

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2017

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The Gospel Magazine

Wisdom and folly • The charge of sin universal • Grace and truth

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1766–2017

Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.

Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.

Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

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

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

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

Editor

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

The Secretary

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

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THE GOSPEL MAGAZINE

Incorporating the Protestant Beacon and the British Protestant

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EDITORIAL

IT is necessary to begin with an apology for the late publication of this first edition of the year. What ought to have been ready by the beginning of December was not prepared until the new year. There is always much to do, and on this occasion other matters took priority.

To say that ours is a godless age is to repeat a complaint that has been made ever since man began to call upon the name of the LORD, Genesis 4. In those days there was a very clear distinction between the godly and the ungodly; parenthood. Those who were descended from Cain were wicked, and those who were descended from Seth had the hope of redemption through the promised seed. As the years went on, that clear distinction became more personal. Job seems to have been one who knew the Lord in spite of the general godlessness of his age. Melchizedek is another who knew the Lord, when few others seem to have done so.

Even when God called a man, Abram, and made of him a great nation, godlessness was ever present. Of the sons of Isaac, one had the hope, the other did not. Of the sons of Jacob, some seem to have been more godly than others. When the Israelites were

brought to the mount of the Lord, to receive his commandments, many rebelled. Godlessness was their standard position, and nothing, it seems, could keep them from it, not even the thundering and smoking of the mountain, nor the very near and terrifying presence of the Lord God.

The days of the judges show how easily the nation fell into godless ways, and the subsequent history under the kings, with the division of the kingdom and all the sins of the north, shows that there is only one reason why the whole of mankind, without exception, does not fall so far from God as to be worthy only of destruction. That reason is grace. It was grace that preserved a remnant, and it was grace that sent the prophets. It was grace that raised up a Hezekiah, a Josiah, a Samson and a Debora. It was grace that brought the exile, and it was grace that ended it. It was grace that brought forth the Lord Jesus Christ when the appointed time came. It was grace that called the apostles, and caused them to be eye-witnesses to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was grace that prospered the preaching of the gospel throughout the world.

The world has no idea just how gracious

God is. The Apostle Peter explains the world's attitude to grace. 'There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation' (2 Peter 3:3-4). He then shows us the true nature of grace. 'The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance' (v.9). It is true that Martin Luther disliked the second half of that verse, and was willing to deny that Peter wrote the Epistle, on the ground that such a sentiment was unworthy of an apostle. We, however, should see the grace of the Lord here.

'If there is a God,' say some, 'Why does he not intervene to end wars and disease, to end suffering and bring peace?' Such attitudes make two fundamental mistakes.

The first is that there is a serious error regarding the true nature of God. Those who believe it is God's role to take away all hurt fail to consider that it is his nature first to deal with sin. Sin is more offensive to God than physical and emotional suffering is hurtful to us. We fear and detest suffering; God abhors all sin. We have little power to deal with suffering; God has absolute power and authority to deal with sin. Those who look to God to take away suffering ought first to seek him to deal with their sin.

The second error here is to consider that the fulness of joy is to be had on this earth and in this life. The Psalmist wrote, 'Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore' (Psalm 16:11). 'We according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness' (2 Peter 3:13). Our hope is not confined to this present age, and to this corrupt world, but to the future age, and to the incorruptible world to come. This is a vale of tears, and we pass through it in the knowledge that Canaan

awaits on the other side of Jordan. A little more suffering, a little more trouble from our enemies, the exercising of our faith for a few more miles, and we shall at last see the defeat of our final enemy, death, and shall stand on the other side of Jordan.

In the mean time, what witness shall we present to this godless age? True religion is at a very low ebb. There is hardly even the semblance of religiosity in people. False religions abound in our land, even if the number of adherents is low. False philosophies are popular, and lifestyles are arranged according to worldly thinking. It is to be feared that among some Christians the underlying motive is little different. Being a Christian, some think, is to take on an important addition to oneself, to become complete. The idea that in true religion we become new creatures through our being regenerate in the Lord Jesus Christ is alien. People do not want to become new creatures. They want to become better old creatures, so they can live longer and more healthily, and enjoy the pleasures of this world.

What witness shall we present to this godless age? When true religion is revived in our nation (as we pray by God's grace and mercy it shall be) what will a future generation say of us? Will they look back on us with thankfulness, that we stood as faithful witnesses in a mass of worldliness? Will they rejoice in our solid grasp of gospel truth, and our faithful proclamation of the same? Will they remember us as men and women of prayer and piety? Or will they not remember us at all, or look back in sorrow at the contribution we made to the general decline in religion through our inability to be separate from the world?

If we are to maintain a faithful witness we must learn to depend on the grace of God, a grace so glorious that it manifested itself in the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ, in his perfect life, in his atoning death, in his glorious resurrection, and in his triumphal ascension into heaven. Do you depend on grace? Oh that we might learn to do so!¶

WISDOM AND FOLLY

THE EDITOR

A SERMON ON MATTHEW 25:1-13

THE parable of the wise and foolish virgins is easy to understand. Christ explains the meaning in v.13; he exhorts his hearers to be ready for the day of his appearing.

The aspect of this parable which has most significance for us concerns the difference between the wise virgins and the foolish virgins. Given that the wise went into the feast but the foolish were shut out completely, and given that the difference between them might appear to be very small indeed, it is surely of great importance for us to give careful consideration to the difference. Though the difference might have been small, the effect could not have been greater.

In order that we may better clear the way to seeing what is being taught here, we begin by asking what these virgins had in common, then by asking in what they differed, before finally considering the teaching.

1. What the virgins had in common

i. *They all expected the bridegroom.* Just how they knew to expect him is not stated; given the verdict of the bridegroom on the foolish virgins, v.12, it seems best to take this as being the result of a general invitation, rather than a specific one. Weddings are joyous occasions, and no doubt the bridegroom was a respected and influential local, who was worthy to be honoured. To be ready to welcome him to the marriage feast would have been an honour in itself, as well as a joy, and none for whom this was an appropriate action would have willingly absented themselves.

In this respect both the wise and the foolish virgins may be likened to those who, hearing the gospel, are drawn to it. Outwardly, if not inwardly, they are moved, and see that in the word of life is much to be

desired. They are drawn to Christ, the heavenly Bridegroom, and they gain a desire to see him.

ii. *They had all brought their lamps.* The significance of this is that all knew the bridegroom would come after the sun had set. None expected him during daylight hours. They had some notion of when he would come, although not enough to be able to put off their arrival at the welcoming place until a later hour. That they brought lamps indicates an association between light and joy; they would light his way to the feast.

In this respect both the wise and the foolish virgins may be likened to those who possess at least a superficial understanding of the Christian faith. They know that faith in Christ is the only proper response to the preaching of the gospel, with repentance. They desire to show their good works, as evidences of their faith. To all who observe only outwardly, both are true believers.

iii. *They all slumbered and slept.* The delay in the bridegroom's arrival had a natural effect on those virgins; they all fell asleep.

In this respect both the wise and the foolish virgins may be likened to those who, coming to the end of their allotted years, fall into the sleep of death, into which almost all will fall before Christ returns. These slept awaiting the bridegroom's coming; we expect to die before Christ comes in power and glory, to judge the quick and the dead.

iv. *They all went out to meet him.* At his coming, his herald awoke the slumbering virgins. They all arose to go out and meet him. The one for whom they had waited was at last near to hand. What joy this must have given them! Their wait was over, and their joy was about to begin.

In this respect both the wise and the foolish virgins may be likened to those who shall arise at the resurrection at the end of the age; when all shall stand once more on this earth, the sea giving up her dead, and all being prepared to see the conquering Lord.

v. *They all desired to go into the feast.* This is shown by the behaviour of the foolish virgins, who, having come late and found the door shut, did not just walk away but knocked and called for entry. They had a real expectation of going into the feast, but it would prove to be an expectation built on a false hope.

So much, then, for the things they had in common. These items appear to cover all the important aspects of their story, and yet it is by the differences that their various hopes stand or fall.

2. What divided the virgins

i. *The foolish took no spare oil, but the wise did.* It would seem that we should understand this of the design of lamps, which contained two spaces or reservoirs. One space was to supply oil to the wick, and the other was a reservoir from which the first could be replenished. It was not as though only the wise virgins had brought flasks of spare oil; outwardly, both groups brought exactly the same thing. The difference lay within; one group had lamps where both spaces were full of oil, whereas the other had lamps where only the immediate burning chamber was filled with oil; there was nothing spare.

In this respect the wise virgins may be likened to those who daily feed on the word of God, who give themselves to prayer, and to the study of Scripture, and who depend on the Lord for fresh supplies of grace. The foolish virgins may be likened to those whose faith is second-hand; it is a borrowed faith, and not their own. They read, not to feed their souls, but to be able to give the appearance of study and knowledge. They pray, not because they would come before the throne of grace, but because only troubles will drive them to their knees when all else has

failed. They produce works of faith, not because they are motivated by faith and love, but because they feel only a burden of duty to do so. In short, they are false professors. They are like the Gibeonites who ‘took old sacks upon their asses, and wine bottles, old and rent, and bound up; and old shoes and clouted upon their feet, and old garments upon them; and the bread of their provision was dry and mouldy’ (Joshua 9:4–5). These deceived Joshua and the elders of Israel, passing themselves off as something very different from what they really were. So do those who burn only the immediate oil, but who make no provision to lay in store any additional supplies.

ii. *The foolish believed the wise could spare some of their oil.* This is how the false professor lives. He borrows freely from the experiences of the true children of God. He uses their vocabulary, speaking of things of which he knows nothing personally, but passing himself off as one who has made a full study of matters. He uses their experiences, claiming things in which he has no part, but allowing others to gain the impression that he has been in the lions’ den, or been cast adrift on the open sea, or been fed with manna from heaven. It is not always altogether hypocrisy; how often does he feel a stirring within, and believes he actually hears the voice of Christ, or sees something of his glory? Yet these things make no lasting impression on him, because there is no root beneath him, no depth of earth.

iii. *The wise were known to the bridegroom but the foolish were not.* This will be the final test. In the day of judgment Christ will call his own to himself. He will divide the sheep from the goats. If that seems a strange division, know that, in many parts of the world sheep are very much more goat-like than in our country. Only the shepherd can say with certainty which is which. Only his judgment is trustworthy.

There will be many who believe that, because they have been among the sheep so long, they are now indistinguishable from

them. The shepherd, however, knows the truth, and because the sheep are precious to him, he will not hesitate to divide. How many who claim to possess the hope of Israel, and who look up, believing their redemption draweth nigh, will yet be bitterly disappointed when Christ comes, because they will be found strangers in his sight?

How, then, may we know ourselves, as Christ knows us?

3. What it means to have oil in our vessels as well as in our lamps

i. It means to possess both parts of justification.

a) *There is an inward and secret justification,* known to those who have it. It is the knowledge of forgiveness: that the burden of our sins has been taken off through the grace of God in Christ. It is the knowledge of true peace: that peace which passeth all understanding. The inward and secret part of justification is that testimony God gives to his own that they are his. It is the sealing of the Spirit, and it is that of which the apostle speaks, when he says, ‘The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God’ (Romans 8:16). It is the having of ‘a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it’ (Revelation 2:17). This is the part of justification by which the Apostle Paul could say, ‘For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day’ (2 Timothy 1:12).

The grace, or blessing, of this inward and secret justification is that it causes the individual to know without question that their sins have been forgiven and that they are now right with God. There is no longer any fear in them, for they are instead filled with love. Furthermore, this love is very far removed from a mere emotion (although it does fill us with great joy and gladness at the thought of the Lord Jesus Christ). Rather, it is a meaningful change within us, whereby we now

delight in the law of God after the inward man. The doing of righteousness is now natural to us, because we are dead to sin and alive in Christ.

Since these things are quite contrary to fallen human nature they are unmistakable in them who have them. There is no doubt about this inner and secret justification; it is an evidence to us that we are the children of God.

b) *There is an outward and visible justification,* known by those who see it in the justified sinner. It is, in a word, the works of faith, those fruits of grace of which the Apostle lists many in Galatians 5:22–23. If the inward change described above has truly taken place, it is not possible that such a change should not manifest itself. Such works cannot be the meritorious cause of grace, but are the fruits of it. They are, as one old writer put it, the train and attendants who follow after the bride; first comes faith, then come works as evidences of faith.

Our Lord Jesus Christ said of such works, ‘Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven’ (Matthew 5:16). This is one of the purposes of good works, to act as witnesses to those around us that we are indeed the children of God. The evidence of a life transformed by grace acts as a powerful testimony on the consciences of the wicked. When our Lord Jesus says, ‘that they may ... glorify your Father which is in heaven’, he does not mean that they will necessarily give thanks to God for our salvation, but that they will glorify God by acknowledging the change that has come upon us.

Unless we can show forth the outward and visible part of justification we have no sure ground for believing that we possess the inward and secret part. If we possess the inward and secret part this must show itself in good works, and cannot do otherwise. To possess the first without the second is to possess dead faith. To possess the second without the first is hypocrisy.

ii. It means using the means of grace publicly and privately.

a) *The public use of the means of grace* is attending public worship and taking part in prayer and praise, in giving due attention to sermons, and in regular attendance at the Lord's Table. All of these things are undertaken by all who would grow in grace, knowledge and love.

Of course, it is possible to attend public worship, to join in prayer and praise, and to listen to sermons in such a way as to derive no benefit. Some love the praise of men, or the tradition of meeting in a particular building, or the social pleasure of being among friends. Some join in worship because they like the tunes, or believe they have the gift of singing and wish to show it off. Some listen to sermons because they feel they could teach the preacher a thing or two, and are adept at deflecting the arrows of the sermon from their own hearts and consciences onto the perceived sins of others. Some attend the Lord's Table in mistaken beliefs about the means of grace, while others never attend because they have never learned how to benefit from so doing.

Where, however, we come in a right spirit, and with a true desire to worship the Lord, and in the knowledge that we need to hear the word of life, then the public means of grace become very precious to us. Let us use them as they are given, that we may show forth our love for the Lord and give him the praise due to his name, while we feed upon him and his word in our hearts by faith.

b) *The private use of the means of grace* involves both secret prayer and the reading of Scripture. It must also involve the engaging of the heart in using the public means, so that we do not play the hypocrite. If we do not use the private means, we may be likened to someone who thinks he can survive on one or two good meals in a week, and eat almost nothing for the rest of it. Regular times of prayer and Bible reading, with suitable meditation on what we read, are necessary if

we would maintain our walk with the Lord. This is the way of wisdom, that we use those means which our heavenly Father has graciously condescended to grant us. We would be poor servants who did not receive with joy what our Lord gives.

It may seem to some that the distinction is not so important as it is sometimes argued. After all, we are, they claim, all different, and what suits one does not necessarily suit all. Some are good at prayer, and some are able to understand what they read; others, it is argued, are not.

By nature none are. By nature none can pray or do pray. By nature none understand the Scriptures, for they are spiritually discerned. The only way a person comes to pray and to love the word of God is through being converted, and being given that desire to know the Lord.

As to the importance of the matter, note the consequences for the wise and the foolish virgins. In so many respects they appeared to be the same, and the distinctions appeared to be very small. Yet the effect of those distinctions would not have been greater. For want of oil in their lamps the foolish virgins were shut out of the marriage feast. For the lack of wisdom to bring a supply of oil when they went out to welcome the bridegroom, they found the door shut against them, and those terrible words, 'Verily, I say unto you, I know you not.' 'Them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed' (1 Samuel 2:30). There are many who will find that, for all their outward appearance of faithfulness and service, they have esteemed the Lord but lightly, even dishonoured him. He knows the difference, and he judges after the heart, and not after the sight of the eyes. The Lord is not deceived, and in the end our true condition will become apparent. Let us learn from the foolish virgins to have in store a plentiful supply of oil, that our lamps do not go out as we await the coming of the heavenly Bridegroom.¶

JUST A TOUCH

CARINE MACKENZIE

HAVE you ever played a game when you are blindfolded and have to identify an object, just by feeling it—perhaps an orange or a clothes peg or a watch? Sometimes it is easy to guess what the object is without seeing it, but not always.

Blind people use their sense of touch for reading. Louis Braille who himself was blind, developed a system of raised dots to represent each letter of the alphabet. A blind person can read a page by running his fingers along the line.

A touch is such a comforting thing too—holding a hand or giving a hug or even cuddling a soft toy.

Jesus' touch was comforting and consoling but also healing. Many people were healed by a touch from his hand. A leper came to Jesus one day and said, 'Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean' (Matthew 8:2). Jesus put out his hand and touched him and said 'I will: be thou clean.' Immediately the man was healed of his leprosy.

Peter's mother-in-law was lying in bed with a serious fever. Jesus touched her hand and the fever left her (Matthew 8:15). She was able to get up and work in the house.

Jesus touched the eyes of some blind men and they were and they were able to see (Matthew 9:29).

A lady who had been sick for twelve years heard of Jesus' power to heal. If I could just touch the hem of his garment, she thought, I believe I would be healed. She came up behind him in the crowd and touched his clothes and was immediately healed. 'Who touched me?' asked Jesus. He knew someone had been healed. The woman came forward trembling and confessed. Jesus commended her for her faith.

Many others came to Jesus in faith seeking to be healed. They wanted to touch him—even just the edge of his garment. As many as touched him were made whole (Mark 6:56).

Jesus also touched little children to bless them. The disciples were annoyed when the little ones were brought to Jesus, but Jesus rebuked them. 'Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God' (Luke 18:16). Jesus took the children in his arms and blessed them.

When the apostle John was an old man on the island of Patmos, he was given an amazing vision or revelation from God. He saw a figure—one like unto the Son of man, the Lord Jesus Christ—in a long garment with a golden girdle. His appearance was so dazzling and awe-inspiring that John fell down at his feet as dead. The Lord laid his right hand on him and comforted him. 'Fear not; I am the first and the last' (Revelation 1:17). The Lord then gave John the instruction to write down all the things which he had seen and the things that the Lord would reveal to him. John wrote the amazing book of Revelation which is the last book in the Bible.

When Jesus touched a sick person he brought healing. We have a grave sickness called sin which needs Jesus to intervene. If Jesus touches our life with his grace, he brings healing of soul. Jesus came to this earth to live and die for sinners. His finished work deals with the sin of his people who look to him in faith. Our sickness is caused by our sin but the blood of Jesus Christ, God's son cleanses us from all sin.

BIBLE SEARCH

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

1. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too _____ for me (Psalm 139:5–6).
2. Saul went home to Gibeah; and there went with him a band of men, whose _____ God had touched (1 Samuel 10:26)
3. So Christ was offered _____ to bear the sins of many (Hebrews 9:28).
4. He cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the _____ of his finger in water, and cool my tongue (Luke 16:24)
5. And besought him that they might _____ touch the hem of his garment: and as many as touched were made perfectly whole (Matthew 14:36).
6. Now as he was speaking with me, I was in a deep sleep on my face toward the ground: but he touched me and set me _____ (Daniel 8:18).
7. Jesus ... turned him about in the press, and said, Who touched my _____ (Mark 5:30).
8. Then the LORD put forth his _____, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth (Jeremiah 1:9).
9. And Jesus answered and said, Suffer ye thus far. And he touched his _____, and healed him. (Luke 22:51).
10. Touch not mine anointed, and _____ my prophets no harm (Psalm 105:15).
11. And he took him aside from the _____, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spit, and touched his tongue (Mark 7:33).
12. Then touched he their _____, saying, According to your faith be it unto you (Matthew 9:29).

_____?

STUDIES IN EZEKIEL

P KING (HAILSHAM)

Chapter 44

DO NOT FORSAKE MY ORDINANCES

THIS chapter is exceptionally difficult to unravel. The prince seems to be the embodiment of power and authority, but in the past kings of Israel did not submit to God. In this new Church order God will reign supreme, with no earthly ruler coming between the people and their Lord. Corruption had often come through the leadership, but now safeguards must be put in place to prevent this, therefore the gate is closed (v.2) and no one allowed in. In the New Testament Church there is no place for the Christian's ideas in worship, only those decreed by God himself are acceptable, and this chapter goes on to describe them using Old Testament order as a picture.

The priesthood in old Israel was charged with the spiritual needs of the nation and it was through their lax ways error came to the people. The toleration of false gods instead of Jehovah (vv.7–9) brought God's anger on the congregation. This must not be allowed to happen in the Messianic age, so warnings are given about unsuitable leaders in spiritual matters. To have unfaithful leaders is as bad as having unbelievers in the church, for the result will be chaos and self-destruction.

Holiness and commitment is the hallmark of the New Testament church, both of which had been allowed to decline in Judah. A truly spiritual priesthood (priesthood of all believers) is the new order and the prophet proceeds to use the former ceremonies as symbols for

the future. The wearing of linen garments emphasises cleanliness and purity, and not to shave the head as a sign of mourning, nor let the hair grow long as unfit for active service, all add up to demonstrate the need for inner holiness, and not just outward form. Holiness to the Lord should be in every part of life, especially public service and worship.

Lessons for today

- a. Ancient Israel had an outward holiness but often had no understanding of inner truth. The Christian must be worthy of his profession.
- b. Justice and law giving centred around the monarch of the day after Israel rejected Jehovah for a king (Saul). In the Church no one is superior to another, all being sinners and equals. The Pastor is not the 'ruler' but the one chosen by God to guide the local fellowship.
- c. A Christian's sins are highlighted because of his position in society, and Satan enjoys pointing out mistakes to the world!
- d. The Christian must endeavour to live a pure life.
- e. Christians are a good influence on society so long as they are faithful to Divine law.

**But be ye doers of the word,
and not hearers only, deceiving
your own selves.**

TO BE CONTINUED

CHRIST AND BELIAL

PART I

BY THE REV P LOS

Supplied by A W DE LANGE (Scherpenzeel, The Netherlands)

The Rev P Los was a Reformed minister at the end of the nineteenth century in Leiden. After ministering subsequently in two denominations he became an independent minister. He is particularly known for his booklets.

SINCE the moment that man by willing apostasy from God flung himself into the jaws of misery, two different powers have revealed themselves on earth. Both contest each other, since the beginning about the victory. From there wars and rumours of wars are born. This contest, began in paradise, is continued until this moment and shall not cease until one of the two powers is subdued forever.

The heathen, who live without the revelation of the Word of God, have, created in them, a knowledge of a great and holy Being, who made the world and everything therein. That is why they have bow down to the sun, moon, wood and stone. But they also have created in them a knowledge about good and evil. That is why in their ignorance they imagine two spirits or gods, one as the maker of good and the other as the maker of evil, and because of that they have great respect of the good and for the evil spirit.

Alas! They worship an unknown God and because they miss the light of revelation they have no knowledge of the actual origin of all things and grope thus like the blind to the wall.

What is it but an unspeakable privilege when we are favoured by our dear Bible that causes a light to shine in the darkness

and chaos of confusion, and lets us see and know these matters in their true nature and being. If we go back to the time that our native country, covered by the sea, first was inhabited by Frisians and Bataves, than we see that we are born from heathens and that our ancestors bowed themselves before wood and stone. It could not be otherwise, or we, remembering this, even superficially, should wonder upon God's mercies, who opened our eye to what the blind heathen miss.

But if we, thinking about this, look around us, then we should wonder whether those blind heathen, who grope in the dark, do not excel many nominal Christians, who confess and yet are unknown to both powers who contest each other.

Many who know things to a very low extent, and certainly, the heathens in Athens, who bowed themselves before an unknown God, when Paul came there to place the light of the Gospel on the candlestick, excelled in religion above many others, who are privileged to possess that Book, that excels all other books, and alone is able to make man known his actual state and status to that high Being, who opened a way to come to that wonderful Light that destroys all darkness and wipes away every haze.

TO BE CONTINUED

A SERMON ON MATTHEW 6:24–34, PART 3

MARTIN LUTHER

27. In like manner it is with preaching and all our affairs. God gives us the wool, and he grows the sheep; but it is not at once cloth, we must labour to make it into cloth; when it is cloth, it does not at once become a coat; and so God does with all things—he cares for us, but we must toil and work. We have plenty of examples of this before our eyes, and God relates especially two here that should really make us blush with shame, namely, those of the birds and the lilies in the field. Pointing to the birds he says, 'Behold the birds of the heaven, that they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feedeth them.'

28. As if the Lord would say: You have never yet seen a bird with a sickle, with which it harvested and gathered into barns; yea, the birds do not labour like we; and still they are nourished. By this the Lord does not however teach that we are to be idle; but he tries by this example to take all anxiety from us. For a bird cannot do the work of a farmer as we do; yet, it is not free from labour, but it does the work for which it was created, namely, it bears its young, feeds them and sings to our Lord God a little song for the privilege of doing this. Had God imposed more labour upon it, then it would have done more. Early in the morning it rises, sits upon a twig and sings a song it has learned, while it knows not where to obtain its food, and yet it is not worried as to where to get its breakfast. Later, when it is hungry, it flies away and seeks a grain of corn, where God stored one away for it, of which it never thought while singing, when it had cause enough to be anxious about its food. Ay, shame on you now, that the little birds are more pious and believing than you; they are happy and sing with joy

and know not whether they have anything to eat.

29. This parable is constantly taught to our great and burning shame, that we cannot do as much as the birds. A Christian should be ashamed before a little bird that knows an art it never acquired from a teacher. When in the spring of the year, while the birds sing the most beautifully, you say to one: How canst thou sing so joyfully, thou hast not yet any grain in thy barn? It would thus mock you. It is a powerful example and should truly give offence to us and stir us to trust God more than we do. Therefore he concludes with a penetrating passage, and asks, 'Are not ye of much more value than they?'

30. Is it not a great shame that the Lord makes and presents to us the birds as our teachers, that we should first learn from them? Shame on thee, thou loathsome, infamous unbelief! The birds do what they are required to do; but we not. In Genesis 1:28 we have a command that we are to be lords over all God's creatures; and the birds are here our lords in teaching us wisdom. Away with godless unbelief! God makes us to be fools and places the birds before us, to be our teachers and rule us, in that they only point out how we serve mammon and forsake the true and faithful God. Now follows the other example of the flowers in the field, by which the Lord encourages us not to worry about our raiment; and it reads thus: 'And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit unto the measure of his life? And why are ye anxious concerning raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they toil not, neither do they spin: yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God doth so clothe

the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?’

31. As if to say, your life is not yours, nor is your body, you cannot make it one cubit longer or shorter; neither be anxious as to how you are to clothe yourself. Behold the flowers of the field how they are adorned and clothed, neither do they anything to that end; they neither spin nor work, yet they are beautifully clothed.

32. By this illustration the Lord again does not wish to have us cease to sew and work, but we should labour, spin and sew, and not be overanxious and worry. The evil we have is our toil; will we in addition worry, then we do like the fools; for it is enough that each day has its own evil. It seems to me, this is disdain that is commanded, that the flowers stand there and make us blush and become our teachers. Thank you, flowers, you, who are to be devoured by the cows! God has exalted you very highly, that you become our masters and teachers. Shame, that this earth bears us! Is it an honour for us? I do not know. We must here confess—that the most insignificant flower, that the cattle tread under foot, should become our teacher, are we not fine people? I think so. Now Christ places alongside of this the richest and most powerful king, Solomon, who was clothed in the most costly manner in purple and gold, whose glory was not to be compared with that of the flowers, 1 Kings 10. Is it not remarkable that the adornment of the flowers in the field should be esteemed higher than all the precious stones, gold and silver?

33. However, we are so blind that we do not see what God designs thereby and what he means. The flower stands there that we should see it, it strikes us and says: If thou hadst the adornment of the whole world even then thou wouldst not be equal to me,

who stand here, and am not the least worried whence this adornment comes to me. I do not however concern myself about that, here I stand alone and do nothing and although thou art beautifully adorned, thou art still sickly and servest impotent mammon; I however am fresh and beautiful and serve the true and righteous God. Behold, what a loathsome, vicious thing is unbelief!

34. These are two fine and powerful examples of the birds and the lilies. The birds teach us a lesson as to our daily food; the flowers as to our raiment. And in the whole New Testament our shame is no where so disclosed and held to view, as just in this Gospel. But they are few who understand it. From these examples and parables the Lord now concludes and says: ‘Be not therefore anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink! or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first his kingdom and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Be not therefore anxious for the morrow; for the morrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.’

35. Now the sum of this Gospel is: Christians should not worry about what they are to eat; God provides for them before they think of their need; but they are to labour, that is commanded them. But what the kingdom of God and his righteousness are, would require too much time to discuss, you have often heard about them, if you have been attentive. This is now enough on to-day’s Gospel. May God grant us grace that some day we may also even put it into practice! May the Gospel remain not only in our ears and on our tongues, but come into our hearts and break forth fresh into loving deeds!¶

The righteous man hath grace beyond expression. The hypocrite hath expression beyond grace.

Ralph Venning

LEISURE

A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

K. J. GAINES (Caversham)

Read Ecclesiastes 3:1–11, 1 Corinthians 10:22–33

THE Bible has little to say about leisure as a distinct concept. Nonetheless there is a wealth of background teaching from which we conclude that liberty is not licence. Thus Paul says, ‘All things are lawful for me but not all things are helpful: all things are lawful for me but not all things edify (build up).’ He is dealing mainly with eating and drinking but in chapters 8 and 9 touches on other matters. It is obvious that eating and drinking, although necessary for life, was then, as now (and since soon after man was made), often considered a leisure activity.

As the word LEISURE does not occur in the Bible let us see how it is defined in the dictionary:—time spent free from employment, freedom from occupation, respite from usual work. Interestingly there are scriptural references similar to these. In Leviticus 23 five times in verses 8, 21, 25, 35 and 36 the Children of Israel are told, ‘Ye shall do no servile work.’ This was in relation to the Feast of Passover, the Feast of Weeks, the Feast of Trumpets and the Feast of Tabernacles.

We sometimes hear about the ‘Protestant work ethic’ and of course it is scriptural principal that, since the fall of man, by the sweat of your brow you shall earn your bread. However, we must not imagine that even in Bible times, before the advent of machinery, life was just relentless drudgery. It appears that for most people there were peaks and troughs in the work cycle. As well as having the ordained Sabbath rest on one day in seven, there were also ordained specific days of ease and feasting. Leviticus 23 shows the feasts were enjoined on the people. Some

feasts were sparse and of short duration but some, for example the Feast of Tabernacles were lengthy celebrations. How good and gracious is our God! He not only ordained one day’s rest in seven but he ordained holidays as well—‘Holy Convocations’ some of these feasts were called. ‘Holiday’ is derived from ‘Holy day’ (a medieval concept usually to commemorate a ‘saint’). Here in the Old Testament we see provision for what we might today call leisure.

There was possibly more spare time available (particularly for men) than we imagine. That could largely account for why there was such waywardness—for the old adage, that the devil makes work for idle hands, was true then as now. The Bible is silent as to how the long evenings were spent. There may have been a little story telling, perhaps a little carving or craft work by the dim rush lights until sleep overtook them—we don’t know! Yes, they were hard times but God saw to it that there were times of respite (leisure) in addition to the Sabbath. In Nehemiah 8 we find that the Feast of Tabernacles had not been kept from the time of Joshua to Ezra and there is great mirth and jubilation when, after the reading of the law demanded by the people, this feast is rediscovered. Throughout the Old Testament we see the development of art and craft work, needlework, silver and gold trinkets etc. ‘Apples of gold in pictures of silver (Proverbs 25:11) is thought by some to have been a work of art. Back in Genesis 4:19–21 we read of Jubal being the inventor of the harp and the organ.

In our Lord’s time on earth we do not read

much about leisure as such. However, Feasts were observed and celebrations called for as at the return of the prodigal son. Jesus's first miracle was at a wedding celebration. Why was it that such crowds followed Jesus when our puritanical streak might suggest that they ought to be at work? We must realise that the whole economy was structured differently. Life was not lived at the frantic pace of today. Although life today is easier in some respects it is also much more hectic and frantic. Even in the Lord's work we tend to rush about. Yes, the gospel is urgent but do we ever read of Jesus rushing or running anywhere? He even stayed another two days beyond Jordan (a precious spot for him where he was baptised) before returning to Bethany when Lazarus died. On another occasion he bid his disciples, 'Come ye yourselves apart and rest awhile.' Some of the frenetic activity in the Lord's name can be counter-productive and can be just as harmful as apathy. 'Fools rush in where angels fear to tread' is an old saying but is often true. However, as with many aspects of the Lord's work there are twin dangers: we can hurry and scurry and miss the obvious; or we can be over cautious and too relaxed so that nothing gets done. We need balance!

God has decreed one day's rest in seven and we can be thankful that in addition there are times available for leisure. This is God's bonus. Paul told Timothy, 'God gives us richly all things to enjoy' (1 Timothy 6:17). We are though accountable to God as to how we spend our time. There is a school of thought that suggests that Christians ought not to have hobbies and that every moment should be spent in witness and the Lord's work. Now such service needs complete men and women and we are better able to witness if we are fit, active and alert—leisure used to this end is a great blessing. God can and does use unwell people but he does not call us to make ourselves ill. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 6:19, 'Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit.' We need to care for that temple. I once heard

a well-known preacher say he would rather 'burn out than rust out'. Does not the temple of the Holy Spirit deserve better than that? There is another course that is neither burning out nor rusting out—what about maintenance? If you take your car, drive like mad up the motorway, never put oil in the engine and never lubricate, it will soon burn out. Neglect cleaning it and ensuring that all is well and it will soon rust out. A well maintained and serviced car will be of best use to its owner. Remember, you are not your own, you are bought with a price, so glorify God in your body, 1 Corinthians 6:19–20. (See also Romans 12:1). What is true of the body is also true of the mind.

So then the implications of leisure for Christians:

1. It can be RESTFUL.
2. It can be PURPOSEFUL
3. It must be LAWFUL

1. One cannot decide for another how their leisure should be used, or how much time to spend. Some people benefit from and are invigorated by RESTFUL pursuits—knitting, painting, writing, craft work etc. Some have marvellous times of meditation doing these things. This is not giving God second best nor is it a substitute for orderly devotion but it is a further opportunity for God to deal with us when relaxed.

2. Some like to be more PURPOSEFUL in their leisure time; walking, athletics, cycling gardening etc. I once found a dear old Christian man busy yet relaxed in his garden. He said, 'You know, Ken, this is what God intended us for—to tend a garden.' The less active should not derive too much comfort from Paul's words to Timothy (1 Timothy 4:8) 'Bodily exercise profits a little'. This may be better understood as for a little while in contrast to the exercise of godliness which is profitable for all things.

3. Our leisure pursuits must be LAWFUL. Paul seems to imply that whatever is not specifically sinful is lawful but may not

be edifying. Any pursuit is sinful if God is crowded out. Even a lawful pursuit could be a stumbling block to some. Beware lest somehow this liberty of yours becomes a stumbling block to those who are weak, 1 Corinthians 8:9. This is often thought of in the context of alcohol but it is more wide ranging than that. A round of golf may be very beneficial but what about the '19th hole'—the club house? In these days when there is little or no teaching on separation a good maxim is still: if the

Lord suddenly returned would he be pleased to find me here? So then we can serve God better if we are whole complete people taking advantage of the means for refreshment and invigoration.

The sorrows of the mind be banished from this place,
Religion never was designed to make our pleasures less.

Isaac Watts

THE CHARGE OF SIN UNIVERSAL

The Rev EDWARD COOPER (1770–1833)
Supplied by PETER MURCOTT (Douglas, Isle of Man)

'There is no difference: for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Romans 3:23

THESE words contain a most weighty and interesting statement—a statement, which requires every one of us to admit as true; otherwise it does not appear possible that we shall be saved. We must ever bear in mind that the gospel of Jesus Christ, by which alone we can be saved, comes to us as a remedy for sin. As with other remedies, no one will willingly apply it, who is not aware of the evil that it is designed to cure. 'They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick' (Mark 2:17) A man must feel his sickness before he will go to a doctor.

Gospel remedy

Now the evil for which the gospel provides a remedy is sin; and this must be felt before the remedy will be applied. It is because of this that so many people hear the gospel, but do not receive it. They seem to listen to it, but it makes no deep or lasting impression upon the heart. The reason is: they have never felt that they are sinners. When asked, they are

ready to make a sort of confession. They may say and own that they are sinners; but they do not feel themselves as such. They have never been condemned for sin in their own hearts, nor felt the sentence of death for their transgressions.

Where, then, is the wonder that, being in such a state, they should hear the gospel with comparative indifference? Nay, how is it possible that they should hear it otherwise? Not feeling the burden of sin, is it possible that they should value and accept the offer of deliverance from it? Not feeling the guilt of sin, is it possible that they should use the means provided for washing it away? No; there must first be a conviction of sin—a sense of guilt; a feeling of condemnation must lie at the bottom of real Christianity.

To produce, then, a conviction of sin in the hearts of his hearers must be one of the Minister's offices. While he preaches the gospel, he must endeavour first to wound, in order to lead them afterwards to the remedy.

And how can he attempt this with a greater probability of success than by setting before them the plain and clear declarations of Scripture on the subject, such as is the declaration in the text?

Paul, speaking by the Spirit of God, expressly says that there is no difference: for all have sinned, and have come short of the glory of God. These words declare as plainly as words can the guilt and condemnation of every child of Adam, which, if received into the heart as true, must produce conviction of sin.

I will endeavour, my brethren, by them to convince you of sin. Only let it not be supposed that I think of producing this effect in my own strength or power. I cannot convince you of sin. Conviction is the work of the Holy Spirit alone. Our Saviour promised that when the Spirit is come, he will reprove [or 'convict'] the world of sin (John 16:8). It is by the word that he begins and carries on this work in the heart. It is, then, in sole dependence on his power that I shall proceed. In considering this passage, let us attend to—

1. The charge here brought;
2. The persons against whom it is brought;
3. The extent in which it is brought

1. The charge here brought

The charge brought is that of having sinned. Fools make a mock of sin (Proverbs 14:9); and they do so as proof of their folly; for surely no one in his right mind would do so. Let us remember that John describes sin as the transgression of God's law (1 John 3:4). That holy, just and good law, in fact, is the mind and will of God himself. God is love. His nature is love. Consequently his law requires love. Love is the fulfilling of the law (Romans 10:13). To love God with all the heart, and our fellow human beings as ourselves is the essence of the law that God has prescribed (so Mark 12:29–31). This is the law, which he first gave to man. Happiness consists in the keeping of this law; and so long as we act in obedience and conformity to it, we fulfil the

purposes for which we were created. But to break this law is sin, which produces misery and ruin.

Cast Out

When some of the angels ceased to love and obey God, they sinned; and they were cast out of heaven. When Adam broke the commandment that was given to him, he sinned, and through his sin he was cast out of Paradise. We see in these two instances what sin is and what it has done. Surely there is nothing in this view of sin which might induce us to trifle with it. To charge a person with having sinned is no light accusation; for it is to charge him with being a transgressor of the good and holy law of his Creator. It is to charge him with the same conduct that cast out the fallen angels (see Jude 6).

Surely this is a solemn charge! Do we want other examples of the malignity of sin?—

- Why was the flood brought upon the inhabitants of the old world? Because they had sinned.
- Why was the fire rained down out of heaven upon the people of Sodom and Gomorrah? Because they had sinned.
- Why were the Egyptians desolated with plagues, and Pharaoh and his host overthrown in the Red Sea? Because they had sinned.

The Decisive Example

Or, to give one still more awful and decisive example on this subject. Why did the Son of God die on the cross? Why was the Lord of Life and Glory buffeted, reviled, scourged, crowned with thorns, crucified and slain? Because he had taken on himself the nature and the cause of sinners. Because he had put himself in the place of sinners, and had permitted himself to be charged with sin, even their sin (see 1 Corinthians 5:21).

It is here, my brethren, in the spectacle of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, suffering for sin, enduring the shame and the agony of the cross, that we may best see and learn the

meaning of the charge in the text. He admitted the charge, though he had not committed the act; and we see what the admission of it cost him. What, then, will it cost those who have committed the act, and cannot disprove the charge? However fools may now make a mock at sin; however lightly men may now esteem the transgression of God's law; yet doubtless to be charged with having sinned is a most weighty charge. It ought to fill those against whom it is preferred with the deepest apprehension and alarm. We now consider

2. The persons to whom it is brought

The charge is universal. It is brought against the whole human race. 'All have sinned!' All who live have sinned in Adam; for in Adam all die. Death, which is the wages of sin, has been passed upon all men, because they are all sinners in their own persons; and against them is the charge in the text preferred without any exception. When we call to mind its nature, we may possibly deem this to be a hard saying. Are all men charged with sin, the commission of which cast the angels out of Heaven, and Adam out of Paradise—nay, even the very admission of which brought the Son of God to the cross? Yes; my brethren, so says the text: 'There is no difference: for all have sinned.' They are not my words, but the words of the Holy Spirit. Only a few verses before the text, the Apostle had been showing that 'every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God' (Romans 3:19). And in the Epistle to the Galatians we find it expressly said that the Scripture hath concluded all under sin (Galatians 3:22)—agreeably with the declaration in another place that there is none righteous, no, not one (Romans 3:10).

Reason Struggles

But this is a truth against which nature and reason will struggle as long as they can. It is unpalatable to the pride of man, who will be disposed to ask 'What! Is there no difference?'

No difference between one man and another—between the righteous Abel and the wicked Cain, who slew him? Between the rebellious and obstinate Pharaoh and the meek and obedient Moses? Between the Jews, who crucified Christ, and the pious women who followed and ministered to him? Are they all equally guilty before God?

My brethren, in these questions two things, which in themselves are distinct and separate, are confounded together. In one sense, all these persons, whom we have named, are not alike. They have not all sinned in the same manner, in the same measure, and to the same degree. Here there is a difference, and a wide difference between them. But in another sense, in the sense spoken of in the text, they are all alike. They have all sinned; and here there is no difference. Though they may not be equally guilty, yet they are all guilty before God. The charge brought against them in the text is true to the extent it is intended to be brought. They have all sinned to the extent therein stated. For the further clearing of the subject, then, let us consider—

3. The extent of the charge here brought

It is contained in the concluding words of the text: 'For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.' This latter clause is immediately connected with the former, and serves to define and limit its meaning. 'All have sinned' and, by doing so, 'have come short of the glory of God'. They have not all sinned alike or equally, in the same way, or to the same degree; but they have all sinned and have come short of the glory of God. Now this expression may be understood as signifying two things—

1. To fall short of rendering to God that glory to which he is entitled

He expects and requires all his creatures to glorify him. He has created them for his glory: and when they fulfil that purpose, then

they do glorify him. Thus the heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork (Psalm 19:1). The power, the wisdom, and the goodness of Almighty God are seen in the various works of the creation. The regular movements of the heavenly bodies, the return of day and night, the succession of the seasons, the fruits of the earth, the birds of the air, the animals, the insects—all proclaim the glory of God, by clearly exhibiting the glorious perfections of him, who made, preserves, and sustains them all.

Man's chief purpose

What, then, was that end and purpose for which man was made? To love, obey and serve his Maker; to render to him, according to the powers and faculties conferred upon him, a moral, a spiritual service and obedience; to keep his holy law; and to love him with all the heart, and soul, and mind, and strength. This was the work for which man was created to perform; and in so doing, he would have rendered to God the glory which he required.

On the other hand, not to perform this work, assigned to him, would be to deprive God of his glory. It would dishonour him, by introducing disorder and confusion into all his works; as much as if the sun should decline to shine, or the moon should refuse to rise and set at his command. Of such a thing, they are not capable; for they have no power to disobey God's law. On the other hand, man, a living, rational, intelligent being, is not placed, like the other works of creation, under a law of necessity, which he cannot break. He is under a moral restraint, by which he ought to be kept in the path of duty. But his depraved will and evil inclinations lead him astray from duty, and teach him to find his pleasure in transgressing the law of his Creator. In so doing, he comes short of the glory of God. So far, then, to this extent, all have sinned. Every sin is a departure from duty, a coming short of the end to which man was created. Every sin, therefore, dishonours

God, and every sinner by his transgression tends to deprive him of his glory.

2. Coming short of the glory of God means the failing to obtain that glory which God originally designed for man.

Of this, there can be no question. All his powers and faculties fitted him for such an immortality; and had he continued holy and obedient, he would doubtless have been admitted to that eternal glory of which the Tree of Life in Paradise was a symbol and a pledge.

But by sin he fell short of that glory; in other words, he forfeited and lost it. Having been unwilling to glorify God, he could no longer expect to be glorified with him. The sin which had dishonoured God, shut out the sinner from his favour and presence. This was represented to Adam by the cherubims and the flaming sword, which turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life (Genesis 3:24). By this significant emblem, he was taught that by disobedience he had shut the gate of heaven against himself; that, through his transgression, he was deprived of a title to eternal life; that by having sinned, he was 'come short of the glory of God.' And so far then, to this extent, all have sinned. By sin they have forfeited eternal life, and have lost their hope of heaven. They have dishonoured God their Creator by their disobedience, and by so doing have excluded themselves from glory.

The full meaning

Here, then, we may now see the full meaning and extent of the Charge alleged in the text: 'All have sinned, and have come short of the glory of God.' Whatever may be the comparative degree of guilt between different persons:

- whether one may have sinned more flagrantly than another; or
- whether one may have sinned openly, and another secretly; or
- whether one may have done more injury to society than another

all those several points are nothing to the case. Notwithstanding these variations and degrees in their modes and measures of sin, yet in one respect 'there is no difference': all have sinned as to have come short of the glory of God. One sentence lies against them all. They have sinned, and have lost their hope to glory.

All have sinned

And this is the declaration of Scripture. This is the Word of the living God. Therefore it is true of us, brethren—all of us, every person here present, of rich or poor, of male or female, of old and young: 'We all have sinned, and have come short of the glory of God.' As Isaiah says: 'All we like sheep have gone astray: we have turned every one to his own way...' (Isaiah 53:6). Notice the expression 'every one to his own way'. Not all are alike, not all are in the same way; but every one has to his own way dishonoured God, and forfeited his favour. Do these words sound harsh in your ears? Does the sentence seem unjust? O my brethren, let me again remind you that the words are not mine. The sentence is one which God himself has declared—that all are guilty, and that every mouth shall be stopped before him. This is his declaration. We cannot alter it. Whether we believe it or not, still it is true.

Driven to despair?

Perhaps you are ready to say: 'Why, this doctrine takes away all hope. Would you drive us to despair?' No, my brethren, not to a despair of salvation, but to such a despair that Scripture would drive you, when it concludes all under sin. It would drive you to a despair of justifying yourselves before God; of standing on your own righteousness; of getting to heaven by your own works, merits and obedience—to a despair of ever getting there at all, but by the one only revealed way of faith in Jesus Christ.

This is now the way to the Tree of Life. The old way by works and a sinless obedience was closed for ever when Adam fell. No sinner can ever pass that way. But Christ has disclosed a new and living way. He has opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. By him all that believe are justified from all things—freely by his grace, through the redemption, which is in him.

Hold fast

My brethren, receive and hold fast this great, this most important truth. You have all sinned, and have come short of the glory of God. But in Christ there is a full and gracious pardon for all your sins. There is heaven opened to you afresh; there is glory offered to you again. Only confess your sins; acknowledge your guilt; say with a feeling, penitent soul: 'We have sinned, and have come short of the glory of God.' And then, with a believing heart, look to, flee unto, rely upon the glorious, gracious Saviour; and, through his grace, walk henceforth in newness of life.

Heaven will be yours; glory will be yours; everything will be yours (see 1 Corinthians 3:21–23). Is this to drive men to despair? Is this to take away all hope? Nay; it is to lead you to the only foundation of all hope—to the only remedy against despair. If we die unrepentant in sin, despair will be our portion for ever. But if we now take Christ as our portion, we shall be filled with peace and hope in believing, and hereafter our joy will be full. Say not then that I have left you without disclosing a way of escape. May God of his mercy grant that you may not only see it, but may escape by it: 'Turn you to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope' (Zechariah 9:12). Carry with you in your hearts and memories the words of inspiration with which I am about to finish my discourse: 'The Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.' Amen.¶

THE LAW OF GOD IN THE LIFE OF THE BELIEVER

THE REV W T FOLEY (London)

THERE is today a massive attack on the law (the Ten Commandments), even though they are repeated in the New Testament. So, it is correct to ask the question: are Christians under the law and in what sense? Today there is misunderstanding of the law of God, and its place in the life of a Christian. Some people are making every attempt to discredit, or indeed even diminish, the law of God in a believer's walk with the Lord.

The argument goes like this: we are not under law but under grace, and the moral law (Ten Commandments) has nothing to do with Christians. Effectively, it is reasoned that Christians do not have to keep the law (Ten Commandments) because Christ fulfilled them, and they were given to only Israel, and therefore a Christian does not have to obey or keep them. (Christ did fulfil the law but he did not abolish them.)

Make no mistake about it, the word of God clearly says we are not under the law. However, does that mean the Christian is completely free from having to obey the law (Ten Commandments)? Is there no requirement and no obligation?

Christ in his first public discourse, the Sermon on the Mount, expounded the Ten Commandments and 'showed the searching nature of their requirements.' 'The law is a friendly guide in the pursuit of sanctification' (see J. C. Ryle, *Holiness*, p.43). In addition, Ryle says, 'He who pretends to be a saint while he sneers at the Ten Commandments and thinks nothing of lying, hypocrisy, swindling, ill temper, slander, drunkenness and breach of the seventh commandments is under a fearful delusion. He will find it hard to prove that he is a "saint" in the last day!' Ibid.). Why all the confusion among Biblical

scholars and Christian people?

Luther in his commentary on Galatians observes that Christians should know 'how far we ought to obey the law'. The law in a Christian 'ought not to pass its bounds, but ought to have dominion only over the flesh, which is in subjection to it, and remains under it.'

Let us further discuss some of the issues. The problematic passage for interpreters is in Romans 6:14, 15: 'sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.'

The first assertion is absolutely true 'sin shall not have dominion over you'. Why not? Because the Christian has a new nature given to him or her by grace, or unmerited favour. If a so-called Christian tells you that sin has reigning dominion over them, then I submit there is something radically wrong. They need to examine their state before God.

The second assertion is true too. 'For you are not under law'. In terms of the law's authority in condemning and making one guilty before God, it is he who has judicially declared one righteous and forgiven in Christ. Yes, we are now in-lawed to Christ and the new nature delights to keep the law, which is holy, just and spiritual. The law's power first brings condemnation and guilt, then its next use is to act as a schoolmaster to lead one to Christ. But it is a guide as part of God's word for the Christian.

The third statement is also true; 'under grace'. We are chosen by grace in Christ, born again by grace, or called by grace; justified by grace, sanctified by grace, kept by grace; and we will be glorified by grace. Salvation is all of grace and nothing to do with works.

Paul says we are not under the law but under grace. Fine, we all agree. But what do we mean? To clarify, however, Paul asks, 'What then?' In other words, Paul says, 'Can the Christian break the law because they are under grace?' How do we deal with this? Let us render this statement like this for clarity: 'Shall we sin (break the law) because we are not under law but under grace?' God forbid, banish the thought. Of course not! Sin is breaking the law!

What does Paul mean? Simply, Paul argues that being under grace does not give a Christian license or any right to break the law. The law is good and wholesome.

Let us be clear: being under grace does not exempt us from keeping the law. However, again I say, 'What does Paul mean by saying that Christians are not under the law? He gives the reply to this matter in Romans 3:19: 'Now we know that whatsoever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.' Notice Paul uses in the sentence the term 'under the law'. I submit that in this statement, Paul equates being under the law with being 'guilty before God'.

Reinforcing the point, those who are under the law are guilty of breaking it, and are under the condemnation of the law. What are the implications for Christians if they are not under the law? Christians are not breaking the law deliberately, so they are not guilty and condemned by it. They are not under the authority or the power of the law. In fact, Christians are instead under the power of grace! What liberty and freedom in Christ, who kept the law for the Christian!

Grace is more powerful than sin and, therefore, grace should reign in our members throughout our Christian life. Grace is super amazing! Thank God for the riches of his grace.

Grace helps the beloved believer to conquer the authority of sin in their life. Indeed, the Christian has now the power to obey the

law (Ten Commandments). The believer has the power of the new nature and the Holy Spirit working the sovereign divine principle in the soul.

Grace is the efficient cause of our victory over sin. Also, it is because we are not under the law (Ten Commandments) in terms of authority or guilt or condemnation, because we are found in Christ, and we are God's workmanship. God will never fail in working in the believer's soul. It is the life of God in the soul. There is therefore now no condemnation. Hallelujah! what a Saviour!

Christians who have the imputed righteousness of Christ, and the blessed experience of forgiveness, must ask the valid question in relation to the function or place of the law: 'Do we then make void the law (Ten Commandments) through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law' (Romans 3:31). That is, we give the law of God its full recognition, in operating in its rightful definition and purpose.

The law (Ten Commandments) make me continually to appreciate Christ, for he kept them fully, on my behalf, throughout his life. Remember it was Christ in his pre-incarnate appearance to Moses, in the burning Bush, who gave the law (Ten Commandments), in tablets of stone, and Moses gave them to the children of Israel, who repeatedly broke them in ungodly living. The law was given to show the exceeding sinfulness of sin, it was never given to sinners to make them righteous. Only God can reckon us righteous in Christ. Christ in his earthly incarnation kept the very law, which he gave to Moses. The Apostle Paul's view of the law must be the final authority, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, as part of the Bible.

The law is spiritual but the Christian, too, has now got a spiritual nature, and the Holy Spirit. We should obey the law, because it is right and proper, and it is an amazing expression of the beautiful character of God, in Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

Paul's delight in the law

Paul said, 'For I delight in the law of God after the inward man' (Romans 7:22). Paul is delighting in the law (Commandments) as a Christian. The inward man Paul refers to is the new nature. Only the Christian has a new nature. So, I rejoice that the law is a wonderful means to convict and show the exceeding sinfulness of sin. We are guilty in the eyes of the law. The law's role is to show us our guilt before a Holy God.

As a justified man in Christ the law cannot 'condemn' me because Christ has taken the curse of the law on the cross. There is now no condemnation, Romans 8:1. Christ has taken 'all' my guilt in the Cross. God doesn't see my sin, he only sees Christ. This is the meaning of forensic justification of the believer.

Christ is the key

'I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin' (Romans 7:25).

1. We, as Christians, must thank God for Jesus. For Jesus is our Mediator. I thank God only because I can come to God through Jesus, my High Priest. I would not dare approach God without Jesus.

2. 'So then with the (renewed or new) mind I myself serve the law of God...' (Romans 7:25).

Paul is speaking of his present experience, as a Christian, that his 'new nature or new mind' serves the law of God. In other words, he obeys the law as an expression of the character of God. Paul recognised that 'the law is holy, and the commandment (thou shalt not covet, v.7) [is] holy, just, and good' (Romans 7:12).

3. 'but with the flesh the law of sin.' (Romans 7:25). What does Paul mean here? Paul recognised that in sinful flesh, sin as a principle, is still working because of his Adamic nature that he inherited from Adam. He believes and knows that he is a sinner

both by nature and by choice.

Paul shows that there is a war going on between the old and new nature, bringing him into captivity—in the following statement, this is revealed.

'But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members' (Romans 7:23). Paul accurately described the Christian in the current battle with sin. We see this in the following statement. Moreover, Paul qualifies exactly the plague and the very depths of sin, in us, so that there is nothing good, in the old nature. Not one part of us is good! There is a war on between the old and new nature, in our sanctification.

How very sinful we are: we don't like to admit or confess, but we are wretched before God unless we have Christ in us (in the new nature). Christ is our way of escape from sin.

'For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh), dwelleth no good thing; for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.' (Romans 7:18). There is a constant wrestling match going on in us, that can so often overwhelm us, but when we look to Christ we can focus on his beauty, and forgiveness and forget about our rottenness. Romans 8 is the answer for our victory in the Spirit. Life in the Holy Spirit!

Love fulfils the law

'Love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law' (Romans 13:8–11).

This is a most important portion of Scripture, for it establishes the view of the Apostle Paul regarding the law of God. Paul quotes five of the Commandments to support

loving our neighbour. Why would Paul quote these commandments if the commandments did not apply as part of Christian living?

Christians are not exempt from the moral law, but law-keeping never makes us righteous. Only the Lord does that, both by the imputed righteousness of Christ, and working in us by the Holy Spirit, in Spirit wrought obedience, which is part of our increasing sanctification.

Remember that Paul has argued throughout the Epistle of Romans for the gospel, but first he proves in chapter 1 and 2 for the guilt of mankind before a Holy God, and next in chapters 3 to 11 for the grace of God to sinners; and finally in chapters 12 to 16 for the responsibilities of Christians towards governments and our neighbours.

Now, it is in Romans 14, Paul shows that we have, as Christians, to obey the law. Paul recognised the value of the moral law. We do well to recognize his wisdom under the superintendence of the Holy Spirit, especially in this matter.

Obviously the law does not justify or sanctify us but the Law always defines sin. But the Christian keeps the law through walking in the Spirit and in the power of holiness.

Because we keep the law out of love we fulfil the law and therefore we are judged by the law of liberty. Notice that in Romans 14:8–11 Paul begins with love in v.8 and finished with love in v.11. Now why does Paul cushion, in the middle of this section on love, five of the commandments? I suggest the Christian keeps the law from within because of the new nature and is mortifying sin in the body. We do not do it to earn or merit salvation, we keep the Lord's commandments out of love. Keeping the law is part of the obedience of the Christian man or woman.

The Christian, in the new nature, loves the law because it shows love for the Lord. We can only love the Lord with our new nature, the old nature is depraved and devoid of spiritual life. We cannot reform the old nature. We have to crucify it; reckon it dead.

When I do not commit adultery against my neighbour, kill my neighbour, steal from my neighbour, bear false witness against my neighbour, covet from my neighbour, then practically and, in reality, I am loving my neighbour and fulfilling the law of God.

It is a dangerous doctrine to say that a Christian has nothing to do with the moral law. Beware of false teachers!

I confess I love God's law with my new nature, but my old nature is rotten and rears its ugly head in rebellion. The commandments of the Lord are pure and altogether lovely, but I am a vile sinner who would in my old nature rebel against the law. Loving my neighbour and wanting the best for my neighbour means, in essence, I fulfil the law and give God praise. Remember the law is comprehended in this statement: 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' Now that's action and real love. I wish no ill to my neighbour! Why? 'For I delight in the law of God after the inward man' (Romans 7:22). I am new-nature driven! It is the obedience of the Christian man, the new man in Christ.

In summary, the regenerate Christian's 'new nature' loves the law, but the 'old nature' loathes the law. Until death the Christian has that 'old nature'; which has to be mortified. We are to triumph in the 'new nature' and put to death the 'old man'. We are crucified with Christ, so we are to put to death the 'old man'. We can only achieve that by living in the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, as Paul set forth in Romans 8: life in the Spirit.

We are not the wretched man, or the condemned man, or the guilty man, under the law, but our total freedom is in Christ alone, and our 'new nature' loves the law of God. The carnal man cannot please God and never will, but we have the Holy Spirit to help us obey God and his law.

'Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man' (Ecclesiastes 12:13). Rejoice Christian: Christ in us the Hope of Glory, the Lawgiver!¶

GRACE AND TRUTH

BY W P MACKAY (Minister of the gospel, Hull, 1875)

‘THE law was given by Moses: grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.’ The law shows what man ought to be. Christ showed what man is, and what God is. The law *was given*, but grace and truth *came*. The word translated ‘came’ is very strong in the original. It might be rendered ‘were impersonated’ in Christ—always kept in due harmony and proportion. Calvary tells out fully what man’s true state is, what God’s truth is, and what grace means. The law is what man ought to be to God. Grace tells what God is for me. The first word of the law is ‘Thou’, the first of grace is ‘God’ so loved. But it is grace through truth. God has investigated everything, nothing has been overlooked. The greatest sin that any man could possibly commit has been committed, namely, the murder of God’s Son. At the same time the greatest grace of God has been manifested.

Man by nature likes neither grace nor truth. He is satisfied neither with perfect justice or with perfect goodness. If John the Baptist comes in righteousness is he hated, and men say he is too harsh, and not human, but hath a devil. If Christ comes in love he is taunted with being a friend of sinners. So when the righteous requirements of God’s law are preached, many people are apt to turn and say, ‘Oh yes, but that is too strict; you must allow a little margin for our imperfection.’ God says, ‘make no provision for the flesh.’ Alas! it will take far too much, but allow it nothing. When a sanctified walk, separated from the world and all its belongings is insisted on, a certain class are sure to call this legal preaching. And on the other hand when the grace of God is preached, Man’s wisdom makes it out to be toleration of evil and lawless licence.

Let us suppose that a convict, who has just finished his term of penal servitude, wishes to lead an honest life. He comes to a man who

has a large jewellery establishment, and who requires a night-watchman. He is engaged to watch this house through the quiet hours of the night, when he has everything under him, and every opportunity to rob his employer. On the first evening of his watching, he meets one of his old companions, who accosts him, ‘What are *you* doing here?’

‘I’m the night-watchman.’

‘Over this jeweller’s shop?’

‘Yes.’

‘Does he know what you are?’

‘No, no, be silent; if he knew, I would be dismissed.’

‘Suppose I let out that you are a returned convict.’

‘Oh, I pray don’t, it would be my last day here, and I wish to be honest.’

‘Well, you’ll require to give me some money to keep quiet.’

‘Very well, but don’t let anyone know.’ Thus the poor man would be in sad fear and trembling, lest it should come to the ears of his employer what his previous character had been. He would be in terror lest he should meet any of his old friends, and lest his resources should be exhausted in keeping them quiet.

Let us suppose, however, that instead of the employer engaging the man in ignorance of his character, he went to the convict’s cell and said, ‘Now I know what you are, and what you’ve done, every robbery you’ve committed, and that you are worse than you believe yourself to be. I am about to give you a chance of becoming honest, I’ll trust you as my night-watchman over my valuable goods.’ The man is faithful at his post. He meets old companion after old companion, who threaten to inform on him. He asks, ‘What will you tell about me?’

‘That you were the ringleader of house-breakers.’

‘Yes, but my master knows all that better than you do, he knows me better than I know myself.’

Of course this silences them for ever. This latter is *grace and truth*. The man has been treated in grace, but on the ground that all the truth was out, that his character was known. It is thus that God deals with us. He deals in grace, but he knows what he is doing, and with whom he is working, even the chief of sinners. The whole truth is out about us, and God’s grace in the face of this saves, gives a new nature, and puts us down before himself in the highest places of confidence. Man wonders at this. A wicked companion gets converted, his old associates wonder at his boldness in preaching (like Peter, who denied Christ, accusing his Jerusalem hearers of having denied him). They think if his audience only knew what they know, they would be suspicious. God knows us better than we know ourselves, and this is our confidence.

Man does not know grace. When unadulterated grace, unmixed grace, the grace of God, God’s own love to sinners, is preached, man cannot take it. ‘Oh, this is downright Antinomianism [lawlessness].’ This is the cry that was raised against Luther when he preached ‘full free justification by grace through faith without the deeds of the law.’ The cry that was raised against Paul, that he made void the law, that he told the people they might sin that grace might abound. Now, unless our Christianity provokes this opposition, it is not scriptural Christianity. Unless the gospel we preach, when presented to the natural mind, brings out these thoughts, it is another gospel than Paul’s. Every Christian—mark, not some of them—has the Antinomian or God-dishonouring ‘flesh’ within him to be watched over and mortified; but this is a different matter. People will readily quote ‘Faith without works is dead,’ ‘We must have works,’ and so on; and we most certainly coincide. But follow up the argument

by inquiry about the works, and you will too often find that such have very loose ideas of Christian holiness. Such will quite go in for having a Christian name, going religiously to church, being able to criticise a sermon and a preacher, being acquainted with good people, abstaining from all immorality, being honest and respectable; but the moment we cross the boundary line that separates respectable and easy-going make-the-most-of-Christianity, into the rugged, thorny path of identification with a rejected Christ, separation from the world’s gaieties, splendours, and ‘evil communications,’ dead to it and all that is therein, taking up Christ’s yoke and denying self,—we meet with the expressions, ‘too far,’ ‘pietism,’ ‘righteous over much,’ ‘we don’t like extremes,’ ‘legal preaching.’

The grace of man would be this, ‘Do the best you can by the help of grace, and then wherein you fail grace will step in and make up.’ But the first thing the *grace of God* does is to bring ‘*salvation*’ (Titus 2:11).

Or, again, man’s grace may take this shape, ‘Oh, yes, we believe in the blood, the precious blood of Christ—only faith can save—; and now we have found an easy road to heaven—a sort of short cut in which we can live on good terms with the world and worldly men, and also on first-rate terms with religious men, spend our money to make ourselves comfortable, get a name, honour, or riches here, make ourselves as happy as can be in this world, just take of it what we can enjoy, and go on thus so nicely to heaven.’ This is another view of the *grace* that *man* knows about; but the *grace of God* teaches us ‘that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ’ (Titus 2:12). Thus man knows nothing whatever about the grace of God.

TO BE CONTINUED

STUDIES IN BRITISH CHURCH HISTORY

THE REIGN OF QUEEN MARY (1553–1558)

EDWARD MALCOLM (Reading)

THE parliamentary session in the second quarter of 1554 disappointed the queen by refusing the re-enact the laws to punish heretics. Convocation was more willing to submit, and arranged for the disputations at Oxford which would result in the condemnations of Latimer, Ridley and Cranmer. Since there was no law by which they could be punished with the severity Mary demanded, they languished in prison.

When Mary married Philip she had already succeeded in her first aim, the overthrow of Protestantism in England. All opposition resulted in arrest, and, in the case of the unimportant, recantation led to release, but those who were considered dangerous were kept in prison against the day Mary should be able to destroy their bodies in public. To do this she had to return England to the papacy, and to do that she needed a papal legate. Hence the significance of Cardinal Pole's arrival late November 1554. By St Andrew's Day (30 November) all was prepared, and the king and queen knelt in humble submission while England was absolved of her sins, and received back into the bosom of the Church. The heresy laws of past generations were revived, and in spite of Pole's objections, it was Parliament which authorized the whole matter, rather than it coming from him as legate. This was Mary's plan; if the nation believed Parliament had enacted all the changes it would come to heel far more readily than if it believed they had been imposed from Rome.

The execution of Protestants began on 4 February 1555. The first to be so honoured was John Rogers; Hooper suffered

at Gloucester on 9 February; Ferrar on 30 March, after his appeal to Pole had been heard and rejected. The French ambassador assessed the popular response to the burnings, and immediately feared an uprising. Rather than encourage the people into submission, the burnings was causing deep resentment. But the Church pressed on, and laymen began to be added to the numbers being burned alive. Latimer and Ridley perished at Oxford on 16 October 1555, and Cranmer on 21 March the following year. The reason for delaying his execution was the hope entertained by the Church that she could persuade him to recant. Had he done so, the Protestant cause would have been dealt a serious wound. Cranmer, in spite of some wavering, was given grace to hold fast, and perished where his two friends had gone before.

In all, some 300 were burned alive in Mary's bid to woo the nation back to Rome. A number of the dead were also dug up and burned, or their bodies cast on dung heaps, including the wife of Peter Martyr, and even of a highway robber called John Tooley, because it was reported that he had denounced the pope as he stood on the gallows.

John Knox's intervention contributed to the worsening mood. His *Faithful Admonition to the Professors of God's Truth in England*, published in July 1554, was interpreted as a call to tyrannicide. Others also wrote inflammatory pamphlets, but the combined efforts of these was to grant Mary a semblance of justification in executing those who posed a threat to the royal person. Elizabeth would use a similar argument once the papal bull of

excommunication was read against her.

Among the dead were sixty women, and almost all of the martyrs were not bishops or clergy or theologians, but ordinary folk who had come to faith in Jesus Christ, and who would not renounce the evangelical faith in favour of Rome's heresies. Thus the fires stoked the resistance of many, both to Mary herself, and to Rome.

Mary was unloved by the people, and by her husband. As soon as his father, Charles V, summoned him to the Netherlands, he went. There he enjoyed a far happier lifestyle than in England, where his wife's hopes for a child proved to be nothing more than symptoms of the disease which would kill her. When Charles abdicated, Philip, who was already King of the Netherlands, became also King of Spain. At that point he lost all interest in England, except as a source of aid for his continental ambitions.

Mary's lack of wisdom and empathy began to show. When Parliament sat in late 1555 Gardiner was dying. The Commons were resistant to the queen's will regarding monastic lands now in Crown hands; she wished to see them all restored, and the Commons did not. The payment of tithes to Rome was not agreed in the way the queen or Gardiner wished, and the laity, being left to act according to conscience in the matter, proved to have no conscience, and kept their money. When the queen had two members of the Commons imprisoned for resisting her, followed by an attempt to enforce an Act requiring all members to attend every session, the Commons replied by adding a clause to the effect that any Member of the House in the pay of the Crown was banned from attending. The queen was forced to withdraw the proposed legislation.

The death of Gardiner, who was Lord Chancellor, on 12 November, played into the hands of Cardinal Pole, Archbishop of Canterbury. The new Chancellor, Heath, could not retain the powers of his office, and Pole simply assumed them at will. This is not

because Pole was crafty, but because Heath was simply not up to the task. Pole was not popular with the new Pope, who had known him when he was part of Henry's diplomatic team attempting to gain support for the divorce. Bitterly opposed to Spanish ambitions in the rest of Europe, the pope, Paul IV, gave secret support to the French. When Philip returned to his wife in March 1557, it was not because he loved her, but because he needed England's help in the growing war with France. In June an English force crossed over to France, routed a French force, and threatened Paris. Had Philip seized the advantage, who know what might have resulted, but in the event he hesitated, and soon Calais, the last toehold of England on the continent, was threatened. Calais was surrendered on 7 January 1558, and Guisnes on 20 January. So ended England's continental holdings.

While the blow was more symbolic than real (England's economy did not suffer from the loss of Calais, as had been feared) the effect was to further weaken Mary in the eyes of her subjects. To Philip, the loss of Calais to France ought to compensate for his gains from France elsewhere. He cared nothing for English pride.

Mary, meanwhile, continued her doomed policies. Childless, she stripped the Crown of its church lands, enforced the laws against heresy, and looked about in vain for trustworthy papists to hold high office.

Parliament knew her end was near. Already overtures were being made to Elizabeth, whom Mary had stated publicly should succeed her. When Mary died on 17 November the rejoicing was greater than at her accession. Her unloved cousin, Cardinal Pole, died that evening, bringing to an end at one stroke the power which aimed at overthrowing the Protestant Reformation.

Analysis

We may sometimes wonder why Providence should permit the course of Reformation to be so shaken by the accession of Mary Tudor.

Could not the Lord have so ordered affairs that a different monarch arise, or that Mary herself should have been converted? Indeed so, but if we look a little more closely at the state of Protestantism under Edward VI, we will begin to see why the Lord allowed things to progress as they did.

Edward VI was a convinced Protestant. Although he has in turns been labelled ‘a godly Josiah’ and a bigot, neither is accurate. He was human, and imperfect. His tender age, however, meant that almost all of what happened during his reign was the work of others in his name. Those who held the power, the Lord Protectors, needed to be seen to support the king, so that their loyalty to him rather than to themselves, should stand out.

Since young Edward was a Protestant, it was politically expedient for those who served him to be Protestants also. This was not hard; the result of Henry’s political actions meant that England was a Protestant nation. The Church of England was a Protestant church. But Edward’s personal zeal appears to have been the catalyst for some to appear zealous, in order to further their ambitions. Thus, through no fault of his own, Edward’s reign saw the shift from experimental religion to a political Protestantism at the highest levels of state. None would suggest anything untoward among the bishops, nor among the majority of the population, only among those who had political ambition. It meant, sadly, that the perception of what it meant to be a Protestant became tied up with greed, scheming, and dissembling. Had Edward lived, and had this situation not changed, it is hard to see that any good would have come from England’s reformation during the reign of Henry VIII, greatly imperfect though that was.

The failure of Northumberland’s scheme to secure the succession through Lady Jane Grey, and the consequent accession of Mary Tudor, served a godly though painful end. The re-emergence of Roman Catholicism in England, with the full force of the Counter-Reformation and its horrible

ways, re-awakened England to the true nature of Rome, and so to the true nature of the Protestant religion. When Mary began to burn alive the friends and neighbours of the common folk, she brought home to them in the starkest manner the true division between Rome and Christ. Whatever people may have thought about one religion or the other, they knew these people to be good, trustworthy and honest. These were not seditious, nor were they wicked, but they were loyal and kind. To kill such caused many to question the character of those carrying out the burnings, and the queen in whose name they happened.

The effect was to arouse in the common people a desire for freedom—freedom from the Pope, from Spain, and from France. They also wished to be free from oppressive government, and Parliament, in particular the Commons, had shown that even a despotic monarch can be resisted within the constitution. True, Archdeacon Philpot had died as a result of his efforts to uphold the constitution against the wishes of the Crown, but his death was a solemn reminder to the rest as to what happens if the constitution is left in the hands of those who have a foreign agenda. Similarly, the party which had supported Northumberland at the beginning of the reign, showed what should happen to those who would use high office for personal gain.

Perhaps the clearest proof that Mary was a zealot rather than simply a faithful daughter of Rome, as she thought, is found in the attitude of most Roman Catholics towards her reign. While men like Bonner and Gardiner may be taken as holding the ‘official line’, the ordinary people were not in favour of the burnings, they greatly distrusted Pole, and they had no desire to be back under papal authority—witness their complete failure to take up the opportunity to pay tithes to the Church. This latter point cannot simply be explained away as arising from personal greed, but is a mark of the antipathy which existed between the people and their

spiritual overlords. Regarding antipathy towards Pole, it was the memory of the last English Cardinal, Wolsey, which turned people against all of that class. Cardinals were not to be trusted, and their influence was deemed to be baleful.

In short, we can say that the Henrician reformation, for all its inadequacies, and the Edwardian reformation, for all its formality at the highest levels, served to strengthen the gospel’s hold on the minds and hearts of men and women. When the choice before them was new Protestantism or old Romanism, they knew where to stand. No wonder they rejoiced at the death of the unlamented Mary.

Conclusion

Mary, for her part, earned two soubriquets,

‘Bloody Mary’ and ‘Jezebel’. The former is easily explained, since so many died under the revived heresy laws. The latter was earned because of the apparent similarity between herself and Ahab’s wife. It was Queen Jezebel who introduced the gods and goddesses of her native Tyre to Israel, and it was she who persecuted the prophets. Mary was deemed to have done just the same. Even if this means that people forgot that she had only sought to return England to the condition which existed at the time of her birth, it shows that, once gospel light has begun to shine, it cannot easily be extinguished. Many may not have embraced Protestantism, but they had learned to fear, despise and reject Romanism. Would that the eyes of more were opened in our day to see the same things.

STUDIES IN II PETER

EDWARD MALCOLM (Reading)

1:12–15—Why we must be instructed.

Peter knew all too well the frailty of the flesh, that an oft-repeated lesson may yet not be learned very quickly. He had sat at the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ, and, with his fellow disciples, had heard him speak many times of his forthcoming death and resurrection. Yet neither he nor they understood these things until some time after they happened. So Peter is careful to repeat the lesson here, as he has taught them many times before. Indeed, Peter lays the responsibility for learning the lesson on himself—*Wherefore I will not be negligent*. This shows us also that Peter considers the matter to be of the greatest importance, for anything so important bears constant repetition. Some Christians may hear sermons and think, ‘I’ve heard this all before’, because they do not understand the vital importance of what is being said. Those who do understand are encouraged by the

repetition because they benefit from the constant reminder of such truth. This is not to excuse preachers who harp on one string, but it should encourage us to benefit from hearing old truths repeated.

though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. That Peter does not consider his readers to be ignorant of these things is shown by this statement. But such is the nature of our present condition that we soon forget the lessons we have been taught, even if they are very important. We need to learn again and again the necessity of godly living. We need to be reminded constantly that bringing forth the fruits of the Spirit, of grace, is not merely an option, but of the very essence of Christian faith. We are reminded if we pay attention to daily Bible reading, but even then we need the guidance and comfort of the Holy Spirit to bring these things ever before our minds. Peter is doing that work now.

Yea, I think it meet... It is Peter's duty and calling to do these things. As an apostle, who bears witness to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, it may be thought sufficient for him to do no more than preach the resurrection. But to what end did Jesus rise from the dead, if not to save his people from their sins? And by what evidence can they, and the world at large, know that Christ has indeed saved his people, and thus be proven to have risen from the dead, except that his people bring forth the fruits of grace? So to consider his duty to be the constant reminding of these things is no false assumption. Peter is doing the work of an apostle. And if he is doing the work of an apostle, we ought to receive his instruction on that basis; he was commissioned by the Lord.

There is a benefit to us in understanding this; we will see that being constantly reminded of the same things is not meant primarily to be a tacit condemnation of our inability to learn lessons quickly, but a mark of the grace of God toward us. Moses was granted a long life to lead the people right through their wilderness wanderings. Another man could have done it, as Joshua perhaps, but the Lord graciously allowed two generations of Israelites to follow the same man. In so doing the Lord gave continuity to the work, and so removed a possible obstacle to obedience. Both generations received the law from the same intermediary, whether at Sinai or in the Deuteronomic giving of the law. So for us, the constant reminder means that we know that our faith is that 'once delivered'. It does not change. Continuity in the matters of the faith is a mark of orthodoxy.

Knowing that shortly I must put off... The day approaches when Peter will die. Whether, as some think, Peter was in prison when he wrote this, and under sentence of death, or whether he was simply an old man who knew his days were numbered, the sense is unaffected. That he is following the example of the Lord Jesus Christ suggest very strongly the former—that he was under sentence of death. This adds something, in that he knew

he was about to seal his testimony with his blood. How important, therefore, that his congregation be assured that he in no way altered his doctrine at this vital stage. He would die in the faith in which he had lived all these years, and so would confirm to them his abiding confidence in the calling and election which was made sure to him, in that he brought forth the fruits of grace in his own life, through the care, protection and love of God in Christ, and through the blessing and operation of the Holy Spirit.

Moreover, I will endeavour... This is to explain why he is writing to them; he wishes them to have that constant reminder of these things even after he is dead. This again shows the vital importance of this doctrine, for Peter cannot die without committing to writing the truth for which he here contends. We benefit from his writing, and so should receive his truth as it was delivered, as being of such importance to us in living the Christian life.

There is one other matter to consider here, and that is the difference between what Peter taught face to face, and what Peter would teach in writing—there is no difference between them at all. This means that the first readers of Peter's epistles would have known straight away that what they contained was authentic and true. That Peter writes as one who knows himself to be under sentence of death, v.14, helps to confirm this truth, for who would die while maintaining a lie? Peter did not come to the knowledge of the truth all at once, but learned it over many years. He would have been educated in the manner of the Jews of his day, to know the Scriptures, albeit not in a rabbinical school; he had learned from the Lord Jesus Christ during his time as a disciple; he learned through the coming of the Holy Spirit to correctly interpret all he had been taught, and to teach others. So Peter was not speaking by his own authority, but as he was called by the grace of God and the love of the Lord Jesus Christ. This means we must take his word accordingly.

1:16–18—The instruction, part 1. As Peter begins to give the necessary instruction, he clears away a potential objection, concerning the source of his teaching. Could it be, someone might think, that Peter has been the victim of some clever plot, that he has been seriously misled, and is therefore misleading others? No, replies the Apostle, because we saw Jesus Christ revealed in his majesty and glory. Specifically, he tells them that he and his fellow labourers 'made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ', by which he means both the Incarnation¹ and the testimony of the miracles.² From where might such teachings have come? By what authority were they taught? Peter and his fellow apostles, being eyewitnesses of the majesty of Jesus Christ, had been given irrefutable confirmation of these other truths. The only explanation for the transfiguration is that given by the testimony of the incarnation and the miracles, that Jesus Christ is God, the acceptable Saviour, the long-promised Messiah, the hope of Israel. So those who saw the resurrection, and who testify of the truth concerning Jesus Christ are to be received as faithful and true witnesses.

The transfiguration³ may, in the context of the Gospels, seem an odd incident to record. It appears to be unconnected to what goes before or comes after. Nothing is made of it. Those who saw it were commanded to say nothing to anyone until after the resurrection. However, its value for the three and for us is made clear here. Since Peter was an eyewitness of the revelation of Jesus' true glory, he is able to write as he does here with 1. 1 Timothy 3:16, 'the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh'. Paul sets the incarnation before us as the great mystery, and the word mystery means that which would remain hidden had it not been revealed. God has indeed revealed himself in the Lord Jesus Christ, in the incarnation, and so we are to see the Father in the Son.

2. John 3:2, the testimony of Nicodemus, who confessed that the miracles testify to the God-given power and authority of the Lord Jesus Christ.

3. Matthew 17:1ff, Mark 9:2ff, Luke 9:28ff

confidence. We are to accept his confident statements as absolutely true. It is interesting that here Peter places as much emphasis on the transfiguration as Paul does in his writings on the resurrection appearance on the Damascus road. Both serve the same purpose, to convince the witnesses that Jesus is God.

On top of the evidence of their eyes, the three disciples had the evidence of their ears. They heard a voice 'from the excellent glory'. Note that this voice spoke to the Lord Jesus Christ, confirming to him first the truth that 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased'. It is this statement which gives sense to the transfiguration, that it was first and foremost for the benefit of the Lord Jesus himself. This was the confirmation he required, as a man, to proceed to the conclusion of his mission. As God he needed no such confirmation, but as a man, he did.

Peter says that the voice spoke 'from the excellent glory', meaning that he understood it to come from heaven; not merely from the sky, but from the very throne of God himself. It is, therefore, the voice of God which he heard. In that God declared 'This is my beloved Son', he identified Jesus as the son of David who would be in that unique relationship with God, 2 Samuel 7:14f. Here is the one who calls God 'Father', and God calls him, 'my son'. This, then, identifies Jesus as the Messiah, the root and branch of David, the hope of Israel. His kingdom and rule are without end. It therefore matters very much that we rightly identify the Son. If to have the Son is to have life, then the declaration from the Father that Jesus is the Son is the essence of the Gospel, for it shows that God has kept his word. This is the word Peter declares, when he shows that we must live according to our calling in Christ Jesus. For to be called in Christ Jesus is not merely to follow a way, a philosophy or a path within a religion; it is to follow the Light of God, to walk in the Way, to know the Truth. That God is well pleased with the Son shows both that Jesus is being comforted to continue in the way

of obedience, and that we are to follow him whom the Father has blessed.

Finally, for those who may not know the Gospel record, or who may have doubts about the event, Peter shows that this was

what he and his fellow disciples heard in the mount when Jesus was transfigured before them. This was an actual event, a moment in time, and not some fondly imagined or vainly invented thing. He speaks of cold, hard facts.

TO BE CONTINUED

BOOK REVIEW

Editor's Note: We live, regretfully, in a day when most evangelicals, and most publishers, have abandoned the Authorised (King James) Version of the Bible. Rather, therefore, than ceasing to review most books, we try to warn readers by stating if the book uses other versions of the Bible. The position of The Gospel Magazine is that the AV is the best translation, from the true text, possessing beautiful and formative English, and that it has been an instrument of blessing to the English-speaking church for over four hundred years. That we name another translation does not mean we endorse it.

JC RYLE – Prepared to Stand Alone

Iain H. Murray

The Banner of Truth Trust 2016 273pp £8.50 pbk/£15 cloth ISBN 978-1-84871-678-0

The bicentenary year of the birth of John Charles Ryle is an appropriate time for the publication of a new biography of this great warrior for Jesus Christ, and Iain Murray has presented us with a detailed and comprehensive account of Ryle's life and times. The bare bones of Ryle's life are fairly well-known, the eldest son of wealthy parents, his education at Eton and Oxford, the Bank crash which left the family in poverty, Ryle's entry into the ministry of the Church of England, and his subsequent incumbencies leading at last to his surprise appointment as Bishop of Liverpool. All of these Murray describes in much detail using a wealth of sources. He reconsiders what may be called the 'received' account of Ryle's conversion whilst hearing the Scriptures read one afternoon in a church in Oxford, drawing on Ryle's own account of the Holy Spirit's work in his heart. He examines his love of the writings of the Puritans, as well as the development of his own writing ministry in tracts and papers, and later on books, which have had such an influence upon the Church of God. However he goes beyond these to discuss the events and circumstances which affected the religious and social life of the nation, so setting Ryle's life in the context of these things. He addresses especially the rise of Tractarianism and the Oxford Movement which had such a profound effect upon the church, describing some of the problems which Ryle faced in the diocese of Liverpool. In two appendices the author reproduces extracts from some of Ryle's writings, and shows how Herbert, Ryle's eldest son, deserted his father's position and embraced the modernising influences in the church. This is a book to be read, not only to remind ourselves of the life and work of this stalwart Protestant soldier, but also of the confusion and increasing liberalism within the Church of England during the nineteenth century against which he was 'prepared to stand alone'. If it also leads to the reading of some of Ryle's writings, of which many are available today, this will surely prove a blessing to the soul.

JPW

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

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