

NOVEMBER — DECEMBER 1996

THE GOSPEL MAGAZINE

CONTENTS

Editorial — 181

The Family of God: Editor — 182

For Younger Readers: C. MacKenzie — 185

Studies in Second Chronicles: P. King — 187

The Scriptures are Binding: G. Thomas — 188

Studies in the Book of Jonah (3): P. D. Johnson — 197

“Fear Not”: I. A. Buckley — 201

Creation — All Things Become New: P. King — 202

The Love of God: W. J. Parker — 210

The End Will Come: J. C. Ryle — 212

Book Reviews — 214

PUBLISHED BY THE GOSPEL MAGAZINE TRUST

THE GOSPEL MAGAZINE

Editor

MAURICE HANDFORD

9 Birtlespool Road, Cheadle Hulme, Cheshire SK8 5JZ

Incorporating the Protestant Beacon and The British Protestant

New Series
No. 1591

NOVEMBER — DECEMBER 1996

Old Series
No. 2591

Editorial

WE COME ONCE AGAIN to Remembrance-tide. It is good that we remember God's goodness to us as a nation when we were mercifully delivered from overwhelming odds.

Remembrance is a duty repeatedly emphasised in the Bible. What a mighty effect the memory can have upon us — yet how easily we forget. In Deuteronomy there are two calls to remembrance:

(i) "Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee . . ." (8:2). The experiences encountered in the wilderness were designed to teach self distrust, humility and reliance upon God. He has a purpose in all the experiences of life though we may not always discern it at the time.

(ii) "Thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt" (15:15). God redeemed and delivered His people from the slavery of Egypt. This tremendous event was imprinted on their minds by the observance of the Passover. Christians have been redeemed by a mightier redemption, even by the blood of Christ. The remembrance of this fact ought to move us to glad thanksgiving.

John Newton had this verse carved over the mantelpiece of his study in Olney Vicarage. In his younger days he had led a wicked life but had been transformed by the grace of Christ. At the end of his life he complained that his powers were failing fast: "My memory is nearly gone, but I remember two things — that I am a great sinner and that Christ is a great Saviour."

The Family of God

A Sermon by the Editor

"I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named" (Ephesians 3:14-15)

THIS SENTENCE occurs in one of the prayers of the Apostle Paul — surely one of the most wonderful prayers recorded in Scripture. All the Apostle's prayers repay careful study, they contain a wealth of meaning.

We want now to notice particularly the phrase, "the whole family in heaven and earth". We are all grateful for our family circle and all that they mean to us. There is a lovely word in Psalm 68:6 where David says: "God setteth the solitary in families." The family unit was one of the first things God created at the beginning of time. Then God's ancient people are spoken of as His family, so in Amos we read: "You only have I known of all the families of the earth . . ." (3:2).

There is a family of far greater importance than my family on earth and to belong to this family confers greater privileges than to be born in an earthly palace.

This family is variously spoken of in Scripture. Sometimes it is called "the elect" or "the household of faith" or "the church of the first born". All these expressions are but other names for the family of God.

Membership in this family does not depend on any earthly connection but only by the second birth. Ministers, however faithful, cannot impart it to their congregations and parents cannot confer it upon their children. They are born "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of men, but of God" (John 1:13).

Paul could write to the Galatians and say: "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." To the Christians at Rome he wrote: "Ye have received the spirit of adoption whereby ye cry Abba, Father." The members of God's family all look to God as a loving and reconciled Father, one who "forgives iniquity, transgression and sin". This reconciliation has been brought about by the meritorious work of Christ on Calvary. Christ as the Head of the body the Church made peace by the blood of His cross.

The origin of our salvation is in God Himself. He sent His only begotten Son to be the propitiation for our sins. The Church was chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4). The names of His family are inscribed in the Lamb's Book of Life and can never be erased. They have been predestinated unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto Himself. We owe it to divine grace if we are numbered amongst the family of God.

The members of this family all rejoice in one name — the name of the Lord Jesus — the name which is above every other name. The name of Jesus is full

of inexpressible comfort and peace. They can fully subscribe to John Newton's feelings and say:

"How sweet the name of Jesus sounds
In a believer's ear,
It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds,
And drives away his fear."

In earthly families there is often a family likeness — certainly this is so amongst the members of the Lord's family. They are marked by the same general features of life and character. There is a spiritual resemblance amongst the children of God. They all rest on Christ for salvation; they endeavour to set their affections on things above, not on things on the earth. They find the Bible as the food for their souls and their guide through life. They all resort to the throne of grace and there find grace to help in time of need. They all know something of repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. These are some of the marks of the children of God. Outside this family there is no salvation (Acts 4:12). Salvation does not depend on any outward Church membership, much as we may value it, but rather in a personal relationship with God in Christ.

Every earthly father considers it his privilege to provide for the members of his family. God's family is certainly well provided for. Human parents may fail to provide for their offspring and indeed may forget them. How different it is with the Lord. He says: "They may forget, yet will I not forget thee" (Isaiah 49:15). The Father's love to His people is everlasting and abiding; nothing can sever them from His love. In this family there is no shortage of nourishment, for Jesus said: "I am the bread of life, he that cometh to me shall never hunger and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." Our daily needs are met, there is constant provision by the way — this is promised and the Lord will fulfil His Word. "My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

What, we ask, is the present position of the family of God? The text tells us quite plainly that it is divided into two distinct parts — one part in heaven and one part on earth. These two parts for the present are entirely separate, but they form one family in the sight of God. The Bible knows of no third habitation. There is no such place as purgatory which, as Article XXII says, is "a fond thing vainly invented and grounded upon no warranty of Scripture but rather repugnant to the Word of God".

The oneness of God's family is a precious truth. Death does not sever from this family. Some belong to the Church militant here on earth and some to the Church triumphant above. With some their race is run; their fight manfully fought and the struggle ended. They are no longer troubled by sin and temptation and subject to limitation; they are as the Apostle puts it "with Christ, which is far better". The heavenly branch of the family is with the Lord; they are in joy and felicity. In the presence of Christ there is fulness of joy and at God's right

hand there are pleasures for evermore (Psalm 16:11). They have done with troubles and conflicts to which they were subjected while on earth —

“Faith has vanished into sight;
Hope emptied in delight.”

But the other part is still on earth — a few in one place and a few in another. After all, did not the Lord speak of His Church as a “little flock”? What an encouragement it is when we meet with a fellow believer, someone we have never seen before, and at once there is a bond between us. United to Christ we are united to each other. On earth this portion of the Lord’s family is made up of all true believers. They have great privilege; they have access to the Father through Christ. All the promises of God in Christ Jesus belong to this family.

The Church on earth has its joys and sorrows, “as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing”. There is no promise given that we shall be granted immunity from the troubles of life. We must needs struggle against the world, the flesh and the devil. We live by faith and not by sight and we serve imperfectly.

The Lord Jesus cares alike for both parts of His Church: both alike are secured by an “everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure”. They are “kept by the power of God unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Peter 1:5).

Charles Wesley wrote:

“Let saints on earth in concert sing
With those whose work is done,
For all the servants of our God
In heaven and earth are one.

One family we dwell in Him,
One Church, above, beneath,
Though now divided by the stream,
The narrow stream of death.

One army of the living God,
To His command we bow,
Part of the host have crossed the flood
And part are crossing now.”

Believers, because they are united to Christ, are united to each other. Though often separated from each other by distance they are still one in Him. We do not know the sorrows and trials and separations which may befall us, but how thankful we are that God holds the key of all unknown.

There can be no doubt concerning the future prospects of God’s family. They will all be brought safe home at last, not one will be lost, all will be gathered into the heavenly garner. Just immediately before the crucifixion Jesus said: “Of all that thou gavest me, I have lost none” — and that will be abundantly proved

at the last day. Imperfection will be a thing of the past and the Lord's people will be presented not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing — they will be holy and without blame and unproveable in His sight.

God's family will be eternally provided for when this world has ceased to be. Do you remember David's confidence: "As for me I shall behold thy face in righteousness. I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness"? Peter says that for God's people there is an inheritance reserved in heaven, incorruptible, undefiled and that fadeth not away.

A great reunion of the whole of God's family will take place when Christ returns in glory. He will bring with Him the saints who have fallen asleep and those still living will be caught up to meet the Lord and so shall they ever be with the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:14-17).

What joys there are when families have their times of reunion. When the whole family of God are gathered from north, south, east and west, their joy will know no bounds. Many of the Lord's people have been separated by vast tracts of time; some have lived in very primitive conditions, some have lived in modern times and perhaps even have travelled in Concorde, but all will meet to part no more. There will be no disagreements in heaven. We shall see eye to eye, or to take up the words of the Old Testament: "Ephraim shall no longer vex Judah nor Judah, Ephraim." All divisions will have ended, misconceptions and misunderstandings all forgotten, there will be perfect unity and harmony. "Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face. . . ."

If we are members of this family we ought to be profoundly thankful to God for His distinguishing grace. We ought to be concerned to walk more worthy of our calling. Let us seek to help one another and be drawn closer together. Who can possibly describe the privileges and the joys of this so great a family? We can but say: "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name" (Psalm 103:1).

M.H.

For Younger Readers

CARINE MACKENZIE

BAKING A CAKE

HAVE YOU EVER BAKED A CAKE or helped your mum make one? It is good fun to take flour, baking powder, eggs, sugar and margarine — beat them all together thoroughly — then bake the mixture in the oven to make a delicious sponge cake.

Sugar and eggs taste nice, but have you ever tasted a spoonful of flour — not at all tasty! A teaspoonful of baking powder is even worse. Even margarine on its own is not very pleasant.

All these ingredients together make a lovely cake, and without any one of them the cake would not taste so good.

Our lives are made up of many different experiences. Some of these we find very sweet and pleasant. Others we find unpleasant and difficult — perhaps some sadness or a hard time at school. But God uses all these experiences together to make our lives better — to help us to trust in Him and to become useful.

“All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28).

When we think about Joseph’s life we see many difficult experiences — he was thrown into a pit by his brothers, he was sold as a slave to Egypt. He was put into prison unjustly. He had good experiences too — being made Prime Minister of Egypt, for example. All these experiences were used by God for Joseph’s good and the good of his family.

Even the evil deeds of his brothers were used by God. Looking back, Joseph was able to say to them: “You . . . thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good” (Genesis 50:20).

The old poem expresses this so well:

“My life is but a weaving, between my God and me.
I do not choose the colours, He worketh steadily.
Oft times He weaveth sorrow, and I in foolish pride,
Forget He sees the upper, and I the underside.

Not till the loom is silent and the shuttles cease to fly,
Will God unroll the canvas and explain the reason why.
The dark threads are as needful in the skilful Weaver’s hand,
As the threads of gold and silver in the pattern He has planned.”

Just as the baker needs baking powder and flour for a good cake, as well as sugar — so God uses the difficult or sad times to make us what He wants us to be.

PUZZLE

I was once given the following recipe for a Scripture cake. I have not actually made it, so I cannot vouch for the result, but the ingredients look interesting. Look up the verses to find out the recipe.

Ingredients

4.5 cups 1 Kings 4:22

1.5 cups Judges 5:25b

2 cups Jeremiah 6:20

.....
.....
.....

- 2 cups 1 Samuel 30:12
- 2 cups Nahum 3:12
- 1 cup Numbers 17:8
- 2 tablespoons 1 Samuel 14:25
- 6 articles Jeremiah 17:11
- A pinch of Leviticus 2:13
- 2 teaspoons Amos 4:5
- Season to taste with 2 Chronicles 9:9

Method

Follow Solomon’s advice for making a good boy — Proverbs 23:14 — and you have a good cake.

Studies in Second Chronicles: Jehoshaphat — the Son Weakened by an Alliance with Apostacy

PETER KING (Stanford, Beds)

*The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear Him,
and delivereth them*

HISTORY RECORDS many great achievements by men and nations, but often the weak link proves the downfall. Rome ruled supreme but fell apart through internal struggles, and King Jehoshaphat, son of Asa, allied himself to Ahab, king of Israel, by marriage (2 Chronicles 18:1). It may have seemed innocent to let his son marry Ahab’s daughter, but the link made with apostacy, allowed Ahab access to Judah. This was only the seed, but it was not long before an invitation came from the in-laws and Jehoshaphat finds himself compromised. But for the protecting care of Jehovah he would have lost his life as Syria sought the heavily disguised Ahab. There was no need for Jehoshaphat to connect himself with Ahab, he was a rich and honoured king in need of nothing, but that one event led to disaster in his life and more so in his son’s.

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour,” says Peter, and this must be our

watchword as friendships present themselves. If we believed there was a lion stalking our street, we would be careful when we left our home until we returned, and that is the picture Peter gives us of Satan. He can come as an angel of light — after all, these two young people are in love and it would be churlish to frustrate their romance. The Scriptures teach us that a whisperer separates between chief friends, and the enemy of souls can cause havoc among Christian fellowships, posing as a lover of truth. The case of Judas Iscariot is top of the list of deceivers, for even the disciples considered him to be genuine, but his end proved otherwise. We need to be on our guard, but above all we should pray daily for the Lord's protecting care, for He has promised to send His angels as invisible soldiers to keep us safe. It is a comforting thought that as Jesus could have called on twelve legions of angels to secure His release from the Sanhedrin, so He can and does send those ministering spirits to bear us up lest we dash our foot against a stone.

Lord, guard us, guide us, keep us, feed us — we have no help but Thee

The Scriptures are Binding

GEOFFREY THOMAS (Aberystwyth)

Matthew 4:4

IF THE WORD OF GOD is infallibly true and sufficient, then the Bible makes its own demands on all men and women. It binds every Christian to it because of its uniqueness and authority. We obey it simply because it *is* the Word of God. If God is its Author, Scripture has the authority of God.

There are some people who want to make conscience the ultimate authority of conduct. They say as it was said to Pinocchio: "Always let your conscience be your guide." But some consciences are, in Thomas Boston's words, "top pernicky". They condemn what God's Word does not condemn. Consider, for example, the conscience of the Jehovah's Witness concerning blood transfusion. Then there are other consciences and they are the very opposite — they let everything pass — they allow what God's Word condemns. They are less sensitive than they should be. They are too open. Consider, for example, how the Inquisitors burnt at the stake and tortured men and women out of conscience.

All of us have to educate our consciences by Scripture. A great illustration of this is the sun dial. The sun dial gives a correct reading only when the light of the sun shines upon it, but, on a bright moonlit night, it would give you quite a wrong reading because it is not a moon dial but a sun dial. The consensus of

every age and the philosophies of men and their religions will cast their own light upon men's consciences. Then men will behave in accordance with that light which their consciences are giving. We have to summons the conscience of our own generation as well as bringing our consciences under the light of the Word of God in obeying the voice of our own consciences.

When Martin Luther was put on trial in a Diet (a Church Court) at Worms in Germany they brought before him the arguments from their traditions, their encyclicals and their Church decrees, and Luther replied: "My conscience is bound captive by the Word of God." Now the Reformation was not about a free conscience: the Reformation was about a conscience that was bound to the Word of God. As the Shorter Catechism tells us: "The Word of God is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy God."

The authority then is the Bible. So we are going to ask ourselves in what area of our lives is the Scripture the normative and authoritative guide? How comprehensive is its authority over me as a Christian? Over what parts of our lives is this Word of God to regulate and control? The answer is — every part — the whole of myself as a Christian and as a human being lies under the control and dominion of the Word of God. Let us move into some details.

Firstly — the Word of God is the only authority for my beliefs, for my theology

If I want to know what I am to believe about God, what He is like, His attributes, His purposes, His works, what has He done for me, what His plan is for redemption, the promises He has given to Christians, the necessary normative, the answer to all this lies in the Word of God.

Now there are secret things that belong to the Lord, matters that He has chosen not to give us any information about, such as: "Who are the elect before they profess faith in Jesus? How can you reconcile divine sovereignty with human responsibility? What is the date of the second coming of Jesus Christ?" The Bible is silent on those things, so we must be silent on them. Then, again, the Bible does not speak on every detail of the life of the Church. The Bible does not give us an order of service for worship, nor a manual for daily Bible reading. The Bible does not tell us what the appropriate size of a congregation is, *but* the Bible *does* speak about the Fall and about Predestination, and about what we may do and may not do when the Church gathers. It speaks about Adam and Eve and it speaks about hell, so we are never to be silent and sheepish about these matters, but we are to believe that these are the things the Word of God teaches. These beliefs are never given to us to fascinate our intellects. They are always given to us in the context of our duty and our lostness. They come to us as men and as sinners. God does not give us truth just to exercise our intellects, but in order to our salvation and our obedience. We must grow in our grasp of the truth, in our familiarity with the teaching of Scripture, and its system of Christian doctrine.

Now it is all very well to speak often of the perils of dead orthodoxy, and that is a real peril. There are people whose interest is not in the great foundational

doctrines of the Christian faith. They are interested in the conundrum of theology. Let us avoid that. There are people who are animated by the great controversial doctrines that divide Christians, that men fight about, and we must watch that spirit. But we are bound as Christians to make conscience of our growing in our grasp of the content of the divine revelation. God has taken such pains to give us His Word. This is a revelation that we can understand, and it is our obligation to use Scripture, to soak ourselves in those great doctrines so that they become totally familiar to us. Every Christian should know intimately the doctrines which relate to the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. He should know of the deity and the humanity of the Son of God. He should know the states of Christ — pre-incarnate, incarnate and exalted. He should know the three offices of the Messiah, Christ the Prophet, Christ as Priest, Christ our King. He should know the doctrine of justification by faith, that is, that God has constituted a righteousness in the life of His Son Jesus Christ, that He imputes that righteousness to all that believe, and in a great act of justification He *declares* the sinner righteous in Christ. All of us should know that. It is the stuff of believing meditation. These doctrines are not for theologians. They constitute that great body of truth that *sanctifies*. Remember Paul has a lovely phrase in 1 Timothy, he talks about teaching “which accords with godliness”. Why do we need to have the Bible? — *that we grow in godliness*.

Let us be careful that we are not blown about by every wind of doctrine, but careful that we do not imbibe theories that cannot bear the scrutiny of the Word of God. The Word of God has the intrinsic right to correct and control us. The issue is not, “What was I taught as a child?”, nor is it some experience that I have had, nor certain doctrines that have been precious to me emotionally. Those are not the issues. The issue is, “What has God said!”, because Scripture has the right to control absolutely my theological thinking.

Secondly — Scripture has the same authority in the realm of ethics and all our daily behaviour

What duty does God want of me? The answer is, *obedience to His revealed will*. Where is that will revealed regarding those great principles of conduct and sanctities of life? In the Word of God. That is the only ethical rule. We have no right to detract from it. We have no right to add to it. It is the final, definitive expression of what God says is the whole duty of man. We have heard people cry that they are in a great dilemma, and that the choices confronting them are very difficult. They really do not know what is right and what is wrong, they say. Their problem is really a problem of “guidance”. Yet very often the problem is one of obedience. The ethical passages in the Word of God are amongst the most lucid parts of Scripture. The ten commandments have a grand simplicity about them — those commandments expounded by the Lord in the Sermon on the Mount and amplified by the Apostles in the great end-sections of the Letters to the Romans and to the Ephesians, or found in James’ whole Letter. They are

amongst the clearest sections of Scripture. This matter of whether I should marry a man who has no interest whatsoever in the Christian life — that is *not* a matter of guidance, but a matter of *obedience to God*. God says so clearly in His Word we are to marry “*only in the Lord*”. So often we are making matters of our conduct problems of guidance, and we are pleading that our sins are not like other people’s sins — our sins are beautiful, they are understandable, and defensible — not like the rest. Time and time again we have to return to the authority of Scripture for all our daily conduct.

For example, there is a sex education taught in the Word of God and it is very simple. Purity before marriage, faithfulness within marriage, and Scripture teaches homosexual activity is forbidden and even bans homosexual desire — that whoever looks on a man to lust after him has committed sexual sin with him already in his heart. Again, Scripture teaches there are two grounds for divorce — adultery and desertion by the unbelieving partner. Again, it teaches that human life begins at conception and that the bounds of the doubt because of the tiny nature of that person during its first weeks of life must lie in favour of the unborn child.

This same Word of God which says, “Thou shalt not kill”, also says, “Whosoever sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed”. So the Word of God tests our ethical obedience. Are we, as Christians, keeping the Word of God? Are we careful to obey the Word of God when we are emotionally disinclined? Are we zealous to obey the Word of God when we lie in the depths of depression, when we wallow in self pity, when we know there is a duty that is calling us which is unpleasant and unattractive? Have we the maturity to stamp on our emotions in the face of our reluctance and aversion to attend to what God is telling us to do? There is no greater peril in the Christian life than to make our emotions the touchstone for our duties, to wait for a warm feeling to arise before we are kind to our enemies, to pause for the moment of inspiration before we pray, to plead, “God can’t expect me to witness when I am feeling like this”. Time and again we have to withstand ourselves and insist that, although our will is weak and all spiritual energy has left us, we have to pick ourselves up and attend to the duties that God has bidden us do. Are we obedient enough in face of the tremendous difficulties and obstacles that our feelings can bring in our way? The Word of God is authoritative in the realm of ethics.

I ask you also, Is it not authoritative in the small things as well as in the great? It is one of the true signs of maturity when we are paying careful attention to matters of detail in the Christian life. You remember how our Lord’s commendation falls upon men and women who are faithful in *little* things, and it is at that point that so often we are losing the battle. It may not seem a great problem for you to be at the doors of a church at 11 o’clock and 6 o’clock on Sunday; only a small thing to be in your place at the Prayer Meeting in the week; only a little matter to remember the work of missions and support them; to write certain letters; only a small thing to keep certain promises — but so often it is

in these *small* things that our submission to the authority of the Word of God for our lives is being tested.

Thirdly — The Word of God controls our worship, the way we approach God

The question is not what is the most attractive form of worship, nor what is the most moving, nor most fascinating to the stranger who just turns up! The issue is not what is the most exciting worship, but simply *what is the most Biblical?* That is all; and should you say, "Oh well! that's boring", that is a fearful response. Are you getting bored with the living God? The one concern is, How does God want us to approach Him? The issue is this, What gives God the most pleasure? That's the question every congregation must ask continually. It is not enough that our fathers worshipped in a particular way, nor that we like a simple form of worship. We cannot plead our feelings or such tastes as our love of silence or our love of ritual or a certain kind of music. How does *God* want to be worshipped? *That* is the only question.

There is a great vital question that God asks in Isaiah 1:12. The people in Isaiah's day were very religious with so much activity — their sacrifices, their trampling God's courts, their offering incense and keeping new moons and convocations, and spreading out their hands. The Lord God looks and says, "Who has asked this of you?". God views with scorn all this religious activity going on, and He says, "Who hath required this of you? Have I asked you to do all these things when you come into My presence? Have I told you, 'Now be sure that you act in these ways'?" The people had forgotten what was God's will for them when they gathered in His Name.

The Lord Jesus has instituted two sacraments — baptism and the Lord's Supper. Just two He has asked of us: "Make disciples of all nations and baptize them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." And He has given us the Lord's Supper, and said, "Do this in remembrance of Me" and "Do it until I come". Two sacraments. Well, let us make sure that both sacraments are in our congregation.

Then the Lord's Apostles have said that prayer should also be part of our worship; "that men lift up holy hands in prayer". Also the Apostle says, "Preach the Word". So the sermon is a part of worship. If you look into the Acts of the Apostles you will see that particular emphasis is laid on the teaching of the Word of God in the New Testament. Then we are told to sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in our hearts to God. There is indeed one occasion when it is recorded in the Book of Acts that Christians sang praise to God. It was in the prison at Philippi where Paul and Silas were in the stocks. There is that one example of Christians singing, so we cannot say there is tremendous emphasis in the New Testament on music. In fact, it is the very opposite. Well, then, those are the elements of Biblical worship that God has asked from us in Scripture; that is when we give Biblical worship to God. So it controls my theology; it controls my behaviour; it controls my worship.

Fourthly — The Scriptures are authoritative for fellowship

Acts 2 concludes with the description of the young Church and its love for one another, its growth and the way it was able to assimilate 3,000 men into the 500 that were there when the Holy Spirit came upon them. We are told how they devoted themselves to the Apostles' teaching and fellowship and the breaking of bread and prayers (2:42). Those are the four marks of a true Church.

Remember when the Apostle Paul went on a missionary journey to Galatia, how he travailed again in birth until Christ was formed in the lives of many people? Shortly after he had left to plant a Church somewhere else, a group of men moved into Galatia and into that Church. That often happens: the cults pick on existing new congregations. They began to teach and said in effect, "Now, do you really want the blessing of God on your life? Do you truly want to serve the Lord? Do you want the smile of God upon you? Don't you know, the Lord has told us in His Word that we must be circumcised. Are not there judgments on those who refuse to be circumcised? Also, there is the seventh day in the week besides this Lord's Day, and there are food laws to keep." How orthodox were those people! They had no problem with eternal punishment. They could have gone through every phrase of the Apostles' Creed and said "Amen" to it. Did Paul have fellowship with them? Did Paul say: "This is an interesting example of the ecclesiastical diversity of our rich tapestry"? He did not say that. What did he say? He said, "I am astonished! I am amazed that you have deserted the One who called you by the grace of God and have turned to a different gospel which is really no gospel at all." Then he takes a deep breath, as it were, and says, "If we or an angel from heaven speak any other gospel, let him be anathema — let him be eternally condemned".

Those teachers were living decent lives; they were keeping themselves unspotted from the world; they knew there was a heaven to win and a hell to lose. These people were saying that Christ was their Saviour. What was wrong with Paul? Was Paul being picky? Was he a hyper-separatist? No, because the very heart of Christianity was at stake as far as the Apostle was concerned. Paul had no problem at all with a boy being circumcised for reasons of hygiene or mere cultural tradition, or to remove any offence for the spread of the Gospel — he encouraged Timothy to be circumcised. For Paul there were three steps —

- (1) Do you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ?
- (2) Then you are justified.
- (3) You are forgiven for all your sins.

Then you may be circumcised.

The Judaizers in Galatia had a very different approach. They said: "Firstly, a man believes in the Lord Jesus Christ. Secondly, he is circumcised. Then, thirdly, he is justified and pardoned." In other words, it is not enough to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. Faith *alone* in the Saviour *alone* was *not* acceptable to them. The Judaizers said: "We must do something and make our contribution.

Of course, the Lord Jesus does 95 per cent of our salvation, but then, we make our contribution of 5 per cent too. We get circumcised, and eat special foods, we keep that seventh day of the week as a special day, just between us and the Lord." Paul says: "If that is how you get your salvation, you are absolutely lost. If that is how grace comes to you, then it's not grace at all!" Just as an anchor chain is as strong as its weakest link, salvation is as strong as the weakest link, and the weakest link is *our contribution*, because sin affects everything men do. Every word we speak, every action we perform — all the sins of omission, all our motivation riddled with and spoiled by sin. It is impossible for us to do anything one hundred per cent pure and holy and spotless and undefiled beneath *His* sight, before whom the angels cover their eyes. When *He* looks and evaluates anything there is sin, and if our salvation rests in part in Christ and in part in us, *we are lost men and women: our part always lets us down.* For Paul the glory of the Gospel that he brought to Galatia was the good news of what our lovely brave young Saviour did *all by Himself*, by His life of spotless submission to the Law of God, in His active obedience and His passive obedience when He suffered and died His royal death on Golgotha. "By himself he purged our sins," and the only contribution we make *is our great need — that's our contribution* — our need of Him. Rabbi Duncan said: "Our sin is the handle which we grasp which is attached to Christ." We plead our sin and our need, and His inconceivable love. For Paul, you see, the whole basis of meaningful Church fellowship rested on the *Word alone — that simple Word.*

Is it by Christ *alone* we are saved? Is it through faith alone in Him that we are saved? Is it the Word of God alone which we are to believe? Is it by grace alone that we are justified? *For Paul those "alones" are absolutely essential* because they give *all* the glory to the Lord Jesus Christ. So, for Paul, the Word of God and accepting its message determines our fellowship. The Word does it. It is not that we are overly particular people, non co-operative and awkward, but we are conscious the Word of God determines our fellowship, our co-operation in mission and in evangelism, our training of men for the ministry, our magazines, our publishing house. There is no way that we can fellowship together unless the Word of God has authority over us.

Fifthly — The Word of God has the right to control the emotional life of the Christian

The Bible is a rule, not just for my theology, but it is a rule for my experience. My experience is the way I react to doctrine, to Christian realities, my providences and day-to-day experiences, and the emotions which I have to handle as a Christian. I am sure we have often been inclined to exempt that department of our lives from the authority of the Bible and to assume whatever the Word of God speaks about doctrine, conduct, worship and fellowship, surely it does not deal with this mysterious and invincible area which seems so inaccessible and uncontrollable as our emotions. Now this is a very great mistake. There is clear

teaching in the Word of God that a certain kind of emotional life is normative for a Christian and required of God. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy and peace." What are "joy" and "peace"? They are emotions. What did Paul mean when he said: "I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content"? Is not that the normative emotional condition for the Christian — joy, peace, contentment? How far astray we can be in these areas! I am not at all sure that Christians characterised by joy, peace and contentment stand very prominent in our circles. Do we appreciate the contribution which a man or woman controlled by these emotions makes to the life of a Church? Do we revere members for their contentment? Do we esteem them for their joy and peace? How we should! The extraordinary ability to calm and uplift the spirit of a minister and a Church. Persons known by their joy and peace — what a blessing they are to a congregation! That is the Biblical norm for a personality, at peace with itself, integrated not by birth nor by temperament, nor by psychological technique, but integrated by the grace of God and so at peace with oneself — that is no mean feat.

Then, also, peace with the world around, with God above and, as a result, joy and contentment in our lives. These things are not *options* for a Christian, any more than it is an option for me whether I believe in the deity of Christ or not, because God's prescription for the Christian reaches down into my heart, my soul, my whole psychological condition and emotional life.

Let me put it in terms of the negatives that you find in the Word of God. Think, for example, of the great teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ on anxiety in Matthew chapter 6, and how the Lord rebukes that care and worry to which men and women are so liable. There the Lord analyzes it and shows how incompatible it is with a life of trust in God. More or less Jesus is saying to us: "Either faith *or* anxiety — you cannot have both." Remember how He stands before Elijah's depression and addresses him under the juniper tree and says: "What are you doing here, Elijah?" How He stands before David's despondency and says to him by His Spirit: "Why art thou cast down, Oh my soul?" Then He stands before Cain and says: "Why is your face cast down?"

God challenges depression. How can a Christian be continually depressed who believes God has put *everything* that touches our lives, whether in the greatest way or in the slightest way to be under obligation to work together for our good? How can a Christian be always cast down who is saying to the world: "I have a loving Shepherd who sits at the right hand of God, who is in control of my life, who makes all grace to abound always to me in every circumstance, from whom I am never, never going to be separated from His love!" How can a Christian who believes that message the moment something goes against him and he is affected, lose his joy? The Saviour said: "Do not be full of care about what you are going to eat or drink, or about the future." "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." The folly of us dwelling on all the possible things that might happen to us! That is so desperately unbelieving. It is simply sub-Christian for us to behave in that way.

Think again of the teaching of our Lord Jesus about phobias and how He so often confronted the disciples and said: "Why are ye fearful? Why are ye afraid?" They are in a storm — yes — but He is with them. The enfleshment of the covenant of grace is there alongside them: what right do they have to be afraid? He says: "Let not your heart be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in me." Why this feeling that you are useless? Why do you think like that? Why this feeling that nobody loves you? How can you think that as a Christian when you are the apple of God's eye? Why this feeling that you are not accepted? Doesn't the Word of God have its rights when it stands before my convictions, theology, worship and fellowship, and interrogates me? So, too, when that living Word comes and looks at my emotions it has the right to challenge me! But the Bible does much more. It looks at this depression and discontentedness so tenderly. God deals with us, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pities them that fear him."

With what a benign and kindly eye God views us when from weariness we have slept when He has asked us to watch and pray! How wonderfully the Lord deals with Job! When Job with such bitterness of soul blurts out his hardness, speaks so foolishly against God, and blasphemes his Maker, God comes and lifts him up and restores him to usefulness and blessing.

To those who have emotional problems (and every single Christian has some emotional problem), don't dismiss yourself. Don't ever rubbish yourself because of painful shyness, because of a depression that the doctors have had to help, because of a worrying disposition, because of fear, because of anxiety. Don't put yourself down. God bears with people like that. God greatly uses people like this. David Brainard was someone just like that, yet greatly used of God. Such people are real Christians nonetheless. The Lord is yet scrutinising them, challenging them, encouraging and helping them to find love, joy and peace. He accomplishes it in us as we are *living a life under the authority of this Word*. I cannot discover any other secret of living a richly fulfilled life than sitting at the feet of this *Wonderful Counsellor* and having Him speak to us, and challenge us and then *we do what He has said*.

THE EVERLASTING ARMS

"None is like Jeshurun's God, so great, so strong, so high;
Lo! He spreads His wings abroad, He rides upon the sky. . . .
Israel, what hast thou to dread? Safe from all impending harms,
Round thee and beneath are spread the everlasting arms."

Charles Wesley

Studies in the Book of Jonah (3)

P. D. JOHNSON (London)

SOME EXPOSITORY THOUGHTS ON THE THIRD CHAPTER

Introduction

When a valuable warship has been badly damaged by enemy action, it is not always abandoned and left to sink without trace. In some instances, it is taken in tow and brought back to a friendly port, before being moved on, not to a breaker's yard, but to a naval dockyard, where it will be repaired and refitted. And when that vessel is eventually relaunched and recommissioned, it will be more suitable than ever for the combat before it, having had many of its weapons systems upgraded, its engines refurbished, and many other modifications incorporated while undergoing repairs.

In a similar way, it was never the Lord's will to allow Satan to eliminate Jonah from usefulness in spiritual warfare. As we have seen in our previous two studies, the Lord kept His hand on Jonah, even when the prophet was at the height of his folly, and never allowed Satan to take him home as a prize. From the furnace of affliction was to come forth a much-purified Jonah, who was yet to be made a great blessing to thousands of people in a heathen capital. We must now study the recommissioning of God's prophet, and the mighty way he was used at Nineveh.

1. The nature of Jonah's new commission

Like many a recommissioned warship, Jonah was sent back to the work he had originally been commissioned to perform. "And the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time, saying, Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee" (verses 1 and 2). Now although the work God recommissioned Jonah to do was the *same* as before, God specifically mentioned something that is only implied in Jonah's original charge. Notice that, when "the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time", it included the instruction "... and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee" (verse 2). Now why did the Lord emphasise the importance of Jonah declaring to the people of Nineveh the exact message He had put into the prophet's hands? Most probably, it was because the Lord foresaw that Satan, having already used one ploy in his attempt to prevent Jonah from preaching repentance to the Ninevites, would employ another weapon from his evil armoury against him the next time. In other words, the Lord added these words to Jonah's new commission to forewarn his restored prophet of the *danger of compromising his real message*. Surely this point comes as a timely warning to ministers of the Gospel today? What temptations are abroad at the present time for men engaged in the great

work of the Christian ministry to compromise their God-given message! Some have already abandoned one or more of the distinctive doctrines of the Evangelical Gospel. Others have started to restrict their message to believers only. And a third group completely sets aside all Biblical precedents for addressing saints and sinners. Like the warship mentioned in our earlier illustration, having been "holed below the waterline", their main work seems to be how to keep themselves and their Churches "afloat", rather than advancing with the rest of the fleet to battle! As we shall see shortly, it is only by heeding the Lord's counsel to Jonah, that any minister or missionary will make inroads into Satan's kingdom today.

2. The faithfulness with which Jonah fulfilled God's commission

It must be heartening for any man engaged in the work of preaching the Gospel today to read of the obedient way in which Jonah "arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord" (verse 3), and of the faithful way in which he delivered God's solemn message in the heart of that great, heathen city. "And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown" (verse 4). *All* whom Christ has called to the ministry are under a solemn obligation to preach the Gospel, irrespective of their particular ministerial gifts or appointed place of labour. To open up to men and women their state in sin; to faithfully warn them of impending judgment, to set before them the glorious Person, Work and Promises of the Lord Jesus Christ; to call them to repentance; to press upon them the urgency of attending to the momentous matter of their soul's salvation — what a work is this! And the more experience conscientious ministers gain of that work, particularly in these days of widespread, militant atheism, and false, soul-destroying religion, the more they are constrained to cry out, with the Apostle Paul, "And who is sufficient for these things?" (2 Corinthians 2:16). Such feelings must have occupied the heart of Jonah as he "began to enter into the city a day's journey", and found himself surrounded by crowds of heathen people, with the signs of idolatry on every hand. But his gracious Father in heaven did not desert His servant in his hour of ministerial need. The faithfulness with which Jonah then delivered God's uninvited and unpalatable message to the crowds who gathered around him in the centre of that vast city, shows conclusively that the Holy Spirit was upholding and enabling Jonah in a truly remarkable way. Is there not encouragement here for ministers of the Gospel today, who find the going hard in many ways, and particularly when faced with the awesome responsibility of proclaiming the Gospel in the ears of the unconverted of our godless generation? Like Jonah of old, and like the Apostle Paul in his day, they may still experience, if they look solely to the Lord for strength, the glorious truth that "... our sufficiency is of God" (2 Corinthians 3:5), and who can tell whether their preaching, like that of the prophet and the apostle just mentioned, will not be owned of God in a way far beyond their own expectations?

3. The astonishing success of Jonah's preaching

The account we are given in verses 5 to 9 of the *effects* of Jonah's preaching at Nineveh is so remarkable, and so unlike anything witnessed under Evangelical preaching today, that we may feel tempted, at times, to wonder whether it really happened like this! How we need to remember that we are still reading divinely-inspired and inerrant Scripture, and that Christ Himself fully accepted the Biblical account of Nineveh's repentance (see Luke 11:32). Rather ought we to take heart from what happened under Jonah's faithful ministry at Nineveh, and pray earnestly that God would own the preaching of His Gospel in a mighty way in our degenerate days. We emphasise just three points which stand out from a careful consideration of these five verses:

(a) *The effect of Jonah's preaching on the king of Nineveh*

It would appear from the words at the beginning of verse 6 — "For word came unto the king of Nineveh" — that the king of Nineveh did not actually hear Jonah preach his unpalatable message himself, but had it reported accurately to him. But with what power and conviction did that report come home to him! Notice his deep sense of the people's terrible guiltiness before God, in which he feels so much involved himself; the way he takes the lead in laying aside his regal robe for a sackcloth, and then sits in ashes; the extraordinary proclamation he issues to his subjects in Nineveh; and his hope in the mercy of God alone (verses 6-9). And all this by one of the most haughty, ostentatious and cruel tyrants living at the time! If any reader doubts the truth of this assertion, let him first read the accounts we have in the Old Testament of the Assyrian monarchs, and then visit the fine Assyrian Galleries in the British Museum in London! And yet, through the blessing of God resting on the faithful ministry of a solitary Jewish prophet, this proud monarch was not only brought to repentance himself, but made instrumental in bringing many of his subjects to repentance as well. In days like our own, when the Gospel never seems to even *reach* the ears of an impenitent monarchy, we do well to notice that God can cause His Word to penetrate palace walls and humble royal hearts.

(b) *Jonah's preaching was believed by all ranks of Nineveh society*

It is unlikely that the great majority of the inhabitants of Nineveh heard Jonah preach personally. More probably most of them living in that sprawling metropolis heard it via the King's proclamation. But what really concerns us is their response to what they heard. How graphically and concisely it is recorded for us in verse 5 — "So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, *from the greatest of them even to the least of them.*" With what divine authority Jonah's message must have come to many hearts and minds and consciences in that heathen city on that memorable occasion! Is not this basic fact an encouragement for us to pray for such blessing to attend the faithful declaration of the Gospel in our day? Every now and then we are all

informed of some high personage — a member of the Royal circle, a prominent Member of Parliament, or an influential businessman — converting to popery, but when did we last hear of anyone from that particular class in our society converting to Christ under the blessed influences of the true Gospel? And as for the great mass of “ordinary” folk in our land, do not their views, interests, priorities and personal lives, coupled with their complete apathy to all things religious, proclaim that they are completely unreached with the Gospel? Let us take heart from what God has recorded for us here in Jonah chapter 3. The account we have of the remarkable success of Jonah’s ministry at Nineveh, and what we may discover in the annals of subsequent times of spiritual blessing, all bear witness that, when God is pleased to accompany faithful preaching with His extraordinary power, the message of the Gospel reaches and affects all levels of society.

(c) The secrets of Jonah’s successful preaching at Nineveh

As our country slides deeper and deeper into spiritual and moral chaos, and we face the failure of the Churches to stem the flood of evil, and turn the tide, we do well to enquire *why* Jonah’s preaching at Nineveh was so successful. Two main thoughts on this point are suggested to us by this chapter. Firstly, *Jonah preached what God had told him to preach*. When Jonah “began to enter into the city a day’s journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown” (verse 4), the message he was declaring was the very same message God had commissioned him to preach. And it was the very same message that the ignorant Ninevites needed to hear. But is *this* the message that is being proclaimed by the Reformed Churches in our land today? What a decline in faithful, evangelistic preaching seems to have taken place in recent years, and what resentment is displayed towards anyone who has the courage to say so! The present writer has never forgotten the reply he received from a Reformed minister, whom he had taken to task, one Sunday evening, for preaching an hour’s sermon, at a chapel in the West End of London, on the subject of “Capital Punishment”, when unconverted people, including a poor “down-and-out” man, were obviously in the congregation. “Christian people,” the preacher told him, “need to be taught about this subject today, and, in any case, we are to declare the whole counsel of God. Besides, you can have too much preaching of Jesus Christ and Him crucified!” One turned away from that preacher with a sense of sadness in one’s heart, realising that, unless God brought a different kind of preaching to bear on people in these days, we shall look in vain for any real and lasting change.

Secondly, *Jonah preached in dependence upon God alone*. Only a Christian preacher whose trust was in God alone could have strode to the centre of a pagan city like Nineveh, and delivered such a solemn message to its ignorant inhabitants. We are as much in need of the Holy Spirit’s support and blessing today. Yet our trust often seems to be in ourselves and what we are doing and organising

than in the Holy Spirit's work. Surely, Jonah's success at Nineveh, is a timely reminder to us that all our activity, including our accurate preaching, will be unavailing, unless the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity comes down and owns, in His glorious, effectual way, the work in which we are engaged? "Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts" (Zechariah 4:6).

(To be concluded)

"Fear Not"

ISA A. BUCKLEY

IN THE 21ST CHAPTER of the Gospel of Luke, our Lord Jesus Christ speaks of the dreadful increase in wickedness and evil which will be seen in the world as time rolls round to His Second Advent.

In verse 26 we are told that one mark of the age will be "men's hearts failing them for fear".

Such fear is around us today. Men and women grow fearful at the increase in violence and crime which can reach even into our homes. There is the fear of devastating war, the fear of dread disease. Fear of illness and suffering, fear of growing old, of increasing weakness and failing powers. There is the fear of not having means to supply daily needs, fear of dying, of death and what lies beyond.

Such fears are very real, and when they take hold of heart and mind then life becomes a desert, joy departs and hope is gone.

But for the Christian this need never be. Scripture bids us again and again FEAR NOT. By the Lord's grace, resting upon His Word, we can live so calmly, peacefully and hopefully as to be a testimony to our Lord's loving and gracious care of His people.

Genesis 15:1. "FEAR NOT, Abram: I am thy shield (to protect) and thy exceeding great reward (to provide)."

Exodus 14:13-14. "FEAR YE NOT, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace."

Psalms 118:6. "The Lord is on my side; I will NOT FEAR; what can man do unto me?"

Isaiah 35:4a. "Say to them that are of a fearful heart, be strong, FEAR NOT."

Isaiah 41:10. "FEAR THOU NOT; for I am with thee."

Read the beautiful FEAR NOTS in Luke chapters 1 and 2.

Luke 12:7. "But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. FEAR NOT THEREFORE: ye are of more value than many sparrows."

Hebrews 13:6. "The Lord is my helper, and I will NOT FEAR what man shall do unto me."

Revelation 1:17b-18. "And he laid his right hand upon me, saying FEAR NOT, I am the First and the Last: I am he that liveth and was dead: and behold I am alive for evermore. Amen: and have the keys of hell and of death."

Revelation 2:10. "FEAR NONE of those things which thou shalt suffer: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

What precious words! FEAR NOT! Not because there is nothing to fear, but because our beloved Saviour has conquered all the powers of evil. He has defeated death and hell and the Devil the fount of all evil. His is the victory. All things are in His hands. HE IS LORD.

Because this is so, we His beloved people can rest in safety in His hands and FEAR NOT.

Psalms 46:1-2. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. THEREFORE WILL NOT WE FEAR."

Creation — All Things Become New

PETER KING (Stanford, Beds)

THE GENESIS ACCOUNT of the creation is possibly the most disputed part of the Bible. People in all generations have tried to discredit the Moses account of events so far away in time, and the theory of evolution was perhaps Satan's masterpiece in this onslaught on the Word of God. Even among Christians some have cast doubt on certain parts of the first chapter of the Bible, and this only adds to the confusion of the unbeliever.

It is very important that believers explain the Bible in the light of their faith and not from the logic of men. Scripture must be interpreted by Scripture, because we are not dealing with "stories" but the inspired Word of God. All Scripture is given for our instruction and profit and in it we shall find, if we diligently search, our own life portrayed as we live it in the fear of God.

This principle is no less important when we look at the creation. It is indeed an accurate account of how God brought into being the world we live in. Creation means to bring something from nothing and only God can do that. We look at matters from our viewpoint and can so easily be caught up in the arguments of men and science. The Bible is not a physics book but the Word of God, to be used by men and women everywhere as a rule for life and the way of salvation. More especially

it is the guide and handbook of God's grace to sinners, and it is from this angle believers should learn from its treasury of wisdom and knowledge.

I would like to suggest that proof of the Genesis creation account is clearly shown in the picture it gives of the new creation which the Holy Spirit works in the heart of all believers. By His grace the sinner is changed from a confused and meaningless life to a directed and transformed life full of meaning, fruitfulness and direction. Before this "new birth" a sinner lives in the darkness and chaos of a fallen world, but afterwards he walks *in newness of life*. Until the light of the knowledge of Jesus Christ is revealed in his heart the sinner cannot begin to grow in grace and live by faith. I hope by this article to show that this is clearly and wonderfully explained in the account of the first creation which portrays regeneration. Paul says in his Letter to the Corinthians that there is a natural body and there is a spiritual body, but the natural came first and then the spiritual. So with creation; the natural came first and then the spiritual.

DAY ONE — LIFE AND LIGHT

We read in Genesis 1:1 that: "*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.*" God was the One who started things moving. So it is in the new creation; we love Him because He first loved us. At the very beginning of our Christian life it was God who created both the earthly life of faith which we try to live, and also the heavenly communications which we enjoy as we pray and praise Him day by day. At the end of our earthly life we shall inherit that heavenly place prepared for us from all eternity.

"*The earth was without form and void and darkness was on the face of the deep.*" There is nothing in an unbeliever that remotely resembles the Christian. The sinner is indeed without form and void. Empty of grace and truth; no life style, no outlook or thinking process that could possibly be acceptable to God. Darkness pervades the mind going deep into the whole being. However, "*the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters*", and this was the beginning of a tremendous change. From now on everything started to happen and in the creation of the believer's world nothing was ever the same again. This beautifully illustrates the new creation, as the Holy Spirit, working in the heart of the unbeliever, moves the emotions and will to a new dimension so that "*old things are passed away, Behold, all things are become new*". This is the turning point and from now on everything is different. Psalm 104:30 says: "*Thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created: And thou renewest the face of the earth.*" The utter dependence of the Christian on the Holy Spirit is summed up in the previous verse: "*Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled: thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust.*"

"*And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness.*" The voice of God is heard back in the dawn of time as He commands the light to shine. This

is before the sun, moon or stars are seen. There was no visible source of this light, it just came and poured forth its glory on the chaos of an unmade world. It is God who holds the light in His hand, not even the orbs of space have this great power but are all subject to His authority. Does this not revive a memory in the heart and mind of the believer? Where did that light come from that revealed to us the dreadful position we were in as fallen creatures in a world of chaos? It shone, but like Paul, it seemed to come from all around as the conviction struck our very being.

"God saw that the light was good"; good in its effect on our mind as we suddenly realised that we were in the presence of a Holy God. The light was separated from the darkness and so our life began to take a new direction, although at first we may have seen *"men as trees walking"*. Night followed day as the struggle started between the powers of hell and the power of God. Sometimes it was daytime, but night seasons came, and still troubled the enlightened soul.

So ended the first day of this world and our new world, and what a day it was, and is still, to all those who know the joyful sound.

"I know not how the Spirit moves,
Convincing men of sin;
Revealing Jesus through the Word,
Creating faith in Him."

DAY TWO — SEPARATION AND BLESSING

"And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters . . . and it was so." The whole of the second day was used to create a space around the now enlightened earth. Previously there was no distinction between the waters, but now an environment was made that separated the one from the other. The fact that this was all that was done in this day, illustrates to us the significance of it and how important it is that we are, as enlightened believers, separated from the world. *"Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you."* This will not take place overnight; in the creation it took a whole sixth of the total period to achieve it. It is an ongoing process until one day we shall be finally separated in that great Day of the Lord when the hearts of all men will be made known. The creation of the firmament also teaches us of the link there is between God and ourselves. It is not a wall of partition but a way of intercession, says Matthew Henry. Amos 9:6 speaks of the drawing of the waters from the earth to be returned as rain. So He takes of the things of this life and we receive them as sanctified blessings. Water is used for refreshing, especially in the eastern countries where it is most precious. So here the waters are both in the earth and around it; both to give refreshment in our earthly bodies and from

heaven to bring blessing to the soul. This stage of the life of faith often brings with it the greatest blessing, when the awakened sinner realises the presence of the Lord in a very wonderful way. One often mourns as the hymnwriter did:

“Where is the blessedness I knew,
When first I saw the Lord?
Where is the soul-refreshing view
Of Jesus and His Word?”

All creation praises God and even the stormy wind has adoration in it. We should imitate creation in our praise and thanksgiving, being born again not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible. Psalm 148:4 says: *“Praise him, ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters which be above the heavens. Let them praise the name of the Lord: for he commanded, and they were created.”* It is interesting to see that the Psalmist believed in the creation account! God called the firmament heaven so identifying it as distinct from the earth and seas. How much more should we regard the grace which we have received as something quite separate from the life in this world even although they are intermingled together. The waters above have come from the earth and yet are used to replenish the earth. This is the mystery of God’s provision and mercy.

DAY THREE — AN HABITATION FOR THE SOUL

“Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear.” The progression of the creation is very controlled and logical. We should expect this from a God of order. First the earth is enlightened, then provided with water, and now the dry land appears ready for the life to be created to live on it. So in grace, the new creation provides an appropriate place for the Christian to live and grow. All around him will be an hostile world, but the dry land has appeared, to give a firm foundation on which to build his faith. There could be no stability on the water, only an uncertain, shifting faith, but here on the Rock Christ Jesus the believer is not moved despite the storms of life. Not only has the soul a place to rest but it is here that the blessings are gathered together. The sea is set apart from the land but also surrounds it. The one is dependent on the other so that neither one destroys the other, but they combine in their provision for the earth generally. So in grace the blessing (waters) are in Christ, not at the whim of man or the uncertainty of the world and yet they are graciously dispensed to the child of God. As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about them that fear Him.

Again God gives names to the areas created, namely Earth and Seas. The sea is often regarded in Scripture as typical of unrest. Here we see that the seas are gathered into one place, controlled and yet surrounding the earth on which man is to live. In the Book of Revelation John said there was “no more sea”, signifying the end of unrest and the ushering in of a new peaceful age. So it is

with the Christian; he will be surrounded with unrest and trouble but with his feet on the dry land he will be at peace. It is when we look at the sea as Peter did that we begin to sink.

"Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed was in itself, after his kind." All the essentials for the maintenance of life are now established on the planet, dry land and water. Now is the time to introduce living plants that can grow without any outside intervention. The herb yielding seed so that it can reproduce and the fruit tree likewise. It is interesting to see that these are introduced before the sun is created, even although we know that sunlight is essential for the maintenance of plant life. Again it emphasises the controlling power of God who sustains all life. We only see the secondary forces of nature but behind the scenes there is an all prevailing God who directs and guides. So also in grace. The herbs and trees teach us the fruitful potential, indeed necessity, of our Christian life. Our seed is in us, as our Lord said, *"a well of water springing up within you"*. The Christian is thus equipped with these faculties and so we are told that we shall know the people of God by their fruits. *If there is no fruit there is no life.* A solemn but sound guide to the reality of the new birth. It behoves us to examine ourselves to see if we are fruitful. Paul gives us a very complete check list in Galatians 5:22-23: *"Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."* Quite a formidable standard by which to mark ourselves.

DAY FOUR — INSTRUMENTS IN HIS HAND

"Let there be lights in the firmament of heaven to divide the day from the night. And God made two great lights . . . he made the stars also." Light is now concentrated into bodies, whereas before it was general. These other lights were to be for signs, seasons, days and years. We now see time being created as a way of ruling in the world. God is eternal and yet He is pleased to use means that we can understand to help us organise our life. These created lights were for the use of mankind and will continue until the end of the age. As the Christian progresses in his new life he will be an instrument in God's hand; a light in a dark place. All the world has benefited because of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Without Him there would be no mercy even for this world, and the unbeliever is spared much suffering because of the Christian influence on society. May the Lord help us to be an even greater influence on those around us that we shall be as a great light *"set in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth"*.

There is no doubt that the love of Christ in a believer does divide the light from the darkness as troubles and sorrows are alleviated by the powerful influence of the Gospel. How sad it is when a Church seems to spread no love into the community it should be serving, and so downgrades the Gospel to a mere legal

observance of rules. It is said that the sun and moon rule but they are under God's control, and so believers must always be aware of the commandments of God when exercising a ministry to the world. Notice also that these lights were set in the heavens where every one on earth could see them. "*No man, when he hath lighted a candle, covereth it with a vessel, or putteth it under a bed; but setteth it on a candle stick, that they that enter in may see the light.*" Although the lights are said to be *great* they are for our use; likewise we should be vessels for the Master's use. "*Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister.*" We do not often find it practised that the great Christians are ready to be servants. Usually the powerful want to exercise power and the weak are oppressed. What a solemn lesson this is for us all as we see the creation of such wonders that we now take for granted in the sky above us, both at night and during the day, and yet so often do not follow their example in serving God and our fellow men to bring them to a knowledge of the truth of God.

"The sun that keeps his trackless way,
And downward pours his golden flood,
Night's sparkling host, all seem to say,
In accents clear, that God is good."

DAY FIVE — THE CHURCH GROWS

In this fifth day the moving creatures were formed. "*Let the earth bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life. . . .*" Out of the divided waters came life which was to reproduce down the generations. There were some that largely survived the great flood; namely the fish. There was no need to bring them into the ark in which Noah set out just prior to the deluge. They continued to reproduce and still do today. Generations of similar creatures go on appearing until the end of the age. So it is with the Church as each generation succeeds the previous one as a witness in its time. It will not be destroyed by disaster nor will it need man's protection, for the Lord Almighty is the defence of the Church. It is interesting to note that all these came out of the waters, perhaps signifying the Spirit's creative power in the redeeming work of Christ for the Church. This is no earthly creation to be destroyed by God's wrath, but a spiritual body which will never be overcome by this world's powers and live for ever in eternity.

It is also worthy of note that God blessed them saying: "*Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the seas and let the fowl multiply on the earth.*" Not only were they born of the Spirit but had the overall presence of God Himself to be with them. So the Church will prosper and increase down the generations because of the determined will of God who has said that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Here then is another example of the first creation showing the glories of the new creation, as the Church of Christ is formed from of old and preserved down through the generations until time shall be no more.

We can also note that it is not until the fifth day that life is created in the earth. Many other things, light, seas, dry land, controlling planets, have to be in place before life is sustainable on the earth. We further see that there is no suggestion that life is being created on any other part of the solar system! How wise our God is to make all the provision ready for the life. So it is in grace for Christ died for us to make a way of salvation and was a *"a Lamb slain from the foundation of the earth"*. In the eyes of the Trinity we were secure in our new creation before we had our first birth. *"Thine they were and thou gavest them me."* We can only marvel at the work of God and stand amazed at His handiwork. The fact recorded by Moses that the waters brought forth, serves to enhance the mighty power of God in creation. It is clear that the water itself had no power to produce the fish and fowl, and so in the new birth a right environment or upbringing, from parents or denomination, cannot produce a regenerate soul. The work is God's alone, by grace alone, and to Him will be the praise and glory.

"I sing the goodness of the Lord,
That filled the earth with food;
He formed the creatures with His Word,
And then pronounced them good."

DAY SIX — ULTIMATE COMMUNION

"Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind. . . ." The cattle and beasts of the earth are now created only to be destroyed in the great flood of years to come. However, some were preserved and the generations continue to this day. All the different kinds of earth-bound creatures are now formed and this shows us the great provision that God made before His greatest creation, man himself. Long before the Christian was manifest in the world all that was needed to protect and preserve him had been supplied. The Spirit had from eternity been consigned the role of the great awakener, to bring light into the darkness of the mind of man. The environment of grace in which the Christian would grow and develop was all in the mind of God long before we had a being. What we should do in our Christian life was also determined even down to our place of natural birth and time of conversion. No wonder one said, "How great thou art".

Yet there is in the creation account of this the last day another more glorious event. *"Let us make man. . . ."* Here at the end of the period God brings Himself into the world in the image of a man. *"So God created man in his own image."*

The crowning glory of the Church is its covenant Head who came to redeem us from our sins. Even as we were created in the image of God in that first week of time, so Christ came in our likeness, without sin, unto salvation. This gave the perfect communion that was, till then, lacking in this dawn of time, so that the

earth should be full of the glory of God. The record, in verse 28, tells us that man was given dominion over all the other living creatures and had power to subdue the earth. What a beautiful picture of the believer as he is made a "king and priest to God". A king to rule over sin and self and a priest to offer the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. So the account ends with God saying to man, "*I have given you every herb bearing seed . . . and every tree*"; to you it shall be meat. Every beast and fowl is given sustenance as well. "*And God saw that it was very good.*"

In this last act of the Creator we see that the language is slightly different. Throughout this chapter it is repeatedly said that God commands — "*Let there be . . .*" — now in the creation of man He says: "*Let us make man.*" Here is something much more important, so "the three Persons of the Trinity consult about it and concur in it", Matthew Henry suggests. We can also note that man was made last of all to counter any suggestion that he may have been involved in the creation process. Such is the case with our own new birth, for we have no part in it but God the Trinity is the Creator from start to finish. Man was created in the image of God unlike any other part of the creation. Paul gives us a beautiful commentary on this from the new man's creation in his Letter to the Ephesians: "*. . . be renewed in your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.*"

So we see that the image or likeness of God is to be holy and true. How far short we fall of that standard and need to have the cleansing power of the Spirit day by day.

As the creation account draws to a close we are reminded that man was also told to be fruitful and multiply and this teaches us the command to later generations to go into all the world and teach repentance and forgiveness of sins, thus fulfilling that great commission. All that had been brought into being over the previous days is now given to man for his use. "*I have given every green herb for meat.*"

"*And God saw everything he had made, and, behold, it was very good.*" At the last great day this will be literally true of all believers as the Lord comes with a shout to gather all the nations to Himself and so He shall see of the travail of His soul. *Will you be there?*

"Ere long I hope to join the throng
Who bow before the King:
And, in one everlasting song,
My hallelujah bring."

"Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. Let all your things be done with charity" (1 Corinthians 16:13-14).

The Love of God

W. J. PARKER (Colwyn Bay)

"God is love" (1 John 4:8)

IN STUDYING THIS TEXT, it is helpful to have a clear understanding of the various Greek words used for love: (i) "eros" is the word for sexual love; (ii) "phileo" is the verb for to like or enjoy; (iii) "agape" is the word for goodwill, kindness, compassion, the love of a man for his family, and friends. This is the word John used for the love of God. It is the mutual fellowship of the Holy Trinity in John 5:20: "The Father loveth the Son, and showeth him all things whatsoever himself doeth." And in John 3:35: "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand." Their close co-operation is seen in the words following: "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do; for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise." So in this close co-operation of the Holy Trinity in thought, word, and deed, we see that "agape" involves respect and co-operation. The Holy Spirit can be thought of as the generator of "agape". This is seen also in the wider sphere of the relationship of God and His creation. Paul describes love as the fruit of the Spirit. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" (Galatians 5:23).

1. The everlasting covenant of grace

In the relationship between God and man, the eternal covenant of grace is the basic formula in which is seen the outworking of the love of God. The Scriptures state and everywhere infer, that the three Persons of the Trinity covenanted together to make a gracious way of salvation for fallen mankind. The Father expressed His love for the world, and gave His Son the office of becoming a Saviour, by His atoning death on the cross for all believers. God *so* loved the world! The Holy Spirit covenanted to effectively apply the decree of salvation, by working in the hearts of men the life of God which is everlasting, repentance for sin, and all the fruits of His presence, love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance. And so Peter and the Apostles said (in Acts 5:30-32): "The God of our Fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are His witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God has given to them that obey him."

2. Faith and salvation, or the call of Abraham

At the beginning of his self revelation to a chosen people, God gave a clear statement of the way of salvation for every man in the experience of Abraham.

The writer of the Hebrews described it in these words: "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out to a place which he should afterwards receive for an inheritance, obeyed, and he went out." Faith and obedience are like the two sides of a coin, for every one of us.

God further tested Abraham in his worship. He sent him to Moriah to offer a sacrifice. Would he go so far in obedience as to offer his only son? Before he could do so, God called him to loosen the boy, and to offer instead a ram caught in the thicket nearby. Abraham called the place Jehovah Jireh, which means, "In the mountain of the Lord it shall be seen", or, "It shall be provided". What a remarkable foretelling this was, followed up by the whole sacrificial system of the laws of Moses, of the cross of Christ where He died for the sins of His faithful people. "By faith Abraham offered up Isaac . . . his only begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called; accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from whence he received him in a figure" (Hebrews 11). Then Paul explained it (in Galatians 3:6): "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." Faith is more than putting your hand up in a cosy Gospel meeting. It is trusting God in the harsh and uncomfortable experiences of life. "So then they that be of faith are blest with faithful Abraham." Faith stands unique in our relationship with God. We are saved by faith alone, by the grace of God.

3. The giving of God's laws by Moses

When Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt a further revelation of the way of salvation was also given. In the ten commandments God revealed the moral standards of every life that could be in fellowship with Him. The moral code brings to light the failure of every man to live up to it. So there follows a further promise of divine grace, in the sacrificial system of the Israelite tabernacle worship. The ritual and symbolic offerings by the people all pointed to the one sacrifice of Christ on the cross. They were all offered in the faith that God would provide the true sacrifice for the people's salvation. Paul made it clear that if men thought they could be saved by keeping the laws of God they were mistaken. "A man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified" (Galatians 2:16).

4. The Gospel of Christ

The rejection of the Lord Jesus by Israel and the Gentile powers made way for the crucifixion of Christ on the cross. There He offered Himself as the "one full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world". This is the Gospel, or good news of Jesus Christ. He alone is the Mediator between God and all men. As Mediator He is our Prophet, Priest, and King.

He fulfils His office as Prophet by declaring God's whole counsel and purpose in His Word, the Holy Scriptures.

As Priest, He offered Himself once on the cross as a sacrifice, an atonement for the sins of the whole Church, and in heaven He intercedes for those He there purchased with His precious blood.

As King He rules from His throne in heaven, gathering and guiding His faithful until they are justified, sanctified, and finally glorified with Him in heaven.

So we see the love of God in Christ.

5. Let us finally look again at the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of men

He comes to apply the gracious and loving gifts of the Father and the Son. "The Spirit breathes upon the Word and brings the truth to sight; Precepts and Promises afford a sanctifying light." He brings men to repentance, to faith, to sanctification, as the Scriptures teach.

"Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

"He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment."

"Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost."

"When he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself . . . he shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and show it unto you" (John 16:13-14).

The End Will Come

J. C. RYLE (1816-1900)

THERE IS A TEXT in the Bible which says, "It is appointed unto men once to die" (Hebrews 9:27). Happy would it be for men if all would think of this, and not put away the subject of death from their minds. One reason why so many are not ready to die when their turn comes, is their unwillingness to think about death while they are well.

Reader, settle it down in your mind that death is the end to which you must come at last, unless the Lord shall first return to judgment. After all our scheming and contriving and planning and studying, after all our inventions and discoveries and scientific attainments, there remains one enemy we cannot conquer and disarm, and that is death. The chapter in Genesis which records the long lives of Methuselah and the rest who lived before the flood, winds up the simple story of each by two expressive words, "he died". And now, after several

thousand years, what more can be said of the greatest among ourselves? The histories of Marlborough, and Washington, and Napoleon, and Wellington, arrive at just the same humbling conclusion. The end of each, after all his greatness, is just this, "he died".

Death is a mighty leveller. He spares none, he waits for none, and stands on no ceremony. He will not wait till you are ready. He will not be kept out by moats, and doors, and bars, and bolts. The Englishman boasts that his home is his castle, but with all his boasting he cannot exclude death. An Austrian nobleman forbade death and smallpox to be mentioned in his presence. But, named or not named, it matters little; in God's appointed hour death will come.

One man, like Absalom, has fifty servants to wait upon him, and do his bidding. Another has none to lift a finger to do him a service. But both are travelling to a place where they must lie down alone.

One man is the owner of hundreds of thousands. Another has hardly a pound that he can call his own property. Yet neither one nor the other can carry one penny with him into the unseen world.

One man pampers his body with every possible delicacy, and clothes it in the richest and softest apparel. Another has scarce enough to eat, and seldom enough to put on. Yet both alike are hurrying on to a day when "ashes to ashes, and dust to dust" shall be proclaimed over them.

Reader, I know that these are ancient things. I do not deny it for a moment. I am writing stale old things that all men know. But I also am writing things that all men do not feel. Oh! no! if they did feel them, they would not speak and act as they do.

You wonder sometimes at the tone and language of ministers of the Gospel. You go away, and say to one another: "The man means well, but he goes too far." But do you not see that the reality of death is continually forbidding us to use other language? We see him gradually thinning our congregations. We miss face after face in our assemblies. We know not whose turn may come next. We only know that "after death comes the judgment". We must be bold and decided, and uncompromising in our language. We would rather run the risk of offending some than losing any. We would aim at the standard set up by old Baxter:

"I'll preach as though I ne'er should preach again,
And as a dying man to dying men!"

We would realise the character given by Charles II of one of his preachers: "That man preaches as though death was behind his back. When I hear him I cannot go to sleep."

Oh! that men would learn to live as those who will one day die! Truly it is poor work to set our affections on a dying world and its short-lived comforts, and for the sake of an inch of time to lose a glorious immortality! Here we are toiling, and labouring, and wearying ourselves about trifles, and running to and fro

like ants upon a heap; and yet after a few years we shall all be gone, and another generation fill our place. Live for eternity, reader.

Lay hold on Christ. Repent and be converted. Believe and pray. Seek a portion that can never be taken from you. And never forget John Bunyan's golden rule, "He that would live well, let him make his dying-day his company keeper".

Reader, remember what you have just been reading. Depend upon it, no dying man ever yet complained that he had thought too much about death while he was in health.

Book Reviews

***Doing a Great Work.* S. K. Evers. Evangelical Press. pp. 224. £6.95.**

This book is the outcome of a series of studies given in the course of the author's ministry. His aim has been to produce a balanced commentary, one that would both inform the mind and warm the heart. He has indeed done just this. The commentary is well written and presented and should prove helpful both in private study as well as for pulpit preparation. Mr. Evers has read widely and his sources are well documented.

Ezra and Nehemiah are books of the Bible which provide us with many valuable lessons; they will stimulate us to both supplication and service. To quote from *Doing a Great Work*, the author says: "In an age of experienced-centred worship and entertainment-orientated evangelism these two books direct our thoughts to a holy God who demands reverent worship and uncompromising loyalty from His people. Furthermore Ezra and Nehemiah call us back to a renewed obedience to God's Word, a fresh realisation of the power of prayer and wholehearted commitment to the work of God in fellowship with the people of God."

We warmly commend the book. Biblical quotations are mostly from the N.I.V.

M.H.

***The Faith of the Vatican.* Herbert M. Carson. Evangelical Press. pp. 192. £5.95.**

Herbert Carson, a former editor of *The Gospel Magazine*, has devoted a lifetime of study to the Roman Catholic/Evangelical Protestant debate. Older Christians will remember his previous books, *Roman Catholicism* and *Dawn or Twilight*. His present book is a clear presentation of what, according to the sub-title, is "a fresh look at Roman Catholicism".

Mr. Carson's book is timely as persistent talk of change has given many the impression that controversy with Rome is a thing of the past. The climate has

indeed changed and friendly discussion with Roman Catholics is commonplace, but the doctrinal differences are still there.

“It has not been my aim in this book to win a clever argument and to overwhelm my opponents,” but the author shows that controversy is still necessary and can be conducted in a loving way. “Paul’s concern was for the purity of the Gospel and so he could not let a loving relationship lead him to condone error. To argue that if we share with others a love for Jesus, we should therefore turn a blind eye to very grave doctrinal error, is to run completely contrary to Scripture. . . . It is a strange love that does not try to point someone to a truer and more secure path. . . . It is a perfectly biblical activity to engage in controversy. If the truth is valued then we have a duty to defend it. . . . Jesus Himself was controversial and was prepared to speak clearly, incisively and indeed bluntly. . . .”

These quotations are from the first chapter and a mere glance at the notes at the back on the other eleven chapters shows that this easily read book is not a superficial one. The author’s constant appeal is to Holy Scripture, which is “a full and perfect rule of faith”.

Mr. Carson has read widely and is up-to-date. His book is warmly commended.

W.J.B.

***Faithful Under Fire.* Roger Ellsworth. Evangelical Press. pp. 96 paperback. £3.95.**

There are thirteen chapters in this enthralling book, showing how Joseph drew strength from the promises of God, amid the pleasures and difficulties of life.

The Pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church, Benton, Illinois, USA, relates in vivid fashion the parallels that face Christians today. The author stresses the grace God gave to Joseph in his treatment of his brothers and the need for believers to put this into practice in daily living.

Ellsworth’s closing chapters relate Joseph and the Lord Jesus Christ in Sonship, Service and Sovereignty. The book is a great encouragement to trust completely in the reliability of the Word of God.

J.C.

***Old Testament Evangelistic Sermons.* D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones. The Banner of Truth Trust. pp. 268 hardback. £12.95.**

Called from the background of medicine and science, Lloyd-Jones, first in Wales, then in Westminster Chapel, London, exercised an enormously influential ministry. He consistently in these Old Testament sermons sounded the notes of the folly of faith in man with all his moral failure, and of the glory of the Gospel of Christ in whom alone salvation and hope are to be found.

The sermons demonstrate that the Christian faith is not merely another religion among many; it alone has the message which can bring us to the knowledge of God and make this life the way to heaven.

A book for our shelves.

J.C.

***Life After Pentecost. A Guide to the Acts of the Apostles.* Donald S. Fortner. Evangelical Press. pp. 348 paperback. £8.95.**

This book will be useful for personal and especially for group use. It is a series of short studies of the early Church, covering a period of thirty to thirty-five years. The Acts of the Apostles was written by Luke and the central theme throughout is the Ascension and Lordship of Jesus Christ.

The author of the above book is Pastor of Grace Baptist Church, Danville, Kentucky, USA.

The publishers are to be congratulated on the typesetting and the book is easy to read.

J.C.

Please obtain any books reviewed or advertised from your local Christian bookshop, as we regretfully are not in a position to supply your requirements.

SECRETARIAL NOTES

We are particularly grateful to all those who so helpfully send gifts and amounts in excess of the *nominal* subscription. **The post paid subscription for 1996 is £5.50 Sterling.** Single copies 90p (postage overseas extra).

It is a saving in time and expense for our small office administration when readers remit subscriptions without our need to send "subscription due" reminder letters. **Kindly pay in sterling.** Banks charge considerable commission, etc. for negotiation of foreign cheques, including those of the Irish Republic.

If payment is not made in sterling we are unable to meet even bank negotiation charges, so that nothing is left for the cost of the magazine. The postage overseas is double that for the UK. **PLEASE PAY IN STERLING IF AT ALL POSSIBLE.**

Church and chapel groups. We already have long-established groups of readers in various parts of the UK. and overseas. We would like to increase the number of church and chapel groups. Would local friends kindly promote this, and thus help to extend the ministry of *The Gospel Magazine*?

Some pre-1996 past copies are available — single copies 25p (postage overseas extra).

MAGAZINE SUBSCRIPTION FORM

To *The Gospel Magazine*, Mr. David Hughes, 18 Altenburg Gardens, Battersea, London, SW11 1JJ.

We would be obliged if established readers whose subscriptions are now due would make use of this form. Please inform us of any change of address. Kindly renew your subscription in good time. Subscription for 1997, £5.50 (the same as in 1995).

Subscriber's name

Address

Post-code

No. of copies to be sent per issue

Sum enclosed

Date of sending subscription

Please tick if a new subscriber

Please give your postcode