transformation would be brought about through Communism, others through liberal humanism, all through the application of science.

But none of this has come to pass. “With the stumbling of the United Nations, ideas of world government have faded... crime has increased... And now that Communism has fallen by the wayside, Adam Smith’s view of human progress driven by self-interest is even more widely accepted than before 1950. A profound pessimism underlies it all. We do not any longer suppose it likely that the human race is capable of improvement except in its material circumstances.” So far Matthew Parris; and that, I think, pretty well sums it up. Not everyone takes the trouble to reflect deeply on these matters, but for those who do, that article describes the present state and condition of the world and the absence of hope. In fact, a strange reversal has taken place. Whereas it was science and “progress” which had formerly inspired the hope of a bright future for mankind, now it is those very forces which are the ground of pessimism regarding the future, principally because human nature cannot be trusted to handle them in a way that will benefit mankind. The truth needs to be affirmed that there can be no real, lasting hope if God is excluded from our thinking. But that, perversely, is exactly what the modern generation has done. It has resolutely set its face against belief in God, and has rejected the Christian Gospel.

Paul writing to the church at Ephesus described what had been their condition before they became believers in Christ. “At that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world” (Ephesians 2:12). That is a stark reminder of our natural condition as a result of sin and the fall. The natural man is without hope. He may have transitory hopes, temporal hopes, but he has no transcendent hope which can sustain and support him in all the vicissitudes of life.

And that is the state and condition of people today, generally speaking. Mankind needs an over-arching hope in order to sustain it and, without that, life is bleak indeed, and the philosophy becomes, “Let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die”. Hedonism, self-indulgence and excess become increasingly the mood and outlook of the age. We can only be delivered from this by hope, but it has to be a transcendent hope.
The important thing about the Christian hope which we have been exploring in this article is that it is not some vague longing for things to be better, some time in the future. It is the message that the important change for the better has already taken place. The fact that God's Son has come in the flesh has heralded a new age. He did not come to announce the kingdom of God at some date, but to declare that it had already arrived — "the kingdom of God is within you" or, as it might be translated, "among you". The new era of God's mercy and grace, of deliverance from sin, and death, and the power of evil has already begun. His contemporaries were amazed to hear him declare, "The law and the prophets were until John [the Baptist]: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it". This is the message of hope that the Church has been commissioned to preach to a hopeless world. It is just the message that our tired, jaded and hopeless generation needs to hear. And this message of grace and deliverance from the guilt and power of sin will find its fruition hereafter in glory, in the blessed immortality of the people of God we have described. For, "grace is glory begun".

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**A Short Bible Study**

M. HANDFORD (Poynton, Cheshire)

"Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:4-7).

THE riches of God in Christ Jesus are available for every child of God.

1. Unbounded Praise. "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice" (verse 4). Observe the sphere of a believer's rejoicing is in the Lord. Very few can find any occasion for rejoicing in their circumstances: but, come what may, we can ever rejoice in God's love and faithfulness, in His grace and power. We have sufficient cause for abounding joy. Our Lord emphasised this joy when He said, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full" (John 15:11).

Observe too the time of rejoicing — "alway". This is not to be a spasmodic experience. The joy can be as permanent as the God of all grace; and as abiding as Christ Himself — "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and for ever".

2. Unfailing Presence. "The Lord is at hand". "The Lord is near". God says to us as He said to Moses, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest" (Exodus 33:14). Repeatedly the testimony is give "The Angel of his presence
saved them”; while the Lord Jesus gave His pledge, “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee”.

3. **Unceasing Prayer.** “Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God” (verse 6). Because of God’s unfailing presence, the believer can rely on His promise, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness”. Hence the exhortation, “Be anxious for nothing”.

Let us come into God’s presence with thanksgiving. Acknowledge the goodness and loving-kindness of the Lord, and give thanks. Then present your petition unto the Lord, and, in your prayer, follow the exhortation of the Psalmist, “Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass” (Psalm 37:5).

4. **Unbroken Peace.** “And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (verse 7).

First comes peace with God (Romans 5:1) and here we have the peace of God. What a priceless possession! As the heart is yielded to the Lord, He reigns there as the Prince of peace. His promise is, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27).

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**John Newton and the Gospel Magazine**

**Part II**

J. E. NORTH (Totton, Hants.)

*John Newton’s letters*

Between May 1771 and 1773, Newton published 24 letters under the pseudonym of Omicron and a further 17 letters published with the pseudonym of Vigil. Writing to John Thornton on 10th August 1774, John Berridge, who, himself, wrote for the *Gospel Magazine* under the pseudonym of Old Everton, comments that he has had sight of “a dozen of Omicron’s letters, for which I return you hearty thanks…” He then goes on to identify Omicron:

> How sweet is Christian simplicity, and how much preferable to mere human eloquence! I suppose by the matter and style that shame-faced Omicron is Mr. Newton. He wears a mask, but cannot hide his face. Pithiness and candour will betray the Curate of Olney, notwithstanding his veil of a Greek signature. I expect him at Everton today...
But why *Omicron*? Josiah Bull, in his *John Newton* tells us that a similar question had been asked by one of Newton’s female correspondents. Bull says, “For any who may still desire that information, we may observe that it is a modest and ingenious *nom de plume* borrowed from the Greek alphabet – *omicron*, short or little O”. Regarding the pseudonym *Vigil*, he says that it means “Watchful”. Eleven of the letters were originally addressed to various individuals, the remainder being written especially for the pages of the *Gospel Magazine*.

The first letter to appear was originally addressed to the Rev. Joshua Symonds (1739-1788). He was born at Kidderminster and studied for the ministry at Mile End Academy. He seems to have been one who was constantly tried by ill-health and had a gloomy despondency brought on by family problems. John Newton refers in his diary to his preaching and settlement as Pastor of John Bunyan’s Meeting House, Bedford:

12th March, 1766. A visit from Mr. Symonds. He is supplying a vacancy at Bedford. I shall be glad if the Lord sees fit to fix him there. I think him a sensible, spiritual, humble young man, and believe he would make an agreeable and useful neighbour. Heard him preach in the evening from John 12:21.

Newton’s first letter to Symonds was appropriately on the subject of “Trust in God”. Obviously it is not possible in this article to reprint the whole of the letter *verbatim* but the following extract shows Newton’s concern for him and his bringing to his (Symond’s) view the Lord’s covenant care of him:

> Consider, my friend, the Lord has done well for you. He has settled you peaceable in a good and honourable interest. . . . Beware, therefore, of that reasoning which might lead you to distrust the Lord your God, or to act as if you did. . . . Now, at your first setting out, is the proper time seriously to seek the Lord’s direction, that you may from the beginning adopt such a plan as may be most for your own comfort, the honour of your character as a minister, the glory of him who has called you, and the edification of your people. It is easier to begin well, than to make alterations afterwards. I trust the Lord will bless and guide you in your deliberations. And as for my own part, I am not in the least afraid, that you will ever have cause to blame me for the advice I have given, if you should be disposed to follow it. . . .

Other letters giving practical spiritual advice continued to be addressed to other ministers and private individuals. Perhaps the best known of these is the series of three letters addressed to Mr. John Thornton on the subject of the “Work of Grace in the Heart” – “On Grace in the Blade”; “On Grace in the Ear”; “On Grace in the Full Corn”. John Thornton (1720-1790) was converted through the ministry of George Whitefield. A director of the Bank of England, he often desired an
Evangelical ministry at St. Mary Woolnoth in the City of London. He was able to purchase “the right of presentation” to that church just prior to the death of the then rector, Rev. Charles Plumtree, who died in 1779. He invited Newton to be rector of the parish in that year. The three letters have been published separately many times, and were published in the Gospel Magazine in 1857.

From its inception the Gospel Magazine had been unapologetically Calvinistic in its theology and opposed to all forms of Arminianism. Controversy had been stirred up in the pages of the Gospel Magazine by “WR” (who is identified by Luke Tyerman as William Romaine), against John Wesley. The “Minute Controversy”, as it has become to be known, rumbled on through the issues of 1771. This same year saw John Newton’s first contribution written specially for the Gospel Magazine. The letter was given priority position on the first page of the October issue. As in any controversy, words were exchanged from both sides which were none too complementary. John Newton, no doubt seeking to be a peacemaker in this unedifying debacle, wrote his advice to the editor. Did John Gurney, the editor, give it priority of position in an endeavour to step back from some of the harsh things that had been written and foster more of a spirit of peace in the Gospel? We shall never know! But Newton’s advice still stands good today. Again, it is not possible, due to lack of space, to reprint the whole of his letters. The following extracts must suffice:

*I may reduce my advice to three heads, respecting your opponent, the public, and yourself. . . . As to your opponent, I wish, that before you set pen to paper against him, and during the whole time you are preparing your answer, you may commend him by earnest prayer to the Lord’s teaching and blessing. . . . By printing, you will appeal to the public. . . . If our zeal is embittered by expressions of anger, invective, or scorn, we may think we are doing service to the cause of truth, when in reality we shall only bring it into discredit. . . . This leads me in the last place, to consider your own concern. . . . We find but very few writers of controversy who have not been manifestly hurt by it. Either they grow in a sense of their own importance, or imbibe an angry contentious spirit, or they insensibly withdraw their attention from those things which are the food and immediate support of the life of faith. . . . If the service is honourable, it is dangerous. What will it profit a man if he gains his cause, and silences his adversary, if, at the same time, he loses that humble, tender frame of spirit, in which the Lord delights, and to which the promise of his present is made! Your aim, I doubt not, is good; but you have need to watch and pray. . . .

Newton was to publish his Omicron letters as a separate entity in 1774. He wrote to his patron, the Earl of Dartmouth, on 29th June of that year, sending him a copy of this volume:
This is our fair day, a day of great importance to the children in town. . . .

On the evening of our fair-days I usually preach, which I call opening my booth. Sometimes I invite them to buy the truth or come and see; sometimes I deprecate the wares and objects of the fair, and endeavour to convince them that all is vanity and vexation of spirit in comparison to what is set forth to view and to sale, without money and without price, in the ordinances of the Gospel; but alas, I have the fewest spectators and the fewest buyers. A mountebank or a dancing dog can gather a crowd, but there are only here or there one who have leisure or desire to attend the things which belong to their peace. But a few there are, and usually amongst them some strangers whom the novelty of preaching at such a time, induces to come and hear what the man has to say. For the sake of such, and with a hope of being possibly useful to some poor soul, if but one, I began this custom upon my first coming to Olney.

It is probable your Lordship has received or will have seen a packet of my letters. They were first published in the GOSPEL MAGAZINE, under the signature OMICRON, and are now collected in a small volume. I just mention them to intreat your favourable acceptance, and shall be glad if you think any of them worth your perusal. Many of them were at first written in private correspondence, without the least thought, at the time, of appearing in public; others were only put into an epistolatory form, as being the manner of writing to which I am most accustomed.

Newton’s Vigil letters were published in the Gospel Magazine between 1774 and 1777. Again, these letters are immensely practical in their advice. We are unable to say whether they were original compositions for the Gospel Magazine or whether they were letters that had been originally written to Newton’s correspondents. The letter format was a literary device used by writers to magazines in the 18th century. They were later added to his Omicron and published as one volume in 1793.

John Newton’s verse

John Newton’s hymns have come to be loved by many generations of the Lord’s people. They are still in use in many congregations as an essential part of their worship. Many of the hymns had their origin in the pages of this magazine. In the early issue of the Gospel Magazine there were nearly always at least two pages given over to original poetry and verses of which a number were written by Newton himself and also by Newton’s good friend, William Cowper. They were later collected by Newton and published, along with other of his verse, in 1779 as The Olney Hymns. Newton writes in his preface to that collection of hymns:

Copies of a few of these hymns have already appeared in periodical publications, and in some recent collections. I have observed one or two of
them attributed to persons who certainly had no concern in them, but as
transcribers. All that have been at different times parted with in manuscript
are included in the present volume; and... the public may be assured, that
the whole number were composed by two persons only. The original design
would not admit of any other association.

Newton and Toplady

Augustus Montague Toplady (1740-1778) is a name that will ever be associated
with the Gospel Magazine. He was editor from December 1775 to June 1776
when, due to ill health, he was forced to relinquish this duty. He had been a
contributor prior to this, writing under various nom de plumes. He was one of that
circle of ministers within the Church of England who had espoused the
Evangelical Awakening. As such, he was well known to John Newton.

Josiah Bull, in his biography of his grandfather William Bull, gives an
anecdote, not without humour, of the final meeting of Newton with Toplady in the
summer of 1778 prior to Toplady’s death. Bull writes:

Mr. Newton had been dining with Mr. Bull, and they were quietly sitting
together, following after “the things whereby they might edify one another”
... when they were startled by a thundering knock at the door; and in came
Mr. Ryland of Northampton, abruptly exclaiming, “If you wish to see Mr.
Toplady, you must go immediately with me to the Swan. He is on his way to
London, and will not live long.” They all proceeded to the inn, and there
found the good man emaciated with disease, and evidently hastening to the
grave. As they were talking together they were attracted by a great noise in
the street, occasioned, as they found on looking out, by a bull-baiting which
was going on before the house. Mr. Toplady was touched by the cruelty of
the scene, and exclaimed, “Who could bear to see that sight if there were
not to be some compensation for these poor suffering animals in a future
state?” “I certainly hope,” said my grandfather, “that all the Bulls will go
to heaven; but do you think this will be the case with all the animal
creation?” “Yes, certainly,” replied Mr. Toplady, with great emphasis, “all,
all.” “What!” rejoined Mr. Newton, with some sarcasm in his tone; “do
you suppose, sir, there will be fleas in heaven? For I have a special
aversion to them.” Mr. Toplady said nothing, but was evidently hurt; and
as they separated, Mr. Newton said, “How happy he should be to see him
at Olney, if God spared his life, and he were to come that way again. . . .”

The devil persecutes the children of God, even to the gates of heaven; but, blessed
be God, he cannot get in unto them, for Christ is within, and has locked the door,
and keeps the key in His own possession.

Mr. Hill
DR. LUKE, writer of the third Gospel, tells the story of the woman of faith in Luke 8:43-48. What was her name? We do not know. Luke simply calls her “a woman having an issue of blood”. However, we do know that she met Jesus on His way to visit the dying twelve-year-old daughter of Jairus, an elder in the Jewish synagogue (verses 41-42, 49-56). The divine Physician interrupts His journey to heal this woman – even now, though in heaven, He hears the cries for help from the sick, sorrowful and the sinful. This woman’s healing illustrates how the Lord Jesus Christ cares for us and can meet us at the point of our need.

Her incurable illness (verse 43)

Day after day, for twelve years, this woman suffered from a continuous haemorrhage. Night after night, she writhed in pain, unable to sleep. According to Jewish law, she could not mix with other people. Drained of energy, through loss of blood, and deprived of the comfort of friends, she feels dejected and lonely. She is also penniless, having spent her money on unhelpful doctors and useless remedies. She is near despair when she hears about Jesus, a worker of miracles. The more she hears, so the more she feels sure that this man can heal her.

Are you struggling with a longstanding problem that is wearing you down? The Saviour who helped this woman can help you too. If you are not yet a Christian, you are like this woman, sick, not in body, but in soul with the incurable disease of sin. According to Jewish law, this woman was ceremonially unclean. The Bible says that sin makes us morally unclean in the sight of a holy God (Jeremiah 17:9; Isaiah 64:6). This woman suffered for twelve years. We enter the world with the heart-problem of sin. David, the Psalmist, lamented, “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me” (Psalm 51:5).

Her futile efforts (verse 43)

Unbelievers, like this woman, try various “physicians” to cure their sin. Some non-Christians fill their lives so they do not have too much time to think about uncomfortable topics, such as life after death in heaven or hell. Let me mention three doctors to whom people go for a cure.

**Dr. Pleasure:** His prescription reads, “Eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die”. However, he does not tell his patients that “the pleasures of sin” are only for “a season” – a short time (Hebrews 11:25). These pleasures cannot bring lasting happiness or contentment. They cannot prepare a person for death. Laughter cannot ease a troubled conscience.

**Dr. Wealth:** His prescription reads, “Get as rich as quick as you can. Buy yourself the best of everything.” But he does not tell you that some of the richest
people have been the most miserable and several rich people have committed suicide. Neither does he tell you “we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out” (1 Timothy 6:7). The woman’s wealth could not buy her a cure; neither can our money.

**Dr. Religion:** His prescription reads, “Get baptised and get confirmed. Go to church. Send for the priest when you die.” This prescription is rather like giving a drug to man who is dying of cancer. The drug eases the pain but does not cure the disease. Because of our sin, we need a heart-transplant not a pacemaker! To quote Jesus’ words, “Ye must be born again” (John 3:7).

**Her determined action (verse 44)**

After doing the round of doctors and swallowing umpteen medicines, she heard about Jesus and went to Him. Neither this woman’s physical weakness nor the thronging crowds deterred her from pushing near Jesus to touch the tassels on the corner of His robe. Will you overcome all obstacles and difficulties to seek the Lord Jesus for pardon? If you do not come, you will remain unhealed, and if you die as an unbeliever, you face everlasting separation from God. How urgent then to come!

Luke tells us that Jesus praised her faith: “Thy faith hath made thee whole.” Faith means she believed what she had heard concerning His ability to heal. She believed that even the mere touch of His clothes would result in an immediate cure. Her faith, though great, was still imperfect (she creep up behind Jesus), and perhaps her faith was superstitious (did she believe that there was magical power in His clothes?). Nevertheless, her defective faith takes her to Jesus for healing. Do not worry if your faith is small or if it is the right kind of faith; a little faith is all you need to come to the Saviour for pardon.

**Her instant healing (verses 44-47)**

Dr. Luke reports that the haemorrhage stopped in a moment, once-for-all; then health and vigour surged through every part of her body (verse 44). The Lord heals the contrite sinner the moment he asks. Why does Jesus, who knows all things, ask, “Who touched me?” (verse 45). Why did He embarrass the woman by compelling her to publicly identify herself? To assure her that she had done nothing improper in the way she obtained healing and to reassure her that the cure would be permanent. Jesus also wanted this woman to confess publicly what He had done in her life (verse 47). We too must declare what Christ has done for us.

**Her special comfort (verse 48)**

Tenderly Jesus calls her “daughter”, though she is probably older than He is. She heard about the fame of Jesus, now she discovers “His exquisite sympathy” (Wuest). When He says, “go in peace” He means go “with the smile of God upon her and the joyful inner knowledge of His smile” (Hendriksen). She knew, without any doubt, that Christ had healed her. We may know that Christ has saved us from our sins.
The times, in which we live are not only unsettling, they are in so many ways dangerous and frightening. No matter where one looks in the world, for various reasons, there seems to be trouble and unrest; conflict appears to be the norm in many regions of the world. Such conflict may be on a grand scale between countries or peoples groups. It is also to be seen within many local communities and on many occasions between individuals. And in all of this, sadly, our own nation is not immune.

Alongside all of this there is the striving by the individual after the "elusive dream". A striving for that something, whatever it might be, that will bring true satisfaction and contentment in life. Indeed we live at a time when it appears that the priority in life is to make every effort to fulfil one's desires and dreams. But the truth is, no matter how hard one works at it, true satisfaction and contentment will always be unattainable.

This may seem like a foolish statement. However, even if individuals are successful in these endeavours, and many appear to be so, especially if fame or wealth is set forth as the criteria, there is no real satisfaction or contentment. Yes, the fulfilling of these desires and dreams may bring pleasure, but they can never bring true contentment and satisfaction, because when one desire has been achieved it does not result in satisfaction, it "only enlarges the desires in the endeavour to gratify them". It is for this reason that "All is utterly inefficient for the great end of man's true happiness" (C. Bridges, Ecclesiastes, Geneva Series of Commentaries, The Banner of Truth Trust). In reality there is no settled resting place for the mind and what we are left with is dissatisfaction and discontent which so often leads to frustration and anger: " vexation of spirit" is how the Authorised Version expresses it (Ecclesiastes 1:14).

What has just been said clearly implies that discontent which leads to frustration, although not always, is our lot in life. If this is correct, and I believe it is, it must surely prompt the question "Is there no escape from this condition; no alternative way of life?" The answer to such a question is a resounding Yes! Yes, it is possible to have real contentment in life, and not just when all is going well, but also as we go through the trials and tribulations of life. But this contentment is not based on one's own efforts. Neither is it easily achieved. More importantly such contentment can only be achieved in union with Christ. Furthermore, it must be strived after if it is to be attained. This, however, raises
two further questions: (1) how does one attain this contentment? (2) how does one retain it when bad things happen?

In his most popular work, *The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment*, first published in 1648, Burroughes expounds from the Scriptures the true meaning of contentment and how it can be attained and retained. The work consists of a number of sermons preached in 1645 on Philippians 4:11: "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content"; a text Burroughes believed contained "the very life and soul of all practical divinity". The sermons were preached with the aim of promoting peace and contentment in the hearts of Christians; as a "timely cordial to revive the drooping spirits of the saints in these sad and sinking times", "in these heart-shaking times". Burroughes may well be referring to the civil war that England was engulfed in at that time and perhaps the contentious issues being debated at the Westminster Assembly.

As is his usual manner Burroughes begins with the grammatical understanding of the different phrases in the text and follows this with his doctrinal proposition, which is: "To be well skilled in the mystery of Christian contentment is the duty, glory and excellence of a Christian." In support of his contention that this "evangelical truth is held forth sufficiently in Scripture", Burroughes makes reference to 1 Timothy 6:6, 8 and Hebrews 13:5, which he then follows by giving a very thought-provoking description of Christian contentment. It is, says Burroughes, "that sweet, inward, quiet, gracious frame of spirit, which freely submits to and delights in God's wise and fatherly disposal in every condition". But such contentment, says Burroughes, "is to be learned as a great mystery, and those who are thoroughly trained in this art, which is like Solomon's riddle to a natural man, have learned a deep mystery".

In opening each phrase in his description, "a box of precious ointment", which is "very comforting, and useful to troubled souls", Burroughes makes the point that Christian contentment is the "work of the Spirit within doors" (i.e., inwardly upon the heart). A work by which the heart is readily brought over to be content in the workings of God upon it as God chooses, and particularly in affliction, "however hard it be and however long it continue". In support of these comments Burroughes gives his own translation of Psalm 62:5: "My soul, be thou silent unto God. Hold thy peace, O my soul," and says, "Not only must the tongue hold its peace, the soul must be silent."

The submission of the heart is important for Burroughes as he goes on to explain: "Many may sit silently, refraining from discontented expressions, yet inwardly they are bursting with discontent... Outwardly there may be great calmness and stillness, yet within amazing confusion, bitterness, disturbance and vexation." To further illustrate his point, Burroughes quaintly says, "A shoe may be smooth and neat outside, while inside it pinches the flesh". But such a condition shows "a complicated disorder and great perversity in their hearts", says Burroughes. Furthermore, it is the "peevish, fretful language of their souls", that
God hears and for this reason “it is not only the tongue must hold its peace; the soul must be silent”.

Continuing with his argument Burroughes notes that these people, “while there is a serene calm upon their tongues, have blustering storms upon their spirits, and while they keep silence their hearts are troubled and even worn away with anguish and vexation. They have peace and quiet outwardly, but within war from the unruly and turbulent workings of their hearts.” In support of his argument Burroughes makes reference to Psalm 32:3: “When I kept silence, my bones waxed old”. Finally, on this point, Burroughes says, “If the attainment of true contentment were as easy as keeping quite outwardly, it would not need much learning”. But, argues Burroughes, “there is certainly more to it than can be attained by common gifts and the ordinary power of reason, which often bridle nature. It is the business of the heart.”

Developing his theme, Burroughes explains that there are three things that true contentment is not opposed to: (1) “a due sense of affliction, [for] God gives His people leave to be sensible of what they suffer”; (2) making our circumstances known to God: “Though a Christian ought to be quiet under God’s correcting hand, he may without any breach of Christian contentment complain to God”; and (3) “to endeavouring simply to be delivered out of present afflictions by the use of lawful means”. But, says Burroughes, these endeavours must be with “such submission and holy resignation of spirit, to be delivered when God wills, and as God wills, and how God wills, so that our wills are melted into the will of God”.

Following these comments Burroughes briefly sets out a number of things that Christian contentment is opposed to, which he sums up in this way: “When affliction comes, whatever it is ... you do not murmur or repine, you do not fret or vex yourself, there is not ... an instability, there is no distracting fears in your hearts, no sinking discouragements . . . no risings in rebellion against God in any way.” This is the result of that “quiet gracious frame of spirit” which “is a grace that spreads itself through the whole soul”, and “brings forth this gracious contentment rather than any external thing”.

The distinction between the gracious quietness of spirit and the natural quietness that may be occasioned in some men’s spirits by way of “sturdy resolution”, or “through unsanctified reason” is explained by its relation to God: “Many men and women have such a natural quietness of spirit and such a bodily disposition that you seldom find them disquieted . . . But when contentment of heart springs from grace . . . the heart is very quick and lively in the service of God.” In other words, “the more any gracious heart can bring itself to be in a contented disposition, the more fit it is for any service of God”, something the natural man does not contemplate.

Another characteristic of Christian contentment is that the person under affliction is seen to be “freely submitting to and taking pleasure in God’s disposal”. In other words, “he sees the wisdom of God in everything . . . [and]
knows that the love of God may as well stand with an afflicted condition as with a prosperous condition”.

Having considered the various points in his description of Christian contentment, Burroughes recognizes an objection to what he has set forth: “What you speak of is very good, if we could attain to it; but is it possible for anyone to attain to it?” The response of Burroughes is that such contentment may be attained: “It is possible if you get skill in the art of it; you may attain to it.” Giving more encouragement, Burroughes says, “It will prove to be not such a difficult thing either, if you but understand the mystery of it”.

According to Burroughes, “there is a great mystery and art in what way a Christian comes to contentment”. The mystery for Burroughes resides in how a man can “be thoroughly sensible of an affliction, and to endeavour to remove it by all lawful means, and yet to be content”. The query here for Burroughes is how to bring together these two conditions:

*How to join these two together: to be sensible of an affliction as much as a man or woman who is not content; I am sensible of it as fully as they, and I seek ways to be delivered from it as well as they, and yet still my heart abides content—this is, I say, a mystery, that is very hard for a carnal heart to understand.*

But while recognising the difficulty of the natural man to join these two conditions together, Burroughes affirms the ability of the spiritual man to do so:

*But grace teaches such a mixture, teaches us how to make a mixture of sorrow and a mixture of joy together; and that makes contentment. Grace teaches us how to moderate and how to order affliction so that there is a sense of it, and yet for all that contentment under it.*

Burroughes also contends that a Christian may be “the most contented man in the world, and yet the most unsatisfied man in the world”. To further enlighten his hearers and help them to understand this comment Burroughes says, “A soul that is capable of God can be filled with nothing else but God”. Pursuing this line of reasoning Burroughes quotes Philippians 4, which speaks of the “peace of God” (verse 7) and the “God of peace” (verse 9), and then makes these two comments: “the peace of God is not enough to a gracious heart except it may have the God of that peace”; “to have the God of the mercy as well as the mercy.”

Continuing to unfold the mystery of Christian contentment, Burroughes reminds his hearers that a Christian does not come “to this contentment by making up the wants of his circumstances, but by the performance of the work of his circumstances”. In other words, by doing “those duties that God requires of me in the circumstances that He has now put me into”, will bring about Christian contentment. This is so unlike the natural man who thinks his wants must be satisfied before he can be content. But it is not only the performance of the duty that brings contentment, important also is the willingness and the desire to
perform the duty. Rather than seeking to have his own desires satisfied, like the natural man does, the "gracious heart is contented by the melting of his will and desires into God's will and desires".

The underlying factor in Christian contentment, for Burroughes, is "God's eternal love" to the believer: "Every good thing the people of God enjoy, they enjoy it... as a token of God's love... God's eternal love to them." Burroughes also reminds his hearers that it is "not only in good things does a Christian have the dew of God's blessing... but [in] all the afflictions, all the evils that do befall him, he can see love in them all: And can enjoy the sweetness of love in his afflictions as well as in his mercies."

The knowledge of this gives the Christian the desire to live "upon the dew of God's blessing" which he has a right to "by the purchase of Jesus Christ". But, while Christians live "upon the dew of God's blessing" this is but the first instalment of the blessings that awaits them in glory: "An earnest penny," says Burroughes, "given them by God as a forerunner of those eternal mercies that the Lord intends for them." Stating this truth in a different way Burroughes says that the believer "has the kingdom of Heaven as present, and the glory that is to come, by faith he makes it present".

Burroughes also shows that a Christian does not attain contentment by bearing his burden in his own strength: "A gracious heart has contentment by getting strength from Jesus Christ." Not by Christ sharing the burden, as would be required if a burden was too heavy for one person, humanly speaking, but "by his faith acting upon Christ, and bringing the strength of Christ into his own soul". In this way the Christian is "enabled to bear whatever God lays upon him". In support of his contention that a believer should not settle for a little strength, Burroughes draws attention to Colossians 1:11: "Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness" and says, "You must not therefore be content with a little strength... you should be strengthened with all might, according to the glorious power of God."

Here Burroughes cannot contain himself and makes this heart-searching plea to his hearers, which is worth quoting in full:

Oh, you who are now under very heavy and sad afflictions more than usual, look at this Scripture, and consider how it is made good in you; and why may you not have this Scripture made good in you, if you are godly? You should not be quiet in your own spirits, unless in some measure you get this Scripture made good in you, so that you may with some comfort say, "Through God's mercy, I find that strength coming into me that is spoken of in this Scripture". You should labour when you are under any great affliction (you who are godly) to walk so that others may see such a Scripture made good in you. This is the glorious power of God that strengthens His servants to all longsuffering, and that with joyfulness.
Having set out in clear terms his definition of contentment and explained the mystery of it, Burroughes begins to inform his hearers, as he did at the beginning of his book, that they, just like Paul, must learn the art of contentment. And this learning of Christian contentment must begin in the school of Christ. In this school the Christian learns the "lesson of self-denial", which informs him that without Christ "he is nothing", "can do nothing" and "deserve[s] nothing except it be Hell". But the lesson of self-denial has a positive end, for thereby the believing "soul comes to rejoice and take satisfaction in all God's ways". Such satisfaction enables a gracious soul to deny its own ends and say, "God's ends are my ends", and in so doing "he comes to find contentment... and his comforts are multiplied".

The school of Christ also teaches the believer "the vanity of the creature", by which Burroughes means that "whatsoever there is in the creature has an emptiness in it". In other words there is "nothing in the creature that is suitable for a gracious heart to feed upon for its good and happiness". Burroughes makes the point that not only is contentment not found in ourselves; neither is it to be found in riches or pleasure. But, "when a soul comes into the school of Jesus Christ, and there comes to see the vanity in all things in the world, then such a soul comes to have contentment". This, however, is not to say that there is no good or comfort in these things, but what there is "has reference to God, the first being". In other words, "so far as I can enjoy God in it, so far is it good to me, and so far as I do not enjoy God in it, so far there is no goodness in [it]".

A third lesson to be learned in the school of Christ is "to understand what is the one thing that is necessary". Burroughes makes the point that it is not necessary to be rich, or to have honour and preferment. Neither is it necessary to have a life of pleasure, but it is absolutely necessary "to have God as my portion and have my part in Jesus Christ, it is necessary that my soul should be saved in the day of Jesus Christ". A fine house, good income, honour and fame are all desirable things, but if the heart is taken up with them they will turn us away from "a real sight of the great things of eternity". Contrary to this is the attitude of the believer, for when his heart is "taken up with the weighty things of eternity, with the great things of eternal life, the things of here below... are things of no consequence to him in comparison".

By being taken up with the "weighty things of eternity" the soul "comes to understand in what relation it stands to the world". By this Burroughes means that "God comes to instruct the soul effectually through Christ by His Spirit, on what terms it lives here in the world". According to Burroughes the lesson being taught is that the Christian must not live in a settled condition, but as "a pilgrim, a stranger, a traveller, and a soldier". Each of these descriptions are expanded upon by Burroughes before he comes to emphasis what he has be trying to get across to his hearers, namely, they "must know their own hearts well", because "you will never get any skill in this mystery of contentment, except you study the book of your own heart".
Such knowledge of the heart will enable the Christian to “find out the root of any discontent” and treat it in a proper manner. “We shall,” says Burroughes, “come to know what best suits our condition.” Students of the heart, as Burroughes has indicated, are also enabled to see God in their differing conditions and therein to be content: “When God comes with afflictions to the man or woman who has studied their own hearts, they can say, ‘I would not have been without this affliction for anything in the world, God has so suited this affliction to my condition, and has come in such a way that if this affliction had not come I am afraid I should have fallen into sin’.”

Failure to treat the root cause of discontent in a proper way may lead to the soul being given up by God to its own desires and “What a great and dreadful evil it is to be given up to one’s heart’s desires”. Quoting Psalm 81:11-12: “But my people would not hearken to my voice. . . . So I gave them up unto their own hearts’ lust: and they walked in their own counsels,” Burroughes also says, that seeking one’s own desires, contrary to the will of God is “one of the most hideous and fearful evils that can befall any man on the face of the earth”. But here again we find the pastoral heart of Burroughes coming to the fore: “Oh that this day you might come to understand, that Christ would bring you into His school, and teach you understanding.” The clear desire of Burroughes is that the Lord would teach His hearers “thoroughly by His Spirit these lessons of contentment”.

From the ungodliness of self-satisfaction through the lessons to be learned at the feet of Christ, Burroughes turns to “the excellence of this grace of contentment”. In doing so Burroughes would have his hearers know that by contentment they “would come to give God the worship that is due to Him”. Such worship that Burroughes argues for in many of his works, but especially in Gospel Worship (1648), which sets forth the right manner of worshipping God in hearing the Word, receiving the Lord’s Supper, and in prayer.

Here in The Rare Jewel the linking of worship with contentment, for Burroughes, raises it above the act of worship in hearing a sermon, spending time in prayer or in receiving the sacrament. For Burroughes these are “only external acts of worship”, while the other is the “subjecting of the soul unto God”. Burroughes is speaking here of both active and passive obedience. In the first “we worship God by doing what pleases God” and in the second we “do as well worship God by being pleased with what God does”.

This holistic approach to worship enables the believer to come to that position in life where contentment in the midst of any adversity becomes a reality and much grace is exercised and “this pleases God at the heart to see the graces of His Spirit exercised”. Indeed, argues Burroughes, “there is no work which God has made – the sun, moon, stars and all the world – in which so much of the glory of God appears as in a man who lives quietly in the midst of adversity”.

Furthermore:
When a Christian can walk in the midst of fiery trials, without his garments being singed, and have comfort and joy in the midst of all (as Paul in the stocks) can sing (which wrought upon the jailer), so it will convince men, when they see the power of grace in the midst of afflictions. When they can behave themselves in a gracious and holy manner in such afflictions as would make others roar: Oh, this is the glory of the Christian.

The settled spirit of contentment also makes the believer fit to receive mercy from God and fit for God’s service. Contrary to this, argues Burroughes, are those people who “have unsteady, disturbed spirits that have no steadfastness at all in them” and therefore “are not fit to do service for God”. Contentment also delivers the believer from “an abundance of temptations” and “keeps out whatever may damp his comforts, or put out the light of them”. Another benefit of contentment noted by Burroughes is the “great blessing of God upon the soul”, whereby it has been fashioned and made suitable for “an excellence near to God Himself”.

In expanding on this last comment Burroughes refers to the self-sufficiency of God: “The great glory of God” is “to be happy and self-sufficient in himself.” Likewise the believer, who has learned the lesson of Christian contentment “is a self-sufficient man”, says Burroughes. This is a strange statement by Burroughes, as it suggests that the man who has learned the art of Christian contentment needs nothing but himself, but this would be to misunderstand what he actually means. Burroughes’ comment, correctly understood, means that such a man, because he is not only a partaker “of the Divine nature as by grace in general” but “in a more particular manner by this grace of Christian contentment”, comes near to God’s sufficiency.

The illustration given by Burroughes makes his comment clear: “[As] God would remain the same blessed God that he is now,” even if “all the creatures in the world were annihilated,” so a contented man has enough in the lack of all creatures” to be as happy as he is now, for he would still have God as his portion and would still be fulfilling the role for which he was created, namely, to glorify God and enjoy him forever. Herein lies the true excellency of Christian contentment; the Christian lives not for self, but to the glory of God alone.

The same emphasis is taught when Burroughes turns to the “evils of a murmuring spirit”. This evil is “especially contrary to the work of God, in bringing the soul home to himself” and for this reason is “too mean and base a disorder for a Christian to give place to it”. This is especially true when the Christian considers his relation to the Godhead – God is his Father, he is part of the body of Christ; and a partaker of the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, a Christian is to be “dead to the world and alive to God ... to have his life hid with Christ in God”. All this should motivate the Christian, no matter what his condition, to be thankful. Indeed, says Burroughes, even in the lowest condition a Christian still has “an abundance of mercies to bless God for”.


Burroughes goes on to emphasise the great danger there is in the sin of discontent, on the grounds that it “highly provokes the wrath of God”. There is too in discontent an attitude of “unthankfulness” which may result in God “justly withdrawing His care of you and His protection over you, seeing God cannot please you in His administrations”. This prompts Burroughes to ask: “What if God should say to any of you, if My care over you does not please you, then take care of yourselves, if My protection over you does not please you, then protect yourselves?” What a “dreadful judgement of God from Heaven” this would be. Take heed, therefore, “what you do then in being discontented with God’s will towards you ... for this may befall you”, says Burroughes.

Finally, Burroughes turns to the issue of how Christian contentment may be attained and here he is very brief, having given guidance here and there throughout the sermons. Burroughes begins by indicating two things that are necessary to be done before he can draw this series of sermons to a close. The first is to “propound several considerations for contenting the heart in any afflicted condition”. The second is to “propound directions”, or “what should be done for working our hearts to” a contented condition.

One of the considerations mentioned by Burroughes is “the greatness of the mercies that we have and the meanness of the things that we lack”. Indeed, “the consideration of the greatness of the mercies that we have, and the littleness of the things that God has denied us, is a very powerful consideration to work this grace of contentment”. Oh, yes, “it may be you have not such great blessings in earthly places as some others have”, but, argues Burroughes “you have mercy enough already to make you spend all the strength you have and time you shall live to bless God for what you have had already”.

Burroughes aptly illustrates the point he has been stressing by saying, “If you pour a pailful of water on the floor of your house, it makes a great show, but if you throw it into the sea, there is no sign of it”. This is succinctly supported by a quotation from Luther (one of Burroughes’ favourite authors): “The sea of God’s mercies should swallow up all our particular afflictions.” Considered in this way “the sea of God’s mercies we enjoy” become the focus rather than the believers’ afflictions. And such consideration will move the believer to give thanks to God, even in the midst of afflictions, which in reality “are nothing in comparison” to God’s mercies.

Another consideration is that any affliction is earth-bound, for the godly “will never suffer except in this world”. This consideration relates to the short time believers live here on the earth in comparison to the life they will spend with God in eternity. For this reason afflictions are to be considered as “but for a moment”. Affliction is “but a little cloud and it will be over, notwithstanding soon”, as Athanasius said when banished from his people (quoted by Burroughes).

Turning, finally, to how contentment may be obtained, Burroughes sets before his hearers twelve suitable directions. These include: (1) “get a good temper within your hearts” for “there is nothing outside us that can keep our hearts in a
steady, constant way, but what is within us”, but only by grace of God can this be done; (2) “do not grasp too much of the world, do not take in more business of the world than God calls you to”; (3) “be sure of your call to every business you go about”. Burroughes shows that by following directions (2) and (3) the believer will be able to say, “I know I am where God would have me. I am about the work that God has set me”, and “this will quiet and content you when you meet with trouble”.

These directions are followed by another that urges the exercise of “much faith” and that “not only in the promise that all shall work together for good to them that fear God, but likewise exercise faith in God Himself”. Indeed, argues Burroughes, it is “in times of extremity” that “God calls for the exercise of faith”. It is the exercise of faith that enables the believer to cast his burden upon God and say, “[I can] commit my way to God in peace”, even though reason baulks at such action. The argument used here by Burroughes is that faith is beyond reason: “When reason can go no higher, let faith get on the shoulders of reason and say, ‘I see land though reason cannot see it, I see that good will come out of all this evil’.”

Furthermore, believers must “labour to be spiritually minded” and get their “hearts mortified to the world, dead to the world”. By these comments Burroughes means, first, “be often in meditation of the things that are above”. Failure to be of this frame of mind is the reason why many believers are discontent: “The reason why we are so troubled . . . with any wants we have, is because we converse so little with God.” Secondly, being “baptized into the death of Christ” signifies that we “profess to be even as dead men to the world”. And “if our hearts were dead to the world we should not be much troubled with the changes of the world”. In other words, afflictions “will not be very grievous or painful to such a one as is mortified to the world”.

Another direction urged by Burroughes upon his hearers is that they should make “a good interpretation of God’s ways towards” them whatever those ways may be. This is something believers who have not learned the lesson of contentment fail to do in relation to God’s dealings with them: “If one sense worse than another can be put upon it, we will be sure to do it.” Driving his point home, Burroughes says that if God should “make the worst interpretation of your ways towards Him . . . it would be very ill with you”. But God does the opposite to us, and call us His saints; He “calls the meanest Christian who has the least grace under the greatest corruption His saint”. We should, therefore, “take heed of judging God to be a hard master, [and] make good interpretations of His ways, and that is a special means to help you to contentment”.

In drawing this series of sermons to a close, Burroughes, being realistic, reminds his hearers that while he has “spent many sermons over this lesson of contentment” he is convinced that “it is a harder thing to learn than it is to preach or speak it”. Nevertheless, there is encouragement as Burroughes directs his hearers to the Word of God which “holds forth a way full of comfort and peace to
the people of God even in this world”. Yes, says Burroughes, “you may live happy lives in the midst of storms and tempests in the world” for “there is an ark that you may come into, and no man in the world may live such comfortable, cheerful and contented lives as the saints of God”.

In summary we can say that Christian contentment, though a rare jewel, as Burroughes has rightly explained it, is the remedy for our worries and anxieties; for our “vexation of spirit” (Ecclesiastes 1:14). But, more importantly, to live such a contented life is to walk in communion with God; such communion that exalts the sovereignty of God over the life of the Christian and the infinite wisdom of God as worked out in the Christian’s life. In this way God receives all the glory and believers fulfil the purpose for which they have been created, namely, “to glorify God”. Therefore, as the contented life brings glory and honour to God, we can say with Burroughes, “let us not be ever learning this lesson of contentment and yet not come to the skill of it”. “Oh, do not be content with yourselves till you have learned this lesson of Christian contentment, and have obtained some better skill in it.”

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• BOOK REVIEWS •


Thomas Chalmers (1780-1847) was a spiritual and intellectual giant of his time, whose abilities and interests stretched beyond theology to moral philosophy, social policy, education and the natural sciences, as well as being a devoted pastor and a loving father of his family. These interests are reflected in his correspondence and the Banner of Truth are to be congratulated at publishing this facsimile of the 410 letters included in the 1853 edition compiled by Chalmers’ son-in-law and biographer, William Hanna.

The collection is prefaced by an introduction from the pen of Iain Murray which in 18 pages covers the main facts of Chalmers’ life and his significance in the context of his times. It is perhaps regrettable, however, that it was not written especially for the purpose but extracted from another work of Murray’s, so that there is no attempt to relate the letters to the life and indeed only one reference to one of the letters.

With the exception of a group entitled “Correspondence on the Church Question” and relating to the events leading to the Disruption in 1843 and the foundation of the Free Church, the letters themselves are arranged by recipient. There is an extended group of 64 addressed to his sister, Jane Morton, and the book concludes with 22 letters to a long-standing friend, Mrs. Dunlop. Few of Chalmers’ correspondents are household-names today and the needs of the student and general reader would have been well met by the inclusion of a “Who’s Who” which would have placed them in the historical context.

Perhaps the strongest theme that runs through the letters and which makes their new availability most timely, is the need of each Christian to experience saving faith and to seek to prepare himself for the moment of death. It is likely that very few letters are written on this theme today.

There are also lighter moments, for Chalmers was by no means the dour Presbyterian of caricature. A group of letters addressed to William Wilberforce includes several concerned with
helping to arrange a tour of Scotland for the reformer and his family. This did not in the end materialise but later we find Chalmers successfully planning a similar itinerary for the French historian of the Reformation, Merle d’Aubigné.

J.B.D.


The remarkable ministry exercised by F. B. Meyer over nearly sixty years in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, is vividly portrayed in this “first chronological account of his life”. Meyer was to become one of the foremost Baptist preachers and writers of his day. He held pastorates in York, Leicester and London which, under God’s hand, prospered, and was notably successful in his evangelistic and social work amongst the poorer classes. During the early days of the Keswick convention, at which he preached on many occasions, his influence was considerable, and he undertook worldwide preaching tours from time to time. His written output extended to over 100 books, papers and pamphlets, some of his devotional works continuing in print today. Though not without controversy, particularly over his political views and actions, Meyer was first and foremost a man with a consuming desire to reach out to the masses, and the author shows how his efforts were blessed by God.

J.W.


The author is a research professor at the Presbyterian Theological College, Melbourne, Australia. This is one of the Evangelical Press Study Commentaries. Previous ones by Professor John Currid on Genesis and Leviticus have been very good. Quotations are primarily from the N.K.J.V. The contents are in the usual style of EP Study Commentaries, and include a list of abbreviations, and 20 pages of introductory matters.

The 280 page commentary on the text is in two parts, “Daniel’s Ministry in Babylon” and “Daniel’s Visions in Babylon”. These are subdivided into ten sub-sections covering the twelve chapters of Daniel. These each consist of a verse-by-verse commentary with a brief application section. Hebrew and Aramaic words are helpfully written phonetically so one does not have to be a scholar to follow the discussion. The final section consists of notes. Problems in Daniel are dealt with, using up-to-date linguistic and archaeological material. Print and layout are good.

Daniel is written in the deportation to Babylon in the 6th century BC. Professor Harman believes that. He rejects the idea, still widely held, that Daniel was written in the 2nd century BC by another author using Daniel’s name, to encourage the faithful Jews at the time of the persecutor, Antiochus Epiphanes.

He appears, however, to hold an Amillenial position on prophecy. Taking a typical comment, that on the image in chapter 2, “These considerations lead to the conclusion that interpretation should not attempt to identify specific kingdoms following the Babylonian, but should rather see a picture of world empires developing and coexisting until the final showdown”.

This approach is consistently followed with the other visions. Thus the prophecy of the seventy sevens of Daniel 9 is helpfully discussed, but ends thus, “Recognition has to be made of the peculiarities of apocalyptic as a genre, and the heavy use of symbolism that extends to numbers as well as beasts. This will result in not trying to compute exact chronological time frames for passages such as this.” Of “Messiah the Prince”, he then comments, “the most likely figure is Cyrus, who is called the Lord’s ‘messiah’.”

Our Lord’s reference to Daniel 9:27 in Matthew 24:15, “the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet”, is missed out and specifically doubted as Messianic. Daniel has some of
the clearest prophecies of our Lord Jesus in the Old Testament. Is it any wonder we feel upset with evangelicalism today?

E.M.


Several books have appeared in recent years on the Song of Solomon and on marriage – this book combines both and is therefore refreshingly different. The author, an American Presbyterian, explains that his book is not another “how to” manual on marriage, nor is it a full-length, verse-by-verse commentary on the Song of Solomon. Rather, his aim is “to equip you to comprehend the wisdom which the Song of Songs offers regarding various aspects of romantic love, marriage and human sexuality”. Selvaggio wrote this book as “a helpful guide for those who are contemplating marriage and for those who are already married”. The author uses Song 2:7 to write about maturity and purity in marriage then, using Song 8:6-7, he affirms that married love is exclusive, enduring and priceless. The author explores other aspects of love, within marriage, from a variety of passages in the Song of Solomon as translated in the New International Version. The final chapter directs our thoughts to the marriage supper of the Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Selvaggio blends sound biblical teaching with pastoral wisdom. I pray that this book will be widely read in these days when we hear of Christian marriages breaking down.

S.K.E

**Where Reason Fails – papers read at the 2006 Westminster Conference.**
Available from Rev. J. F. Harris, 8 Back Knowl Road, Mirfield, West Yorkshire WF14 9SA. pp. 136, paperback. £5.95 inc. UK postage.

The six papers in this slim volume deal with John Owen on the Trinity, Thomas Cranmer, the Azusa Street phenomenon from which the Pentecostal movement is usually dated, the Puritan doctrine of the atonement, when is a war a just war? and William Tyndale. I especially enjoyed reading Gordon Murray on Cranmer, Stanley Jebb on Azusa Street and Philip Arthur on Tyndale. Pastor Arthur states that 80% of the Authorised Version of the Bible comes directly from Tyndale’s translation. You may need a dictionary handy when reading some of the papers!

The lecturers, besides those already mentioned, Robert Letham, Gary Williams and Kenneth Brownell show the relevance of their subjects for 21st century believers. The references at the end of each paper reveal the careful research behind each lecture.

S.K.E.


This is a book of 14 sermons, garnered from a lifetime of parish ministry in Scotland. The foreword, by Howard Marshall of Aberdeen University, speaks of the Rev. David Wright as a gifted preacher who is lucid, interesting, relevant to the needs of the people and, above all, firmly based on God’s Word. It is not surprising that a Scottish Kirk reviewer of his sermons said that they were too exclusively evangelical.

The sermons, carefully prepared and researched, are logical and doctrinal, and broadly cover the Christian Year and special events. The author’s preface says how he found his own method of free delivery by accidentally leaving his sermon notes at home when a young preacher. He found that reliance on the Holy Spirit after careful and proper preparation, gave great freedom. He always “soaked” his sermons in prayer. Each must preach as fits him, but I would heartily recommend his method.

On page 15 should not “degree” be “decree”, and on page 17 it would seem to me that “jibbet” should be “gibbet”? The A.V. is used throughout.

E.M.

The opening comment, “Why write a book on the law – because of the Gospel?”, is a fitting summary of this book. The content is made up of thoughts on the Decalogue with special emphasis on today’s society.

Chapter One questions the need for the Ten Commandments in the 21st century Church and world simply to promote a biblical answer. It is interesting to note that “in the original Hebrew, the ten commandments are given to us in only one hundred and seventy-three words, whereas we are told there are almost 30,000 words in the European Union’s regulations on the importation of cauliflowers” (page 6). There are three brief chapters introducing the theme and then each following chapter deals with the 10 commandments in turn.

Several writers contribute to this book and they are listed at the beginning, showing which chapters they are involved with. In order to help, a thumbnail sketch ends each chapter as a brief overview on the subject.

The subjects are dealt with in a broad application. For example, the eighth (“Thou shalt not steal”) is not confined to physical theft but includes idleness and uncharitableness with goods and wealth.

The last chapter is a Study Guide asking questions about each commandment. A book to be read with the title in one’s heart.


“The wonder and glory of the Resurrection are far greater than we can ever conceive,” writes the author in the Foreword to this book, in which he meditates upon the events which took place between the Resurrection and Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ. Weaving his thoughts around the individuals and places associated with them, he explores what the Resurrection meant to the disciples, how they reacted to it, and how it relates to us as Christians.

Each of the fifteen short chapters is introduced by an appropriate passage of Scripture, using the English Standard Version of the Bible, and is followed by the author’s commentary and comments. This handsome little book would serve as a good companion at the bedside or in the study, where a few moments meditation will uplift the mind and bless the soul.

FROM THE SECRETARY’S DESK

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Peter King, Secretary