

JULY–AUGUST 2015

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The Gospel Magazine



'In Christ'—Ephesians 1:3–12 • New Covenant Theology—Part 2 • A Sermon on Matthew 6:10

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1766–2015

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 39 Articles of Religion of the Church of England, but the magazine itself is non-denominational. We aim to provide variety in unity, publishing articles from a wide diversity of past and present writers committed to ‘the faith once delivered to the saints’.

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EDITORIAL

‘Brethren, pray for us’ (1 Thessalonians 5:25)

A CONSTANT theme in Scripture is that of suffering, in particular, the suffering of God’s people at the hands of the world. Sometimes such suffering is the divinely-ordained consequence of sin. This is certainly the cause of Judah’s plight as recorded in Lamentations. It is also the reason why Israel suffered at the hands of neighbouring tribes and nations during the period of the judges. The LORD was teaching his wayward people that obedience is not an option but a requirement, and that the Law was not given for their convenience but to set before them good and life. This has been true of individuals, as well as of the nation as a whole. The leprosy which struck Gehazi was the direct consequence of sin—in his case, greed leading to lies. The Lord our God is well able to use circumstances in order to admonish and correct his backsliding people.

The other sort who come under the condemnation of the world are those who are walking in faith, and whose very life and witness becomes a cause of bitter hatred for those who walk without the Lord. This can lead to lament among Christians, as the Apostle

James shows in his Epistle. There, Jewish believers were struggling to come to terms with the reality of their situation. They were faithful disciples of the risen Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah. By rights, they believed they ought to be enjoying the benefits of serving the King. Instead, they were made the objects of hatred. James wrote, in part, to correct their misunderstanding of the matter, and to comfort them in their sorrows.

Writing to the Hebrews, the Apostle Paul taught that the Lord corrects every son whom he loves. The chastisement of the Lord is not to be despised, nor are we to faint under his rebuke. We are instead to remember that he chastens whom he loves, and scourges every son whom he receives. Why? Not to punish us for our sins, since these have been forgiven in Christ. If you want to be clear on this point, read the sermons of Tobias Crisp. I know he is viewed with some suspicion, but on this matter he is full of comfort and instruction on a subject which concerns every child of God.

Rather, the Lord afflicts us to teach us that we are to seek no comfort from the world,

and that faith must be caused to grow and strengthen. Since, in the midst of his correction, we find the Lord our God to be the only source of comfort, our Father in heaven is teaching us to have yet more faith in him than may have been the case hitherto. We should be turned more and more towards our Saviour, Jesus Christ, when we understand that he endured affliction, and the contradiction of sinners, for our sake. He has promised to never leave us, nor forsake us, and we should rest in this promise.

So we confess that we suffer in this life. Many obstacles are raised against the gospel, and the proclamation of the gospel, and the opportunities to live by the gospel. Christian men and women, and indeed children, are squeezed more and more into a narrow mould by the world. They claim to be content with Christians who are socially active and who are spiritually inactive. We know that we have a duty to be spiritually active, alive unto the Lord, and then to be fruitful in good works. To have the one without the other is to have either a religion unworthy of the name, or no religion at all. Neither is of comfort, or use.

What may we do in the midst of such a trying situation? We must heed the apostolic injunction, and pray for one another. Prayer is not easy. I mean, real prayer is not easy. We find it no great trouble to mouth a few sentences, and to show off in public prayer our knowledge of this or that matter. Real prayer, however, is a matter of the heart, and of the will, and of the mind. It requires us to spend serious time in prayer, to shut out the world, the flesh, and all the distractions and temptations they bring. It requires a true seeking

after communion with our heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ our Saviour, in the power of God the Holy Spirit. It requires a knowledge of the divine will, which we will only have if we are close and careful students of Scripture, wherein that will is revealed.

Furthermore, prayer must be constant. That is, keep on praying until the Lord answers. He may take years to answer our prayer, not because he is careless of our needs, but because his timing is so often not ours. He may answer in ways we never imagined, but then, he is God, and it belongs to the sovereign majesty of the Triune God to do as pleases him, and not us. We may never see our prayers answered, but that ought not to discourage us from prayer.

The witness of this *Magazine* depends on your prayers. Mere writing, be it done never so well, will assist few, and none properly. It is the application of God's truth to God's people by God's Spirit, and for the sake of God's Son and his kingdom, that we seek. Let us pray earnestly that the Lord would use this publication to his glory, and for the good of his Church.

Thank you to each one who has written or telephoned with encouragements. It is such a blessing to know that there are some who have been helped, and we dare to presume that others, who may not be in touch, have also been helped. It certainly helps us to know this.

Thank you also to each one who prays for the *Magazine*, its contributors, and its witness. Only the Lord can prosper any good work, and whatever he chooses to use will redound to his glory, be it never so weak in the world's eyes.

Brethren, pray for us, for Christ's sake.¶

A multitude of preventing mercies, in afflictions, in disappointments, in cross providences, there are with God; and what mercies are folded up in these afflicting mercies, in these disappointments, and in these merciful cross providences, must rest in the bosom of him to be revealed, who only is wonderful in council, and excellent in working.

John Bunyan

'IN CHRIST'

A SERMON BY THE EDITOR

'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.' (Ephesians 1:3–12)

THE gospel of our Saviour Christ commends itself to us in the number and extent of the blessings promised therein to all who believe the gospel aright. It is a great, though not a new, error that the gospel blessings may be enjoyed either by the unregenerate, or because somehow God is pleased with our good works. Gospel blessings cannot be enjoyed by the unregenerate, because the assumption that God is equally good to all men is false. Gospel blessings will not be ours because of our good deeds, since God is not pleased with our efforts and good works. Whereas the natural man considers that God is moved by his small kindnesses and occasional mercies, the truth is that whatsoever is not of faith is sin, Romans 14:23. Thus the morality of the Muslim, and the charitable actions of the Hindu or Buddhist, will help neither into heaven, but will rather hasten them on the path to hell. And if the followers of false religion seem to be more righteous than some who profess faith in Christ, let the self-proclaimed Christian look to the ground of his hope, and be sure that it is solid.

Writing to the Ephesians, the Apostle Paul lists a number of blessings (vv.3–12) which belong to those who are in Christ. So v.3, 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.'

Note the necessary qualification at the end—'in Christ'. Our heavenly Father has not blessed us with all spiritual blessings, such that we can live a long and happy life in this world without Christ, before entering into his presence in the life to come. Rather, these blessings come to those who are 'in Christ'. This is why the Apostle says, v.6, that we are made acceptable 'in the beloved'.

I propose to say a word, first, about the various blessings St. Paul lists. Second, I will say a word about the necessary qualification for receiving these blessings. Third, I trust to show why this doctrine is so important.

First, the blessings

Summarized as 'all spiritual blessings in heavenly places', the Apostle then names

- our being chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, v.4;
- our being predestinated unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ, v.5;
- our being made accepted in the beloved, v.6;
- our redemption, which is in Christ, v.7;
- Christ as the one in whom God has abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence, v.8;
- the end, that he might gather into one all things in Christ, v.10; and
- our inheritance, which is in Christ, v.11.

This is an impressive list, by any stretch of the imagination. There is only time to say a brief word about each.

We are chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. That is, God the Father chose some from out of the mass of mankind before ever a single person was born, before the first man was created, even before the beginning of the work of creation itself. This means God knew exactly who would be born. Moreover, he did not choose us because he foresaw that we would be good, but in spite of our innate wickedness. This is taught in the latter part of v.4, 'that we should be holy and without blame before him in love'. That is, by nature we are of blame, and without that holiness without which none can see the Lord, Hebrews 12:14. Thus our being chosen in Christ from before the foundation of the world was the means appointed by God, in his perfect wisdom, to call to himself a people who are acceptable to him. And this is accomplished through the love of Christ, in whom we are called, and in whom alone we are holy and without blame before him.

We have been predestinated in Christ. More fully, the Father has 'predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will' (v.5). That is, those who are called the sons of God are only given that privileged status as a consequence of their having union with Christ. We must be Christ's in order to be sons of God. The Lord has not chosen the wise, the good, or the great, but has chosen 'according to the good pleasure of his will.' And he has chosen none outside of Christ. There are no sons of God (speaking of humans rather than of angels, who may also be called sons of God) who are not united to Christ. All the sons of God have faith in Christ.

We are accepted in the beloved. God the Father loves God the Son. He calls him 'the beloved.' Our acceptance with the Father is only in so far as we are 'in the beloved', 'in Christ'. More on this point in the second section.

We are redeemed in Christ. In v.7 the Apostle Paul rightly places all the benefits of salvation,

as redemption and forgiveness of sins, on Christ; we receive these benefits in Christ. So, we must be in Christ to receive these benefits. No Israelite was forgiven his sins because sacrifices were offered in the temple, not even the offering of the yearly sacrifice of atonement. The sins of any were only forgiven in so far as they identified themselves with the victim. In the normal course of events, the priest received the victim from the hand of the penitent. In this way the penitent sinner showed that he made this offering in the knowledge that he was a sinner. We must identify with Christ if we would receive the benefits of his death and resurrection. We must be 'in Christ', have union with him.

God abounds towards us in all wisdom and prudence in Christ. This is a comment on our redemption in Christ, that our heavenly Father has changed his face towards us, and is now propitious, merciful, gentle, gracious and kind, whereas formerly we saw only his wrath. The cause of this change is that Christ knows the mercy, gentleness, grace, kindness and love of the Father, for these qualities exist in the Godhead. And when we are in Christ, the bounty of God's goodness extends to us. God abounds towards us in wisdom and prudence. He shows us the wisdom of his way of salvation. When we are in Christ, we see the goodness of God in decreeing the Fall, and in cursing mankind for Adam's sake, for we see also his wisdom in revealing the seed of the woman who would bruise the serpent's head. We see his wisdom in sending forth his Son, in the fullness of time, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem them that were under the law. We only see this when we are in Christ.

We see the blessing which awaits, that the Father might gather into one all things in Christ. There is a beauty in the order revealed by God. When he created the world, he called into being an unordered universe, to which he began to bring order—first, by the creation of light, and lastly, by the creation of man. The coming of sin rent the created order, and divided man from God, and the creation among itself,

so that beast fights beast, and man fights man, and man and beast fight one another. The day will come, declares the Apostle, when all shall be gathered into one in Christ. This was, after all, the prayer of our Saviour, St. John 17:21; all the redeemed made one in the Godhead.

Our inheritance is in Christ. We are, first of all, Christ's own inheritance, being 'to the praise of his glory' through predestination. Our Saviour Christ was given the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow. Our being 'in Christ', and being saved through the finished work of Christ, redounds to his glory.

We also obtain our inheritance in Christ. If David was promised a son to sit on his throne forever, how much more shall those who are the sons of God through faith in Jesus Christ reign with him forever. The northern tribes, lacking a son of David to reign over them, lacked also the stability of dynastic rule. In the end, the nation perished. We must be in David's greater Son if we would gain the kingdom. This much is promised to us, St. Matthew 25:34. This is a direct consequence of our being 'in Christ'.

Second, the necessary qualification

This ought to be abundantly clear from the foregoing list, that each and every blessing with which we are blessed can only come to us when we are 'in Christ', 'in the beloved'. The reason for this is shown most clearly from the words of v.6, 'in the beloved'. This is the Father's description of the Son. He calls him 'beloved'. He did so when the voice came from heaven at Christ's baptism, St. Matthew 3:17, declaring, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased'. The same words were heard on the mount of transfiguration, St. Matthew 17:5. Our Lord himself stated 'The Father loveth the Son', St. John 3:35, 5:20. Again, St. John 17:23, he prays to the Father 'that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me'. Thus the love of the Father for the Son is taught clearly in Scripture.

It is not possible, if we have an orthodox doctrine of the Trinity, to consider the love of the Father for the Son without considering also the love of the Son for the Father, and of both Persons for God the Holy Spirit—and of the Spirit for the other two Persons. It is right and proper that the Godhead ought to be characterized by love. After all, 'God is love', 1 John 4:16. Properly speaking, God can only love that which is God, for anything which is not God is not worthy of his love. This is not to say that there is in God that narcissism which characterizes some people, for such a thing would be unworthy. Love is good, and God is good, therefore whatever is good is of God. God can love nothing which is contrary to his nature, and there is nothing more Godly than God himself.

On the other hand, God can love nothing which is not God, for whatever is not God falls short of his perfect will and goodness. Therefore the common cry of the 'evangelist', that 'God loves you', is false. If the person addressed is a sinner, without thought for God or Christ, with no sorrow or indeed concern for his sins, then how can he have any confidence that God loves him? Such a one is so far from what is God, or what is pleasing to God, that he cannot be allowed to believe that God loves him, when the truth is that God is justly angry with him. If God opposed Moses when he was on his way to Egypt in obedience to the Lord's direct command, because he had not circumcized his son, how much more shall he oppose those who disobey and show no sign of ever obeying?

So the great question to which all men must face up is this. How can the love which exists within the Godhead be extended to me, a miserable and wretched sinner? Is there any means by which it may be so? Has God made any provision for this? The answer is that he, in his infinite mercy and wisdom, has done exactly that. He hath made us accepted in the beloved.

That is, if we are 'in Christ', if we are partakers of his death and resurrection, we are

loved as Christ is loved. God loves none apart from Christ, but all who are in Christ are loved as Christ is loved. This is a most wonderful, glorious, comfortable and blessed truth! This is the wisdom of God seen in the most remarkable manner. This is the love which God has for the world, such that he gave his only begotten Son, that all who believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

In order to understand this, turn to 1 Corinthians 10:1–4. See how St. Paul declares that all Israel was 'baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea.' That is, as they owed their very lives to Moses, so they were bound to be obedient to him as their *de facto* king. The nation of Israel owed its survival at one point to the kingly actions of the lad David, who did what Saul would not do, and confronted the giant Goliath. So here, Israel owed its existence, on one level, to the man Moses, and so was bound to him, to obey him and to follow him, as the Lord directed him. Thus when the Lord would destroy his people, Moses was able to intercede for them. For Moses' sake they were spared. Now, says St. Paul, 'with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness', v.5. Yet there is a great and vast difference between 'many' and 'all'. God did not overthrow all in the wilderness as they deserved, for the sake of Moses, in whom he saw Israel in mercy and goodness.

So for us. If we would be loved of the Father, of the Godhead, we must be in Christ. There is no love from God towards any who are outside of Christ. We depend on our union with Christ for every spiritual blessing.

Third, the importance of this doctrine

This doctrine teaches us that, unless we are in union with Christ, unless we are made to be partakers of his death and resurrection, being baptized into his death, we have no share in the blessings which come through him. Since the love of God exists only between the Persons of the Godhead, it follows that we

must have union with the Godhead in order to enter into the love of God. The only way in is through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; faith which lays hold upon him and his finished work, which rests in his Person, and which hopes in his grace. Those who have union with Christ are made partakers of the love of God. Blessed and happy are they.

That this doctrine is of great importance may be seen from the following.

First, as it addresses our standing in this world by nature. As we are, shapen in iniquity, and conceived of our mothers in sin (Psalm 51:5), we can know nothing of the love of God. For how can God love that which is so abhorrent to his perfect nature and Godhead? So we should learn to judge the worth of our actions, our good deeds, our own persons, in the light of this doctrine. God does not love us by nature, since we are altogether unlovely. We are not in a right standing with God, being strangers from the commonwealth of Israel. Many who have no faith still believe that they have little to fear from an Almighty God, for he must take notice of their merits, and overlook their few and infrequent—by their own estimation—demerits. But teach them, let them understand, that they are outside the love of God, and are instead objects of divine wrath, and they will begin to take a different view of themselves. They will begin to have a right view, and it will shake them out of their complacency, and put them in a better mind. There are many who believe the 'God loves you' claim of the open-air 'evangelist' and the 'evangelical' preacher, who have no idea that God does not love them. Far kinder to tell them the truth, and with it point them to Christ, than allow them to labour on under the gross misapprehension that they have little to fear from the Lord. How we need a right view of our standing in this world by nature!

Secondly, as it addresses our view of Christ. This is most important. Many today are taught to look upon Christ as a means to an end, or as a source of bankable blessing. Few are taught the real meaning of being 'in Christ'. Much

modern worship is about Christ, but little is of Christ. Rather than worshipping the Lord our Saviour as being worthy of worship, we tend to prefer to give thanks for the benefits and blessings which are ours through faith in Christ. While it is right and proper to give such thanks, we must begin with a right worshipping of the Person of our Saviour, in his majesty, glory and power.

Thirdly, as it affects our understanding of the doctrine of justification by faith. This is of course an outworking of the former point. Once we grasp this key point, that we are to be 'in Christ' if we are to know the blessings of salvation, we see that our being justified is also our being 'in Christ'. We are accounted righteous in God's sight precisely because we are seen of God as being in Christ. Since Christ is the beloved, and we are accepted in the beloved, Christ is the sole ground of hope for the sinner.

Fourthly, as it affects our view of Scripture. The pride of fallen human nature, and its lingering effects in the regenerate, causes us to buck against the Word of God. We become

unsettled when the Word commands, 'Thou shalt not...'; for it reminds us that we have done the forbidden thing, and we are loath to confess our sin. We become unsettled when the Word declares, 'Thou shalt...'; for it reminds us of our sins of omission, and we are quick to blame anything and everything instead of confessing our sin. But when we see that we are 'in Christ', and when we understand the benefits, blessings and mercies which are granted to us from the Father because we are in the Son, then we begin to see that we are to live as God's Word commands. This is, after all, how those who are 'in Christ' ought to live. This is what the Word declares. Thus that Word becomes precious to us, and we delight in the law of the Lord after the inward man.

We could, no doubt, add many other benefits of this doctrine. May these be written in our hearts by the grace of our loving heavenly Father. May we all know what it means to be 'in Christ', and thus be accepted in the beloved. Amen.¶

HELP IN TROUBLE

CARINE MACKENZIE

DO you know anybody who has not got a problem? I doubt it. Certainly everybody I know has one kind of problem or another! Some have a health problem and are undergoing tests or treatment in hospital. Others have lost a close family member and are feeling so very sad. Others are worried about their job or find it hard to pay the bills every month.

We should not be surprised that there are so many problems around. The Bible tells us that 'man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward' (Job 5:7).

The Bible tells us where to go for help when we are in trouble. 'Call upon me in the day of trouble,' says the Lord, 'I will deliver thee and thou shalt glorify me' (Psalm 50:15).

'God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble' (Psalm 46:1).

When Jesus was ministering in this world, many people came to him with big problems—blindness, leprosy, demon-possession, a sick child, hunger. Jesus helped and healed many. Today we should ask the Lord for help and healing. He knows what is best for us and may graciously heal our sickness. We often think that our healing comes from the medicine or the surgeon, but all healing is a gift from God and is for his glory.

Two very close friends of ours have died recently. God did not heal them. That too was his kind and gracious will. God took both these friends to be with himself in heaven. Jesus prayed to his Father that his people would be with him in heaven (John 17:24). When one of the Lord's own people goes to heaven, that is an answer to Jesus' own prayer.

The Lord tells us to bring all our troubles to him—'casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you' (1 Peter 5:7). And if we trust him with all our anxieties and troubles, then we know his peace in our hearts. 'Be careful for nothing,' God tells us, 'but in everything by prayer and supplication let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus' (Philippians 4: 6–7).

BIBLE SEARCH

Find the missing words. The initials of the correct answer will spell out a word from the story.

1. But I am poor and needy; yet the Lord _____ upon me (Psalm 40:17).
2. The _____ cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles (Psalm 34:17).
3. The LORD also will be a refuge for the _____, a refuge in times of trouble (Psalm 9:9).
4. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD _____ him with his hand (Psalm 37:24).
5. The father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I _____; help thou mine unbelief (Mark 9:24).
6. Who shall separate us from the _____ of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? (Romans 8:35).
7. He shall deliver thee in six troubles: yea, in seven there shall no _____ touch thee (Job 5:19).
8. This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and _____ him out of all his troubles (Psalm 34:6).

STUDIES IN EZEKIEL

P KING (Hailsham)

Chapter 36:16–38

YOU HAVE NOTHING TO COMMEND YOU—IT IS ALL OF GRACE

THIS part of the chapter explains the reason for the judgment on Israel, and points vividly to God's mercy and grace for their survival. The glory of God is always paramount in this prophecy, contrasted with the inglorious behaviour of his people. Verse 21 concentrates our minds, when he says, 'I had pity for mine holy name'.

Regeneration. The New Testament doctrine of new life is taught in this chapter, but always to the glory of God and not the converted person. So often today people are praised to a level unbecoming of the humility we should practice. Verses 22–23 are replete with this teaching—'I do not this for your sakes'—'for mine holy name's sake'—'I will sanctify [set apart] my great name'. If we could realise more clearly our position before God, his mercy and grace would shine more brightly. This great work is detailed in verses 24–32. Notice the stages in outline;

- a. Taken from among the heathen (separated by grace) v.24
- b. Gather you (the Church is a gathered people) v.24
- c. Sprinkled with clean water (purification from sin) v.25
- d. A new heart (regeneration) v.26
- e. The Holy Spirit given (conversion) v.27
- f. Walking in God's statutes (a new life in Christ) v.27
- g. Dwell in the land (the kingdom of our Lord) v.28

- h. My people (personal salvation) v.28
- i. Delivered from uncleanness (sanctifications) v.29
- j. Multiply your fruit (grow in grace) v.30
- k. Remember past ways (confession of sin) v.31
- l. To the glory of God (for Jesus Christ) v.32

Witness. At conversion a change of outlook takes place in a person, but if this is unnoticed by those around us we should question our claim. Some seem to 'become Christians' and retain their former lifestyle. The teaching here is that 'In the day that I shall have cleansed you' (v.33) 'they shall say, The waste and desolate and ruined cities are become fenced and are inhabited' (v.35). The unbelievers will know a change has occurred and it will be an on-going thing—'I will increase them with men like a flock' (v.37).

Lesson for today

- a. God will never forsake his people, even in the deepest distress.
- b. Judgment is not without reason, and always for God's glory.
- c. We must reflect God's glory in our lives in humble service every day.
- d. If we know no change in our life we are not converted.

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature

He that can search in any measure, by a spiritual light, into his own heart and soul, will find 'God be merciful to me a sinner' a better plea than any he can furnish withal from any worth of his own.

John Owen

NEW COVENANT THEOLOGY: PART 2

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IN the first part we looked at some of the tenets of New Covenant Theology (NCT), a theology and hermeneutic based on Anabaptist ideas re-developed by Jon Zens and others since the late 1970s. NCT denies a number of Reformed doctrines, including the covenant of grace, the moral law, and the abiding validity of the Ten Commandments. We now begin to examine the most recent writings of a British proponent of NCT, David H. J. Gay.

David Gay, a self-confessed mouthpiece for NCT,¹⁷ was a speaker at Zens' Searching Together conference in 2013, and has produced a stream of books, articles, and sermons promoting NCT, including *Christ is All: No Sanctification by the Law*, commended by Zens. One reviewer of *Christ is All* extolled it as the 'best and most thorough book on New Covenant Theology'. Others hailed it as 'a unique book exposing this Reformed spell that has been cast over the church', in which the author has 'demolished the teaching of the reformers'. We will therefore consider contemporary NCT (from 2013 to 2015) from the pen of one of its most prolific and active exponents, whose publications have been endorsed by the founder of this movement.¹⁸

David Gay's voyage from Reformed truth

David Gay formed a Reformed Baptist Church in 1977, and wrote *Voyage to Freedom*, a children's story based on the voyage of the

17. D. Gay, *Christ is All: No Sanctification by the Law* (2013), p20.
18. *Christ is All: No Sanctification by the Law* (2013); *Grace, Not Law! The Answer to Antinomianism* (2013); *Four 'Antinomians' tried and Vindicated* (2013); *Psalm 119 and the New Covenant* (2014); *The Glorious New-Covenant Ministry* (2014); plus various short papers 2014–2015 available online.

Mayflower, published by the Banner of Truth Trust in 1984. He gave a paper in 1993 at the Banner of Truth Leicester Conference, and was a contributor in two issues of the *Banner of Truth* magazine in 1994, including one entitled 'A Commemoration of the Westminster Assembly'.

David Gay has progressively turned away from Reformed theology because it upholds the moral law, which he now describes as 'Calvin's system, a system of fear and guilt and punishment ... enslaving law-work based on fear'.¹⁹ His recent theological stance—denying the covenant of grace and asserting that the moral law of God has no place in the ministry of the Church or in the life of the believer—is radically at odds with that of the Puritans, the Westminster standards, and the Banner of Truth Trust.

One of Gay's methods to promote NCT is by misrepresenting the Reformed faith, setting up straw men to make it look implausible. Intimate knowledge of the Reformed faith makes such misrepresentations inexcusable and vicious. Gay is not averse to employing premises that are at odds with the biblical doctrine of justification and the gospel itself in his attempt to score points. This is an exceedingly irresponsible methodology, and calls for robust reproof.

Another method is to attempt to demonstrate inconsistencies within the Reformed faith. In principle this is unobjectionable because all theology should be open to scrutiny. But again, because he brings beliefs contrary to the Reformed confessions as premises in arguments concerning Reformed theology, Gay makes invalid deductions to 'prove' that the

Reformed faith is inconsistent. For the well-informed reader this demonstrates nothing more than expertise in propounding invalid arguments. However, this approach will certainly mislead many.

NCT denial of the Law of God—Introduction

NCT makes a multi-pronged attack on the Reformation doctrine of the 'three uses of the law',²⁰ especially the third use, which affirms that the moral law remains useful for the believer. Firstly, NCT denies that there is a body of law that always binds all men, traditionally called the moral law. Secondly, it asserts that 'the entire law, the old covenant, the ten commandments are all of a piece',²¹ so that if any of the Mosaic Law can be shown to be abrogated, then the Ten Commandments must also have been swept away.

NCT drives a wedge between the New Covenant and the Old Covenant to such an extent that what Gay says starts off as 'a little local difficulty' becomes 'a point of wider and greater significance':

[W]hen you read of a man in Scripture stating that he loves the law of God, you have to decide whether the writer is an old-covenant man speaking in old-covenant terms; an old-covenant man speaking in new-covenant terms; or a new covenant man speaking in new-covenant terms.²²

Gay reminds us that Psalm 40 is 'a prophecy of Christ and his glory in his saving work',²³ and that 'there is no question' but that in it the Son's 'delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart' refers to the abolished law of God.²⁴ Since the 'en-

20. It is not only Reformed but also Lutheran, and enshrined in the confessional Lutheran *Formula of Concord*, Article VI (1577).

21. Gay, *Psalm 119 and the New Covenant*, p28.

22. Ibid., pp73–74.

23. Ibid., p51.

24. Ibid., pp11, 13, 17ff. The notion that God's law was abolished *in toto* is found in several of Gay's works,

tire' law of God was 'abolished' including the Ten Commandments, it cannot now be the new-covenant man's delight and meditation.²⁵ Though Gay admits that in Romans 7:22 'the apostle apparently speaks of his delight in the law',²⁶ he maintains that

there is no evidence ... that Paul is here setting a pattern for believers to follow. None whatsoever. There is no command here along the lines of: 'Follow me!'²⁷

But as John Murray questions:

If Paul thought of himself as released from obligation to the law of God, how could he ever have confessed as a believer, 'I consent unto the law of God that it is good ... I delight in the law of God after the inward man ... Consequently then I myself with my mind serve the law of God' (Romans 7: 16, 22, 25)?²⁸

Gay's solution, typical of NCT's handling of its many self-generated paradoxes, is a fallacious 'argument from incredulity': if *he* cannot reconcile delight in God's law within the paradigm of NCT, then the difficulty must be eliminated to avoid any challenge to it:

I am not at all sure that 'the man of Romans 7' exists! ... [T]here is a complete absence of Christ and the Holy Spirit in the context ... I am unable to reconcile all this with the view that this is a believer ... delighting in the ten commandments ... This verse, therefore, inflicts no damage whatsoever upon new-covenant theology.²⁹

for example *Christ is All*, p205–206: 'Christ did not abolish the entire law except the ten commandments ... it was the entire system of law which Christ abolished'; p139: 'the entire law ... was abolished by the coming of Christ'. No law escaped abolition.

25. Ibid., pp12, 13, 17ff.

26. Ibid., p61.

27. Ibid., pp58–59.

28. J. Murray, *Principles of Conduct* (1957), p191.

29. Gay, *Psalm 119 and the New Covenant*, pp58–59. It is *false* to claim a 'complete absence of ... the Holy Spirit in the context'. Since 'they that are after the Spirit [do mind] the things of the Spirit' (Rom 8:5), the

Whilst Gay insists that ‘the entire law, the old covenant, the ten commandments are all of a piece’ and so were abolished, he admits that Christ did mention ‘a law which had been written 1500 years before his time’³⁰ when he cited Leviticus 19:18,³¹ and that

[T]his is precisely where “sin” comes into the picture: the root sin is failing to live according to these demands. And we are all sinners.³²

If Leviticus 19:18 makes ‘demands’ on us all, and we are ‘all sinners’ for ‘failing to live according to these demands’, then God’s commandments in Leviticus 19:18 must still bind us in regard to our obedience. But Gay must never be seen to make such a valid deduction, as that would contradict a dogma of NCT:

[A]ny law regarded as binding upon believers must be drawn, not from the Old Covenant ... but from the New Covenant.³³

NCT’s Covenant of Death

Gay’s book *The Glorious New-Covenant Ministry*

spiritual man will mind God’s law because ‘the law is spiritual’ (Rom 7:4), that is to say ‘it is of divine origin and character, and more specifically, that it is derived from the Holy Spirit, is validated by his authority, and bespeaks his character. The law is also spoken of as holy, just, and good. These are attributes that express what God is; and to characterize the law as holy, just, and good is but to claim in the most explicit way that the law is of God and bears the imprint of his character as holy, just, and good. Thus every lack of conformity to the law of God is a lack of conformity to God’s likeness, and all conformity to the law is but conformity to that pattern which is the primary and ultimate pattern of sanctification.’ (J. Murray, *The Pattern of Sanctification*, p307).

30. Gay, *The Glorious New-Covenant Ministry*, p57.

31. Matt 5:43–44: 19:19; 22:39; see also Paul in Rom 13:9 and Gal 5:14; and James in Jas 2:8.

32. Gay, *The Glorious New-Covenant Ministry*, p57.

33. J. Zens, *This is My Beloved Son, Hear Him* (1997). Thus incest is honourable if permitted under civil law: ‘In the New Covenant Scriptures no mention is made of the impropriety of marrying one’s sister ... [Y]our marriage would be holy in God’s sight.’ Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology: Questions Answered* (2006), p155.

considers 2 Corinthians 3:7–4:6. This passage is not specifically about different law codes, or *uses* of the moral law summarized in the Ten Commandments.³⁴ Nevertheless, NCT claims from this passage that the law of God has been replaced by the law of Christ.³⁵ NCT dogma states that the Ten Commandments were abolished as the ‘letter that killeth’, being an inseparable part of the ‘covenant of death’, a covenant of works.³⁶

But the New Covenant also delivers ‘the letter that killeth’ when declared to the impenitent, to apostates, and to unworthy partakers of its ordinances, and so becomes the ‘ministration of death’ to transgressors. To them the work of the gospel becomes ‘the savour of death unto death’, as Paul had just noted (2 Cor 2:16). What God institutes as a means of grace can be corrupted by sinners into their means of condemnation: the letter without the Spirit condemns, whether in the Old Covenant or the New. But the pious believer in the Old Testament no more thought that he could obtain forgiveness of sins through the blood of animals, than the pious believer today thinks he can obtain forgiveness through the water of baptism; and neither would think they could inherit eternal life through law keeping.

R.L. Dabney includes 2 Corinthians 3: 6–7 among texts where ‘the scope and circumstances of the Apostles in making such statements, are greatly overlooked’:

34. Paul’s argument is much more nuanced than NCT would have us believe. The veiling and unveiling of Moses’ face was in relation to what God revealed to him in the Tent of Meeting, which was neither the Decalogue, nor the body of case law based on application of the Decalogue (‘the judgments’), but mainly positive ceremonial and civil laws.

35. This was the topic of Gay’s address at Zens’ *Searching Together* conference in 2013, which paper Zens calls ‘uplifting’. NCT is thus formally antinomian (i.e. the moral law is abolished) and formally neonomian (i.e. a new law is substituted). NCT’s supersessionist ‘law of Christ’ will be dealt with in a subsequent part.

36. Gay, *Reformed covenant-theology and new-covenant theology are two very different ‘beasts’* (2014). The expression ‘covenant of death’ is also used by Geoff Volker, Mike Adams, and other NCT proponents.

Let an evangelical Christian imagine himself instructing and refuting a modern Ritualist of the school of Rome or the Tractarians. He would find himself necessarily employing an *argumentum ad hominem* precisely like that of Paul against the Pharisees. The evangelical believer would be forced to distinguish between the legal or condemning, and the gospel side of our own sacraments; and he would proceed to show, that by attempting to make a self-righteousness out of those sacraments, the modern Pharisee was going back under a dispensation of condemnation and bondage; that he was throwing away ‘the spirit which giveth life,’ and retaining only the ‘letter that killeth’.³⁷

The covenant of grace, which runs right through the Mosaic administration, does not suspend life and death on the believer’s personal and total obedience to the moral law, but by grace through the gospel grants life so that the believer can live in obedience to God’s revealed will. It declares: ‘Live! And do this!’ As Ursinus notes in his commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism:

The law is not in itself the letter which killeth ... the law alone, without the gospel, is the letter [that kills] ... But when it is joined with the gospel ... [it] is effectual in the godly, inasmuch as those who are regenerated commence willingly and cheerfully to yield obedience to the law. The law ... is the ministration and means through which the Holy Ghost ... works spiritual obedience in us.³⁸

Augustine had said much the same in his comments on 2 Corinthians 3:

For there is no doubt that, without his assisting grace, the law is the letter which

kills; but when the life-giving spirit is present, the law causes that to be loved as written within, which it once caused to be feared as written without ... The law was therefore given, in order that grace might be sought; grace was given, in order that the law might be fulfilled.³⁹

But Gay insists on NCT’s founding dogma that the covenant of grace is an invention of the Reformed faith:

[T]he Reformed have also invented ... ‘the covenant of grace’ ... [T]his covenant of grace ... does not appear in Scripture ... either in name or concept.⁴⁰

On the contrary, the covenant with Abraham, as Paul makes clear in Galatians 3:16–18, 29, was replete with gracious promise:

Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made ... which is Christ ... For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise ... And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.

God gave inheritance by promise, by grace, not by works of the law, legal merit, or legal right. Since this covenant was made *with* Christ the Mediator, and confirmed *in* Christ, and by grace *to all in* Christ, it is suitably described as a covenant of grace. NCT instead aligns itself with the old errors of the Anabaptists and the Romanists:

The covenant of grace, or plan of salvation, being the same in all its elements from the beginning, it follows, first, in opposition to the Anabaptists, that the people of God before Christ constituted a Church, and that the Church has been one and the same under all dispensations. It has always had the same promise, the same Redeemer, and the same condition of membership, namely, faith

37. R.L. Dabney, *Lectures on Systematic Theology*, pp458–9.

38. Z. Ursinus, *Explicationum catecheticarum D. Zachariae Ursini Silesii* (1591).

39. Augustine, *De Spiritu et Littera* (AD 412).

40. Gay, *Christ is All*, p82.

in the Son of God as the Saviour of the world.

It follows from the same premises, in opposition to the Romanists, that the salvation of the people of God who died before the coming of Christ, was complete. They were truly pardoned, sanctified, and, at death, admitted to the state into which those dying in the Christian faith are now received.⁴¹

Historical Theology misrepresented

NCT proponents put far too much weight on secondary sources (some quite poor, biased, and discredited) rather than going *ad fontes* and reading primary sources in their original languages. Thus NCT tends to make inaccurate, fallacious, and contradictory propositions on historical theology, especially with regard to covenant theology. For example, Gay states that '[T]he development of covenant theology originated with Zwingli'.⁴² 'Calvin was not a covenant theologian—he died before the notion had been invented'.⁴³

Neither proposition is true, and since Zwingli died in 1531 and Calvin died in 1564 it is evident that they are inconsistent. Moreover, the proposition that 'Covenant Theology was unknown until Ulrich Zwingli called it into service against the Anabaptists'⁴⁴ is self-refuting.⁴⁵ NCT proponents would have us believe that covenant theology was 'invented' after 1564, yet this 'unknown' theology was 'called into service' for a major doctrinal controversy before 1531. These positions are absurdly incoherent. The charges of invention are also spurious, and similar to ill-informed comments made by the heterodox about such doctrines

as the Trinity and Christology. Moreover, the thesis propounded a century ago that Zwingli invented covenant theology to defend paedobaptism against the Anabaptists has long been discredited,⁴⁶ yet continues to be wheeled out by NCT proponents. As recently as 2014 Gay asked the question, 'So why did the Reformers invent covenant theology?'⁴⁷—begging the question that they did—and he cites a work that he believes supports his antipaedobaptist NCT position. In this quotation, John Riggs says,

From a historical perspective, the Reformed use of covenant to interpret Christian baptism first arose, almost always, when arguing for infant baptism.⁴⁸

Gay's commentary on this is:

In other words, the Reformers began with the practice they had inherited from Rome, and went looking for a theology to support it.⁴⁹

Gay clearly has a problem with English comprehension. He claims, in answer to his own question, that because the Reformers 'inherited' a practice, they had to 'invent' a theology to 'support it'. But Riggs' point is not about the *origin* of covenant theology, but about how a *specific use* of the doctrine of the covenant 'first arose'. The *particular application* of the doctrine of the covenant in a controversy over baptism originated, as Riggs goes on to say, as a 'specific response' to an attack by the Anabaptists, an attack that was framed on the basis of their defective theology of covenant. It has been known for decades

46. Such ideas can be traced to E.G. von Korff, *Die Anfänge der Föderaltheologie und ihre erste Ausgestaltung in Zürich und Holland*, (Bonn, 1908); and G. Schrenk, *Gottesreich und Bund im Alteren Protestantismus vornehmlich bei Johannes Coccejus*, (Gütersloh, 1923) and *Bund: III. Föderaltheologie, Dogmengeschichtlich, Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, I. (1927) pp1364–1367.

47. D. Gay, *The Abrahamic Covenant* (2014), p3.

48. J. W. Riggs: *Baptism in the Reformed Tradition: A Historical and Practical Theology* (2002), p122.

49. D. Gay, *The Abrahamic Covenant*, p3.

that Zwingli's understanding of the covenant, which preceded the Anabaptist controversy by some years, 'was developed in a context other than the defence of Infant Baptism ... through his reflection upon Scripture itself'.⁵⁰

As the Reformer Bullinger pointed out, Zwingli was the first in a thousand years properly to appreciate the 'one eternal covenant', the doctrine of which (like many others) had lain fairly dormant since Augustine. Thus as Woolsey points out:

[I]n Augustine especially, there was a close association of the covenant with baptism, so that it is erroneous to locate the origin of the idea of the covenant in this connection in the Zurich reformation.⁵¹

Gay thus confuses the *specific application* of a doctrine with the origin of the doctrine itself. Beneath this lies an insidious postmodern approach, the 'fallacy of origins' (also known as the 'genetic fallacy'), which assumes that the truth or falsity of beliefs can be determined by how they came to be held. Gay's writing is pregnant with this fallacy, and is apparent in such expressions as 'invent covenant theology', 'the practice they had inherited from Rome', 'went looking for a theology', etc, in

50. J.W. Cottrell, *Covenant and Baptism in the Theology of Huldreich Zwingli*. ThD thesis (Princeton, 1971). Zwingli's statements before the Anabaptist controversy (1525) on the unity and continuity of the everlasting covenant of grace include: 'God ... deigns in our day to illumine us with his gospel, in order to renew his covenant which cannot be annulled', *Petition to ... Bishop of Constance* (1522); 'For ... there would still have been a gospel, as the glad tidings of God's grace, and there would still have been the covenant which God in his grace had entered into', *Apologeticus Archeteles* (1522); 'When we speak of old testament and new testament, we in fact understand the covenant that God once made (lit. 'cut', as Hebrew) by Christ, be it with the patriarchs or with all the world in the generations following', 'While Christ had delivered the covenant to us by grace, through the same we became sons and heirs of God', *Expositio et Confirmatio Articulorum* (1523).

51. A. Woolsey, *The Covenant in the Church Fathers*, in *Haddington House Journal* (2003), p52.

order to discredit both paedobaptism and covenant theology. A more accurate view of the matter is by Bavinck:

The relation in which believers have come to stand to God by Christ is repeatedly described in Scripture with the term 'covenant.' Zwingli and Bucer already seized upon these scriptural thoughts to defend the unity of the Old and New Testaments against the Anabaptists.⁵²

To employ an established biblical doctrine against a *new* error does not make that doctrine an *invention*. Any period where biblical truth is attacked calls for rebuttals, and leads to the further refinement and definition of doctrine, and development of arguments to refute the errors of the age. Such was the case at the Reformation. It was the Anabaptist attack across a swathe of biblical doctrines that spurred the Reformers to combat their errors with Scripture truths that, in regard to the covenant, they had been expounding in lectures, sermons, letters, treatises, and commentaries since 1521.⁵³ The unity and continuity of the covenant of grace was explicated to meet the latest challenge, though it had been worked out sufficiently in the early Church to refute the detractors and heretics of its own age:

One of the emphases in the Reformed use of the covenant was to demonstrate the unity and continuity or harmony between the Old Testament and the New. This was especially so in relation to the early Anabaptist controversy, and was a continuing concern for Calvin. But this was an old issue. With the church under attack, first from Judaism itself, and later from Gnostic and pagan writers who sought to isolate Christianity from its Judaistic roots, the early Fathers were pressed to explain the relationship

52. H. Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, Vol.2. Insufficient scholarship had been done on the writings of Oecolampadius when *Reformed Dogmatics* was published.

53. Oecolampadius (at Basel), Bucer (at Strasbourg), and Zwingli (at Zurich) were active in this.

41. C. Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, p373.

42. Gay, *Christ is All*, p369.

43. Ibid., p83.

44. Wells and Zaspel, *New Covenant Theology: Description, Definition, Defense* (2002), p2.

45. The proposition is self-refuting since something 'unknown' cannot be 'called into service' in theological debate.

between the Old and New Testaments. The covenant was naturally seen as a unifying factor in the dealings of God with men throughout both periods.⁵⁴

Indeed, the concept of the covenant of grace was taught in the early Church from the first century. Woolsey, having set out a great deal of evidence for the same, summarizes the concept in the Apostolic Fathers and the Church Fathers, one utterly at odds with NCT:

First, they used the idea of the covenant to stress the unity of the Old and New Testaments ... Secondly, they saw the covenant soteriologically as one eternal covenant in Christ manifest throughout all ages from the time of Adam.⁵⁵

A charge of invention of doctrine is the kind of cheap jibe levelled at Protestants by Romanists. The Reformation was a re-discovery of biblical truths hammered out in the early Church. Certain of these truths were brought into the foreground to combat the attacks from both Romanists and radicals. Far from covenant theology being an invention of the Reformers, we find from a more careful study of historical theology that NCT doctrines and their like are the real departures from the Church's historic teaching.

Calvin—Covenant Theologian

Gay's charge that 'Calvin was not a covenant theologian' is peddling yet another discredited thesis that claims a significant difference between Calvin and Calvinism:

Calvin was not a covenant theologian—he died before the notion had been invented. Apparently, therefore, Calvin would have failed his examination paper on Calvinism!⁵⁶

This idea has been comprehensively refuted by, among others, Paul Helm, Andrew Woolsey and Richard Muller:

[T]he problem of the relationship between Calvin and 'covenant theology' can now be seen to be (as several scholars have already identified on other grounds) a problem of twentieth-century approaches to theology.⁵⁷

Indeed, covenant theology did not change radically after the Reformers:

The weight of evidence ... leans heavily towards the view that the theology of the covenant does not represent any great divergence on the part of the later Reformed covenantal theologians from the theology of the Reformers themselves.⁵⁸

Although Calvin could not be expected to have employed some of the scholastic *methods* and the theological *terminology* introduced after his death,

All the basic *ideas* of what is normally designated "covenant theology" are to be found in his works ... [He] built the idea of the covenant into his entire thought in a pervasive manner, so as to include it not only in theological tracts and treatises, but in commentaries and sermons as well ... Calvin took up all the points raised by Oecolampadius, Zwingli, and

Bullinger, and expounded them and applied them in considerably more detail than his predecessors had ever done. He painstakingly demonstrated the unity and continuity of the covenant throughout his works. He showed the harmony of law and gospel in the context of the covenant.⁵⁹

Calvin's own comments about the 'new covenant' demonstrate his view of the unity and continuity of the covenant of grace:

Now, as to the new covenant, it is not so called because it is contrary to the first covenant ... [God] had already made his covenant with Abraham, and the Law was a confirmation of that covenant ... God has never made any other covenant than that which he made formerly with Abraham, and at length confirmed by the hand of Moses ... [T]he covenant which God made at first is perpetual.⁶⁰

God had promised a new covenant at the coming of Christ; but had shown at the same time that it would not be different from the first, but rather this would be his object—the covenant that he had originally struck with his people would be confirmed for perpetuity.⁶¹

This covenant teaching is anathema to NCT, so much so that Gay lashes out and

charges the Reformed faith with doing 'very serious damage' to believers:

[C]ovenant theology leads to very serious damage; not least, in the lives of those believers who are reared on it ... who are in bondage under the law as a result of Calvin's system, a system which is bolstered by covenant theology.⁶²

But never in the history of the Church have views on the law, the covenants, and the Church like those of NCT been held as orthodox; indeed, they are explicitly and implicitly condemned in the Reformed confessions. On the other hand, views akin to NCT have turned up in the teachings of heretics such as Marcion, Servetus, and Socinus, as well as in Gnostic, Antinomian, and Anabaptist movements. The Church has judged that it is these and their like who have done the 'very serious damage' to the Church corporately and to believers individually.

Ultimately the issue is whether NCT is *biblical*. But NCT's extraordinary claims, which amount to the charge that the Church has been completely wrong on the moral law and the covenants for thousands of years, demand extraordinary evidence. Despite his prolixity in many monographs, David Gay's defence of NCT turns out to be nothing but special pleading, vacuous rhetoric, inexcusable misrepresentation, faulty logic, and unsound exegesis, as we shall demonstrate in subsequent parts.

In the next part we shall consider the moral law and the uniqueness of the Decalogue, and deal with NCT objections.¶

62. D. Gay, *Reformed covenant-theology and new-covenant theology are two very different 'beasts'*.

54. Woolsey, *The Covenant in the Church Fathers*, pp26-27.

55. A. Woolsey, *Unity and Continuity in Covenantal Thought*, PhD thesis (Glasgow, 1988). RHB edition (2012), p183.

56. Gay, *Christ is All*, p83.

57. Richard A. Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin: Studies in the Foundation of a Theological Tradition* (2000), p183. See also Muller *After Calvin: Studies in the Development of a Theological Tradition* (2003). Writing in 2012, Muller states that Andrew Woolsey's 1988 PhD thesis is 'the first (and after more than two decades, remains the only) major attempt in English to present a view of the movement of Reformed thought on covenant ... Woolsey's work remains crucial in its detailed, balanced analysis, and above all in its conclusions'. Ligon Duncan writes, 'No future thesis in this area of study can afford to ignore this work. It is now the gold standard.'

58. Woolsey, *Unity and Continuity in Covenantal Thought*, p540. We recommend reading the whole PhD thesis, where Woolsey weighs the evidence.

59. Ibid., pp336–337. See also Paul Helm, *Calvin and the Covenant: Unity and Continuity*, in *Evangelical Quarterly* 55 (1983).

60. J. Calvin, *Commentary* on Jeremiah 31:31–32.

61. J. Calvin, *Harmony of the Gospels*, on Matthew 5:17

TO BE CONTINUED

O excellent hiding, which is become my perfection! My God, thou hidest thy treasure, to kindle my desire; thou hidest thy pearl, to inflame the seeker; thou delayest to give, that thou mayest teach me to importune; seemest not to hear, to make me persevere.

Anselm

A SERMON ON MATTHEW 6:10

PART I

BY J. VAN LODENSTEYN (1620–1677)
SUPPLIED BY A W DE LANGE (Scherpenzeel, The Netherlands)

‘Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven’ (Matthew 6:10)

DEAR hearers! We have been busy and are still busy with things, which are highly necessary and are far from natural reason, namely to lose and kill one’s own reason, will and desire. This the natural man cannot grasp, for to lose his own will is to him to be totally dehumanized. His thoughts are: we are reasonable creatures, and the Lord hath created the will in us, shall we lose this will? In this way we would steal what the Lord hath laid in us. But people who speak like that show that they do not know the highest majesty, glory and unspeakable greatness of God. They have no spiritual eyes. They have lost what their first father Adam had before the fall. They do not understand that the Lord Jesus came into this world to redeem us of our damnable self and to cause that man could pray again: ‘Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven’. As the Lord Jesus showed us by his example, Luke 22:42, where he saith, ‘Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine be done’. While we were busy speaking about the doctrine whereof the Catechism speaks, in the first question, touching our belonging to the Lord, which we confirmed above from 1 Corinthians 6:19,20, we

saw that such an ownership should result in a denial of our own will.

When we were meditating about this, we could not find a more suitable word than the words of the Lord Jesus, where he teacheth how the inward sighs of the faithful unto God are about this: not our will, but God’s will be done. It is true that this verse speaks both about the will of commandment and of the will of God revealed by his order; but, because we have spoken earlier about conforming our will to God’s command, when we spoke about 1 Corinthians 6:19, we shall now speak about the submission to the Lord’s order, and that all man’s desire should end in the all-sufficiency of God, that shall bring everything to a good end, and that makes us rest fully on his all-sufficient, only-wise and always good control.

And Oh! that we would understand this in the inner part of our heart, and that we would try it in uprightness. Because, Christians! it is not done by speaking, but as it comes to an energetic and dexterous devise, of this resting on God’s control unto exaltation of the Lord, and onto a sweet rest in our mind in all our adversity, so how unpleasant our meetings might be for our defiled mind.¶

TO BE CONTINUED

As Abraham dealt by his concubine’s children, so doth God by the Ishmaels of the world; he gives them portions and sends them away; but the inheritance he reserves for his Isaacs: to them he gives all that he hath, yea, even himself: and what can we have more?

Elisha Coles

GOD’S MYSTERIOUS DEALINGS WITH HIS PEOPLE

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

‘Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known. Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron’ (Psalm 77:19–20)

IN this psalm, the inspired writer records a temptation to which he had been exposed, and the way he had overcome it. The temptation had been one to which the people of God are at all times liable, and with which they are frequently assaulted, a temptation to despondency. Under the pressure of some heavy affliction, the particular nature of which he does not state, his spirits had been deeply affected. ‘My soul ran,’ (says he) ‘in the night, and ceased not; my soul refused to be comforted’ (v.2). At such seasons, the usual resource and consolation of the pious soul is meditation upon God, upon his promises and perfection: but in the present case, such meditation, instead of healing the wound, aggravated it. ‘I remembered God, and was troubled; I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed’ (v.3). His mind, instead of being composed and cheered with the thoughts of God, became more confused and perplexed, from the apprehension of his Majesty, Justice and Holiness. At length, not finding any peace and comfort, he fell into the usual state of supposing that he should never find any. Such, at least, was the apprehension, which fear and unbelief suggested to his mind. ‘Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? doth his promise fail for evermore?’ (vv.7–8). Such had been his temptation.

His Deliverance

He next recounts the way in which he had been delivered out of it. This had been by calling faith into exercise, and by reviewing the

past dealings of God with his people: ‘And I said, This is my infirmity.’ Here we see the secret workings of faith, belief beginning to operate against the suggestions of unbelief. ‘Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?’ (v.9). No; to entertain such a thought is weakness indeed, and shows how little is my faith. I cannot seriously admit such a conclusion. There are no just and reasonable grounds, neither is there anything in the past history of God’s gracious dealings with the Church, that can justify any apprehension of this kind.

He goes on to say—

I will remember the years of the right hand of the most High. I will remember the works of the LORD: surely I will remember thy wonders of old. I will meditate also of all thy work, and talk of thy doings (vv.10–12).

In this way, he found his fears dispersed, and his hope revived. Looking back on the lives of the Patriarchs, as related in the sacred writings, he saw that though the Lord had afflicted, he had not forgotten them; though he had troubled, he had not forsaken them. While in that great national deliverance of Israel out of Egyptian bondage, there was exhibited for the benefit of his Church in all ages, a striking example of the way in which God frequently deals with his people, bringing them into troubles and difficulties, and then causing those very afflictions to work beyond all expectation for their good: so that instead of being

cast down and desponding under their trials, they had in truth reason to rejoice in, and to be thankful for them.

Mysterious But Gracious

It is this view of the case which the Psalmist described in the text, when, having come out of all his trouble, and now better understanding the design and tendency of the Divine proceedings, he thus bears testimony to the mysterious, but gracious way in which God often deals with his people. 'Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known. Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron'.

In further discoursing on these words, my intention is—

1. To give a clearer explanation of the doctrine conveyed in them;
2. To draw from it some salutary instructions.

May the same Spirit which has caused this passage to be written for our profit, accompany with his special blessing our meditations on the truths contained in it.

1. The Doctrine Conveyed

In explaining the doctrine conveyed in the text, I must begin by reminding you that I have already represented it as descriptive of the mysterious, but gracious way, in which God often deals with his people. With respect to them, his way is in the sea, and his path in the great waters, and his footsteps are not known.

These words set forth the mysteriousness, in which the Divine dispensations are frequently involved—

- Truly God is a God who hideth himself (see Job 23:9)
- Clouds and darkness are round about him (Psalm 97:2)
- How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out (Romans 11:33)

How Things Seem

And in nothing are these truths more evident than in his dealings with his people. He leads

them in a way they know not. He often brings them into troubles and difficulties; obstructs their paths; crosses their inclinations; and appears, perhaps, to forsake and disregard them. They call upon him; but he seems to turn a deaf ear to their cry. His providences expose them to some imminent danger; and when they look to him for deliverance, he seemingly stands afar off; and instead of lessening the danger, appears only to increase it.

How Things Are

But, in the meantime, what are his real thoughts towards them, but thoughts of peace? In the midst of their trials and tribulations, his causing all things to work together for good (Romans 8:28). While his way is in the sea, and his paths are in the great waters, and his footsteps are not known—all around him is darkness and mystery—yet he is still leading his people like a flock, and is overruling all events for their benefit. His eye is continually upon them for good, and his hand is unceasingly exercised in their protection and preservation. Does he conduct them by a rough and steep and rugged road? The reason is because he knows this road is safest, and in the end the shortest to that land of rest and peace, where their souls will be most certainly and most permanently refreshed. Does he lead them by a path full of dangers and difficulties? It is because he sees that every other road would expose them to more real dangers, and would involve them in greater difficulties.

But let us make this truth still plainer. Let us illustrate it by the example adduced in the Psalm from which the text is taken.

The Exodus from Egypt

The people of Israel, groaning under the cruel bondage of the Egyptians, cried unto the Lord. And in compassion to their sufferings, in answer to their cry, and in fulfilment of the promises made to their fathers, the Lord sent them deliverance by the means of Moses and Aaron. Having desolated Egypt with his plagues, which compelled its haughty King

to let the prisoners go, the Lord brought them out of the house of bondage with a mighty hand and a stretched out arm. And having thus delivered them out of Egypt, he promised to conduct them into the rich and fruitful land of Canaan. But how did he proceed in fulfilling his promise? Instead of leading them along the nearest, the straightest and safest road, he directed them to take another route, which brought them into the wilderness. On either side, high and impassable mountains shut them in, while in front, an arm of the Red Sea kept them from advancing.

But no sooner did Pharaoh and the Egyptians hear of their situation, than, being already forgetful of the Divine judgments, and grieved that they had let the people go, they resolved to pursue, and compel them to return. Accordingly, having collected their chariots and horsemen, they followed after the fugitives, and overtook them. And now the destruction of Israel seemed to be certain. Shut in by the wilderness, before them was the sea: and behind them was Pharaoh and all his host. Being an unarmed multitude, with more than half of them women and children, laden with goods and clothes and all their substance, what resistance could they make against such an enemy? They could not contend with them, nor escape from them. Nothing but death and captivity stared them in the face. No wonder they were sore afraid and cried unto the Lord, and gave way to complaining and despair, as many of them did (Exodus 14:10–12).

The Sequel

But mark the sequel. The Lord who had brought them and had designedly brought them into this difficulty, found a way of escape. At his command the sea itself opened a passage to them, as the Psalmist expresses it: 'The waters saw thee, O God: the waters saw thee; they were afraid: the depths also were troubled' (v.16). 'The LORD caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind...', and the waters were divided. And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry

ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left' (Exodus 14:21–22).

Thus they passed safely on. But what became of their pursuers? Blindly following them, in their rage and folly, they rushed into the midst of the sea, and the waters returning to their place, they were all drowned. Their discomfiture is thus described by the Psalmist: 'The clouds poured out water: the skies sent out a sound: thine arrows also went abroad. The voice of thy thunder was in the heaven: the lightnings lightened the world; the earth trembled and shook' (vv.17–18).

The Outcome

And what was the final result? The Israelites not only went safely through the sea, and thus escaped from their enemies, but saw in the morning those very enemies dead on the seashore. They who had thus troubled them would trouble them no more for ever. The very circumstances, which had seemed to be their destruction, proved in the end to be their salvation. How truly, on contemplating those events, might the Psalmist go on to say in the text before us: 'Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known.' He could say those things literally: for we see that the way which the Lord opened for his people was 'in the sea, and his path had been in the great waters'. But he could say it in the figurative sense. The way of the Lord had been very mysterious. His dealings with Israel had been dark and inscrutable, till the event showed the wisdom and mercy with which he acted.

He had seemed to be leading them into danger, but he was, in fact, securing their safety. He had appeared to be regardless of their interests, to be forgetful of their dangers, and to be conducting them into peril and ruin, without foresight or thought. But in the meantime, he was truly, however secretly, performing the part of the kind and good Shepherd. He was leading his people like a flock, by the hand of Moses and Aaron. Notwithstanding

all appearances to the contrary, he was planning their safety and happiness; and instead of leaving them to perish in the difficulties, into which he had purposely brought them for a season, he was designing by those very difficulties to work out for them a great and permanent security.

May we not exclaim with Paul, 'O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments! And his ways past finding out!'

Having thus more clearly explained the doctrine contained in the text, I shall proceed to draw from it—

2. Some Salutory Instructions

One lesson which we may learn from this is to form a right estimate of the safety and happiness of the people of God. This is a point on which worldly and irreligious people are in general very ignorant, and on which the people of God themselves frequently entertain very low and inadequate perceptions. They perceive not their own privileges, and consequently they neither love nor act up to them.

The Afflictions of the Righteous

It is a truth, which every day confirms, that many are the afflictions of the righteous. Those who fear God, and conscientiously serve him, are not exempted from trials and troubles—

- They are exposed to sorrows and calamities like any other person; and, indeed, they are sometimes afflicted more severely than others;
- Under the pressure and experience of these things, they are often cast down in their souls, and are tempted to conclude that it is no better with them than with others.

Meanwhile, wicked and ungodly persons are hardened by these things in their sins, and perceive, as they think, no benefit in seeking and serving God. Nay, they draw a directly opposite conclusion. Seeing, as they may

sometimes do, that the troubles of the righteous are increased, or are even occasioned by their Christian scruples and conscientious conduct, they are induced to believe that Christianity is a hurtful thing. They imagine that it only tends to make people more unhappy than they would otherwise be, and, consequently, instead of diminishing, it aggravates the afflictions of life.

How directly does the doctrine before us tend to correct these mistaken notions? It teaches us that those afflictive dispensations, with which the righteous are so often visited, far from being hurtful to them, are really blessings in disguise. It teaches us that those troubles and trials, in which they are frequently involved, though doubtless for the present more grievous than joyous; yet are the necessary and gracious discipline with which their heavenly Father is training them up for future usefulness and honour, which are even now working together for good. It teaches us, that though the ways and dealings of God with his people may often be to us mysterious and hidden, yet they are, in fact, all ordered in wisdom, mercy and love, and will be found at last to have been those very means by which their safety, peace and happiness will have been most effectually secured.

The Example of Joseph

Look, my brethren, at the history of the Patriarch Joseph. Hated by his brethren on account of his piety, he was cruelly sold by them into servitude, and was carried down as a slave to Egypt. Hated by his mistress, because from a religious principle, he would not comply with her wicked solicitations, he was falsely accused, cast into prison, and there left to endure, to all appearances, a hopeless and endless captivity.

We might, perhaps, be tempted to ask,

- What good did he derive from his religion and piety?
- Did they not involve him in troubles and difficulties?
- Did they not procure for him nothing but

bonds and imprisonment, misery and disgrace?

- Was this not the fruit of his serving God?

But what is the lesson that we learn from this sequel of history? We see that all his suffering was the appointed path to happiness and honour. We see there that every affliction, every indignity that he underwent for conscience' sake, were so many steps by which the Almighty in his secret providence was conducting him to that exalted station in which he became not only the benefactor of the whole land of Egypt, but the preserver of his father and his brethren. With what heartfelt conviction would Joseph have borne witness to the truth in the text. He had, indeed, found by a most happy experience that though the Lord's way is in the sea, and his path in the great waters, and that his footsteps are not known; yet that he still leadeth his sheep like a flock, and is conducting them, even by the way of the wilderness, into green and fruitful pastures.

A second lesson which we may learn is to see our duty in time of trouble and darkness. We have already observed that, at such times, and under such circumstances, we are naturally prone to despond, and to give up all as lost, and to think our difficulties will never be at an end, but will at last overwhelm us and sink us for ever. Such are the suggestions, which of ourselves we are prone to entertain, because we are prone to unbelief and impatience. Naturally, we have, and can have, no faith in the power and promises of God. Therefore we are under the influence of natural principles. We cannot see and understand the dealings of God, when dark and mysterious; nor feel and act under them as we ought. It is only in the light of his word, that we can come to this knowledge, and by believing it, can act as our duty requires. The first thing, then, that we must do in seasons of darkness and trial is to stir up our faith into action. Let us remember his wonders of old time (v.11) and bear in mind that he is the same yesterday, to day, and for ever (Hebrews 13:8). He is the

same God that he ever was: the same in love, mercy, and power, in truth, and in faithfulness, that he has been in ages past.

Precious Promises

Next let us call to mind the precious promises with which his Word abounds. Thus exercising our faith in his Word, we shall find our desponding fears lightened, if not removed. We shall learn in the darkest hours of affliction, to possess our souls in patience, and notwithstanding seeming obstacles, to hope in God's mercy; to look forward to the time when our burdens will be alleviated, and light return to our soul. In the meantime, we expect and pray that his recent gloomy dispensations towards us will be overruled and sanctified to our good; and will, by his blessing on them, be made the means of rendering us hereafter fitter for his mercies, and more capable of serving and glorifying him either in this world, or in the next.

Here, then, is our duty, in such times and circumstances as those described in the text. Is this a day of adversity? Are we in heaviness through manifold temptations? Do we find ourselves entangled in difficulties, from which we see no way of escape? If this be the case with us, yet let us not be cast down as men without hope. There is no ground for despair. The Lord's hand cannot be shortened, that he cannot save us. Nor are these trials and troubles any certain proof of his displeasure against us, or of his forgetfulness of us. He has wise reasons for what he does, and may have merciful reasons, too, as we shall see in the end, if we will but trust in him.

Humble Yourself

Let our afflictions only bring us nearer to him. Let them lead us to humble ourselves under his hand, and we shall find in the end, as Israel, as Job, and as David found, that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy.

Hearken to the direction of the prophet, so very applicable to this subject: 'Who is among you that feareth the LORD, and obeyeth the

voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the LORD and stay upon his God' (Isaiah 50:10).

No Reason for Despair

Nor do these remarks apply more forcibly to troubles of a personal and private nature, than to those of a public kind, relating to the Church of God, and to the interests of true religion in the world. It has often happened that God has brought his Church into very gloomy circumstances, and his people, who have the interests of his holy religion at heart, have been often cast down with fear at the prospect of the danger which threatened it, and on looking after those things which seemed to be coming on the earth. But at such times there is no just reason to despair. Christ, who hath all power in heaven and earth, will not forsake his Church. It is graven on the palms of his hands (Isaiah 49:16), and he will surely protect it in every danger. What ground then is

there for despondency? What cause for fear? 'He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them [all his enemies] in derision' (Psalm 2:4).

Joy cometh

He will surely make his cause triumphant over every foe. Let us feel assured of his truth. Let us remember how often he interposes on behalf of his Church, and has overruled its apparent dangers for its increase and prosperity. Let us bear in mind that he is still the same, and that with the same arm with which he has already gotten the victory he will continue to gain it in every time of need. Be the heavens at any time overcast, be the prospect dark, threatening, tempestuous; yet wait a while with patience. The clouds will disperse; a calm will succeed; and the sun will shine forth with renewed splendour, and will cheer and brighten every object. 'Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning' (Psalm 30:5).¶

STUDIES IN BRITISH CHURCH HISTORY

Thomas Cranmer 1489–1547 (Part 2)

EDWARD MALCOLM (Reading)

Cranmer the Archbishop

THE Church of England was not short of candidates to replace Wareham, at least in the opinions of those men who desired the post. These included another of Henry's continental ambassadors, John Stokesley, who would become Bishop of London, and John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester. The latter was out of the question since he took Catherine's side in the divorce. The former, although a supporter

of the campaign to end the marriage, was a traditionalist, and so could not be trusted to carry through Henry's intention of reforming the Church of England. Archbishop Wareham died on 22 August 1532. News, both of the death, and of the identity of the successor, reached Cranmer—then attending the Emperor Charles V at Padua—at the end of October or the beginning of November, when Nicholas Hawkins called on Cranmer

to announce that he had come to replace him. Cranmer took his leave of the Emperor on 16 November, and made for England. Another reading of the chronology is made possible by Cranmer's own testimony at his trial, where he spoke once of a seven-week gap between the summons and the return home, and once of a six-month gap. Diarmaid MacCulloch suggests that Henry had summoned Cranmer as early as June, knowing full well that Wareham had not long to live, and having already made up his mind. We cannot know which version is correct, but, unless Cranmer was confused in 1555 (a distinct possibility, since he was on trial for his life) he may have been deliberately delaying his return.

While the greatest motive for the break with Rome was Henry's urgent need to legitimise his marriage to Anne, it seems that another, less compelling motive, was Cranmer's own reluctance to accept the See of Canterbury from the Pope. He had come to the conclusion that the Bishop of Rome had no lawful jurisdiction in England, and to be consecrated by papal decree was now anathema to him. Henry seems to have sympathised, offering his man the best legal minds in the realm in a bid to find a way forward which would sit well with Cranmer's conscience on the matter.

The consecration itself, on Passion Sunday 1534, was a momentous event. The ceremony was Roman, the authority by which it went ahead was the papal bull, and Cranmer wore the pallium. He even swore the usual oath of loyalty to the Pope. However, immediately after the first oath, he added a declaration that no oath could supersede the authority of God and his word, neither would he allow any oath to stand between him and his loyalty to his King. Indeed, he declared, he intended to carry out a reformation of such matters as may seem necessary to him. On each occasion in the ceremony, when he was required to affirm his loyalty to the Pope, he referred to that first declaration. It would have been obvious to all present that things would never be the same

again.

Taking up his role as Chairman of Convocation, Cranmer oversaw votes in favour of Henry's position, including one which affirmed that the Pope had no power to intervene in the issue. This was intended to undo the earlier dispensation which had granted Henry permission to marry Catherine in the first place. Parliament had, the day before, passed the Act in Restraint of Appeals, and so had rendered illegal Catherine's last-ditch attempt to save her marriage, and her honour.

As Archbishop, Cranmer wrote to King Henry and warned him that his marriage to Catherine had caused a scandal. He then wrote a second letter, almost immediately afterwards, seeking authority from the King to call Henry and Catherine to appear before him so that the matter could be settled. Both letters were, it seems written in consultation with Henry, and with an eye to presenting a version of events to the watching world that would, as far as possible, satisfy his enemies.

The venue for the appearance was at Dunstable, on 10 May 1534. Catherine was convinced not to appear, and, predictably, Cranmer's final judgment was that Henry had acted unlawfully in marrying Catherine, and, if he did not put her away, Cranmer would excommunicate the King. Henry did as bidden, and all that remained was for Cranmer to declare Henry's marriage to Anne lawful, in that the previous marriage, being unlawful, had been annulled. Anne could now be crowned Queen.

The diplomatic skills honed during his time as Henry's envoy at Rome did not desert Cranmer. He acted, at least in public, as if he was exercising the authority granted to him by the papal bull by which he had become Archbishop. At the same time Henry kept up a busy correspondence with the Pope, seemingly to encourage him to think that the breach could be reversed. In fact it could not be, but such was the fury of Charles V, and of the French king, that Henry needed to buy time.

Among the less pleasant tasks which fell to the new Archbishop, aside from the pantomime of the King's Divorce, were two worth noting. The first concerned Elizabeth Barton, the Maid of Kent, a young nun who claimed to receive visions in which the King was to suffer terribly if he put away his first wife. Cranmer inherited her as a case, and he treated her with sympathy. This would prove her undoing, for, believing the new Archbishop to be taken in by her apparent holiness, she spoke most unwisely. Seeking permission to return to her nunnery for the Feast of the Assumption, Cranmer granted it, knowing that she would return with news of a new vision. She did, but this time Hugh Latimer was one of her inquisitors. Under his probing and analytical questioning, she admitted never having seen a vision, and of having simply spoken against the divorce. She was beyond help, for her target, Anne Boleyn, was the crowned Queen. Barton had committed treason, and none could save her. She did, unwittingly, do Cranmer a great service. Her visions had been received as genuine by Archbishop Wareham and his fellow senior clergy. Her exposure as a fraud undermined their legacy completely, and put their opposition to Henry's divorce in a very bad light.

The other matter concerned John Frith, arrested in 1532, and left in prison since. Frith had followed George Joye and William Tyndale in rejecting the doctrine of transubstantiation. Although left alone in prison, albeit in terrible conditions, until after Cranmer's consecration, Frith expected to suffer a martyr's death. He therefore threw caution to the wind, and spend his time writing. He wrote letters to friends and supporters to encourage them, and he wrote a treatise on the doctrine of the Lord's Supper against the day he would no longer be able to articulate them in person.

Frith was brought before Cranmer, who considered him so full of heresy as to be unable to be put to death; to do so at that stage would be to condemn his soul eternally. Cranmer sought opportunity to convince Frith out of his

errors, and called for him some three or four times. We cannot know what effect the discussions had on Cranmer's own views at that time. Suffice it to say that, thirteen years later, it would be Cranmer who would articulate the same doctrine, in his famous treatise on the Lord's Supper. Frith was burnt to death, but in his sovereign mercy, God had caused his witness to be blessed.

The early years of Cranmer's archiepiscopacy are marked by a blizzard of legislation aimed at completing the isolation—or independence, depending on one's point of view—of the Church of England, and by protracted attempts to advance or resist reformation. The Aragon party was still strong, and Kent, for instance, although initially subdued by the fall of the Maid, came perilously close in the early 1540s to overthrowing ten years of change. Cranmer was kept very busy, and had to employ all his diplomatic skills, as well as calling in favours wherever he could, in order to maintain a steady course.

Although it would take a further two decades to bear fruit, one matter which was raised by Parliament in 1534 was that of canon law. The canon law was in Latin, and was used by the Church as a means of oppressing the laity. The case of Richard Hunne in a previous generation had been one *cause célèbre* which had raised the matter in the public consciousness. A translation was made into English, to allow the laity to see just how the Church's law was being used against them.

The visitations of the monastic houses was under way by the mid-1530s, and here Cranmer ran into an unexpected problem. His official title included the words 'Legate of the Apostolic See'. Bearing in mind that Convocation and Parliament had already passed a resolution that 'the Bishop of Rome hath no more jurisdiction in this realm of England than any other foreign bishop', it was anomalous for the Archbishop to claim what amounted to papal authority for his position. The problem was, in large measure, because his role had yet to be defined. The matter

would not be resolved until well into 1536. One effect of the resolution would be that the diocesan bishops would be freed from submission to the Archbishops, and would have power to confirm, visit, and rule in disputed wills. We ought to see here something of a return to the situation which prevailed in England in the days of Theodore of Tarsus, in the seventh century, albeit just in a few matters.

As the powers of Canterbury were being defined, the Archbishop's own authority was being undermined by Thomas Cromwell. Although Cromwell was a supporter of reform, and although evangelical endeavours were flourishing in the mid-1530s, Henry's own efforts to establish the full extent of the royal Supremacy meant that clashes were inevitable. These arose, at least in part, because Henry, ever the wily Tudor monarch, used parties to his own ends. We know that at times he appeared to favour reform, and that these periods coincided with his courting the German Protestant princes over other European Roman Catholic rulers. At other times, when he need the support of those Roman Catholic princes, the path of reform became blocked, and those of evangelical principles found themselves oppressed.

Catherine died in January 1537, and, although Anne was initially delighted, Henry began to change his attitude toward her from that moment. Matters were not helped by Anne suffering a miscarriage, of a son, on the very day of Catherine's funeral. Suddenly, the wife to whom Henry had clung through years of accusations and mutterings, was being cast as the cause of his present misfortunes. He had married her, he began to say, because he had been bewitched. It soon became clear

that Anne was being blamed for his lack of a son; after all, Henry had done everything he could, including breaking with Rome, in order to restore his standing before God. That God should still punish him surely proved that the fault lay elsewhere. It could only lie with Anne. When Anne was executed, Cranmer wept. He believed the charges against her to be false, and he had been without power to assist her.

Anne's downfall, although a blow to the reform movement, in that Cromwell, who had tied himself rather too closely to her, was weakened, did perhaps provide a necessary corrective to the progress of reform to date. Anne had been brought up in France. She had French courtiers. Her sympathies lay with the French reformers, rather than with, say, the Swiss or German reformers. Cranmer, however, had more experience of the Swiss and French. In common with all the reformers, he and his fellow bishops were troubled by the antics of the Anabaptists, whose agitation for more far-reaching reform extended into treasonable statements about the King in England. The downfall of Anne helped to turn Cranmer in a more English direction in his reforms.

We should perhaps pause at this point and attempt to trace Thomas Cranmer's spiritual journey, from young, conservative Churchman, to the architect of the reformation of the English Church. Over the centuries some of his friends have sought to portray him as always being an opponent of papal power and dogma, while his enemies have accused him of opportunism, changing his doctrine to suit the prevailing political climate at any given point. Neither description is accurate.¶

TO BE CONTINUED

Grace is so free, that the mercy we abuse, the name we have profaned, the name of which we have deserved wrath, opens its mouth with pleas for us, *Ezekiel 36:21*. His name, while it pleads for them, mentions their demerits, that grace might appear to be grace indeed, and triumph in its own sweetness.

Stephen Charnock

STUDIES IN I PETER

EDWARD MALCOLM (Reading)

VIII A further call to holy living, 4:1–16

THE previous section was entitled ‘Christ’s Suffering and Its Triumphant Consequences’, and we saw that Jesus died, the just for the unjust, in the place of sinners. The path of suffering led him to the cross, the grave, the resurrection and the ascension. The glory to which he has come is the ultimate consequence of that suffering, a glory he could not have come to except he had submitted to the Father’s will, and suffered. The consequence is not his alone, for all who are accounted dead in him—all who are partakers of his death—will also share in the glory to be revealed. Thus we are given such a wonderful incentive to seek participation in the death of Jesus Christ, even if it means that we will have to suffer also.

There is, however, another consequence, and this is the one in view here. The Christian, the one for whom Christ has suffered, and who is to be a partaker of the glory to come, must live now as though dead—dead to sin, no longer under its hold. Rather, the suffering of which Peter has spoken will come to us from unbelievers precisely because we put away the sinfulness of fleshly living.

In v.1 Peter takes us back to his statement of 3:18. To suffer in the flesh, we said, is to suffer as a man, for all mankind is under sentence of death. Christ died for sin, since it is sin which brings man under the sentence of death. So we can say that Christ died for sin; not his own, but ours. We can also say that he died under sin; death is the sentence due to sinners, but not due to him except in so far as he is our Substitute. We can certainly say that he died to sin; those who are dead are no longer the servants of sin. Paul uses this argument in Romans 6:8–14. Being dead to sin, he no longer has anything to do with it. He is freed

to worship and serve the Father, which he does by reigning and interceding for us. This is the mind we are to have, the mind of service, of devotion, of wholehearted dedication to the will of the Father through the Son. This is a difference which is only possible because Christ suffered in the flesh. We need to grasp this point, and understand that we are saved from sin in order to live as God requires us to.

Finally, it is worth noting in this verse that Peter does not call on Christians to suffer, nor to expect suffering. Rather, the life we are to live is the consequence of Christ’s sufferings. Anything we may suffer will relate to the new life we live, and so is indirectly, though actually, related to Christ’s sufferings.

The heart of v.1 is laid out in v.2. The mind, or attitude, we are to have is of making the proper response to Christ’s sufferings. How can the one for whom the victim has died be so callous as to continue in the very behaviour which caused the victim to die? Of course, the point Peter is making is that we are still in the flesh; we are still in our mortal body, subject to the reality of living in a fallen world. Christ suffered in the flesh and is now set down at the right hand of the Father. We are not. We are still in the flesh, even though we are made partakers of the glory to come. Therefore we are to live now as those who are heirs of the blessings to come.

The life of the Christian is divided into two parts. There is ‘the time past’, before we were converted, and there is the new life, since our conversion. The former time is characterised by one thing. All who have lived or are still living in that time ‘work’ (carry into effect) ‘the will’ (the desire or deliberate purpose) ‘of the Gentiles’ (those without God). Paul has

described this behaviour in Romans 1. Peter is about to do the same. His point is that there is a deliberate spirit of rebellion in the godless, and we all partake of it. These are things which his readers had actually done (*cf.* I Corinthians 6:9–11). These forms of behaviour fall into two categories, those which can be called sins of the flesh, and those which comprise religious error, or idolatry. Lasciviousness, or sexual abandonment, coupled with a pandering to the desires of the flesh, drunkenness, wild foolishness and drinking parties on the one hand lead to abominable idolatries on the other. Very often the former was part and parcel of the practice of the latter. False worship entices participants by offering to fulfil their fleshly desires. Only true religion exposes the error of this position, and sets before us the truth that will give real satisfaction to our spiritual yearning. Those who commit sexual sin will also have spiritual problems, even if they call themselves Christians.

That these two groups go together is demonstrated by v.4. Our former fellow-labourers in the works of the flesh are genuinely surprised when one of them ‘gets religion’ to such an extent that they cease to live as they once did. This causes an offence, for by ceasing from sin we are, in effect, standing in judgment over our past lives, and over their present lives. So they slander and malign us, desperate to blacken us because the alternative is that we blacken them.

The ‘who shall give’ of v.5 could refer to us, who are no longer sinning, or them, who are still sinning. In fact it refers to those who are still in sin, who must give account before the

Judge for their behaviour. Those who wish to judge and condemn us should know that they are being prepared for judgment and condemnation. We have Jesus Christ as our Saviour, and the judgment of death has already fallen on him. We are therefore no longer under judgment. Whether they, the sinners, live or die, their judgment cannot be avoided.

The final verse of our section, v.6, may appear to be difficult, owing to the statement that the Gospel was ‘preached also to them that are dead’. Given the ways in which 3:19 has been used, the history of interpretation of this verse is, unsurprisingly, convoluted. The truth is that what Peter is saying here is simply by way of illustration of the point he has just made in the previous verse, that our accusers must face the judgment of God. What Peter is saying here is that we do not face the judgment for the simple reason that the gospel was preached; indeed, the gospel was preached precisely in order to deliver us from the judgment to come! Yes, we suffer the judgment of men in the flesh; we will die, and cannot avoid death. However, we will also be raised to eternal life. Peter is making a further point; we are already judged dead in the flesh, so that God looks upon us as those whose sins have been covered already. Therefore we live in the Spirit already. We have a spiritual life in Christ, and this is the life we are living already. It is a life ‘according to God’, meaning it accords with his revealed will for us, it is obedient, and therefore righteous. Such is the purpose of Gospel preaching, and we should rejoice each time we hear it!¶

TO BE CONTINUED

What are you afraid of Satan’s fiery darts? Know, they are but as the waves tossing the ark, yet saving Noah; or as the whale swallowing up, yet preserving Jonah; or as the dragon pursuing the woman, yet procuring her preservation; or as the file grating the iron, yet making it clearer and brighter than before; or as the mill grinding the wheat, yet making it useful; or as the coals heating the perfume, yet making it thereby more odiferous.

Isaac Ambrose

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BOOK REVIEWS

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.

AMY CARMICHAEL 'Beauty for Ashes' – A Biography

Iain H Murray

The Banner of Truth Trust, 2015. 168pp £6.50 pbk ISBN 978-1-84871-552-3

Half a century ago the names Amy Carmichael, and Dohnavur in South India, were well-known in Evangelical Christian circles. The familiar blue-covered books published by the SPCK were well read, and blessed by God in the lives of many Christians. Today one feels she is largely forgotten, and it is good to see a new biography by a respected author reminding us of her work, and providing a fresh perspective on a life much used by God.

Born in Northern Ireland in 1867, Amy served as a missionary in Japan for a short time before ill-health forced her to return to England. A year later, responding to an opening with the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, a connection of the Church Missionary Society, she left for India, never to return home. Her life's work, 'at the very bottom of the heap of humanity', was the establishment of a home, first for girls and later boys as well, rescuing them from temple slavery and prostitution, and providing them with a secure, loving Christian upbringing at a former mission house at Dohnavur. Undergirded by prayer and with the help and support of many others, Amy was a full-time mother to countless children over fifty years, to the extent that by the 1940s there were as many as 900 children and adults including 40 or 50 helpers in the Fellowship. She was also the author of 35 books, a number of which are still available.

Five chapters describing her work are followed by a review of Amy's life and its message, and an account of how the general abandonment of faith in the supreme authority of the Bible led to her severing the connection with CMS, and the dismissal from Dohnavur of Stephen Neill, later to become bishop of Tinnevely. A brief summary of the work of the Dohnavur Fellowship today concludes this interesting and readable book.

JPW

THE MESSAGE OF LAMENTATIONS (BST series)

Christopher J H Wright

IVP, 2015. 176pp £9.99 pbk ISBN 978-1-78359-275-3

Providentially, my congregational Bible Study series was in Lamentations when this volume arrived for review. It was therefore with great interest that I opened the book, and began to read.

The introductory material, running to thirty-six pages, serves as a most useful guide to the historical and theological setting of Lamentations, while attempting to locate the relevance of the themes in the context of suffering at the present time, with references to recent natural disasters, and to the ongoing conflict in Syria. If this last part sounds a little forced, a reading of, say,

Calvin on Lamentations, will show that good commentators have always attempted to show the relevance of this work to the situation in which they live. The introductory chapter is most useful.

The actual exposition of the text is undertaken in short sections. The comments are illustrated by reference to other parts of Scripture, which is as it ought to be. Questions of translation, which, in some places, are legitimate, are handled clearly, even if one does not always agree with the conclusion. The author's dependence on other works is evident, if one has read them; the oldest work listed in the bibliography was published in 1984.

Wright deals very helpfully with the great liberal objection to Lamentations, namely that the voice of God is never heard in it. He points out that Lamentations is but one book of the whole Bible, and we are to find God's answers there.

Any pastor or Bible study leader planning to expound Lamentations will find this volume to be valuable and helpful, but will need to add a more in-depth work to their reading list. I recommend Calvin.

The Bible version used is an iteration of the NIV.

EJM

THE QUEST FOR THE HISTORICAL ADAM

William VanDoodewaard

Reformation Heritage Books, 2015. 359pp hbk £18.99 ISBN 978-1-60178-377-6

Christians who hold to a literal reading of the early chapters of Genesis – that is, who believe that God made the world out of nothing in six consecutive twenty-four hour periods, culminating in the special creation of the first man, Adam, from the dust of the earth, and the first woman, Eve, from his rib – may consider themselves to be in a minority. The media, many preachers, and the authors of many books, as well as scholars and scientists, present a constant diet of evolutionary opinion, which stands in complete contrast to the sacred record.

William VanDoodewaard has undertaken an enormous task. Beginning with a brief survey of the biblical references to Adam, Eve or the creation (there are twenty), he then gives a chronology of Christian thought on the subject of the first two chapters of Genesis. Chapter 2 of this volume surveys the patristic and medieval period; chapter 3 surveys the Reformation and Post-Reformation eras; chapters 4 and 5 survey the Enlightenment era and the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries respectively; and chapter 6 considers the most recent developments from the 1950s to the present day. The final chapter asks, 'What Difference Does it Make?', and takes ten areas where non-literal views affect such matters as our doctrine of Scripture, of man and the ethics of human life, and the fall. The author shows how any view which denies special creation in favour of some natural evolution cuts at the very heart of orthodox Christian doctrine. A brief Epilogue, in which the author calls on his readers to uphold the traditional, literal reading, concludes the volume.

Readers of this volume will discover much to encourage thought and reflection. The significance of a right view of the origins of the world and of mankind will become very clear, if they are not already. Readers will also discover the wide variety of views which exist, particularly among those who reject the traditional reading. Readers will also discover that, not only is the traditional view the majority one historically, but it is also the majority view today, especially among the younger generation of ministers – at least in the USA, where the author lives.

Scripture quotations are from the NKJV. In every other respect, this volume is warmly recommended to readers, with the warning that it is not a 'popular' read. Be prepared!

EJM

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