

NOVEMBER–DECEMBER 2015

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The Gospel Magazine



Crucifying the flesh • New Covenant Theology—Part 4 • 2015 Index

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1766–2015

*Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.
Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.
Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

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

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

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

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EDITORIAL

WHAT is the most important task entrusted to the Church? We know the Church is the bride of Christ, being the body of Christ, as the Apostle Paul teaches. We know that the Church is to be a holy and a faithful witness to Christ, bearing his name before the world in spite of all its hatred, wickedness and opposition. We know that the Church is to be a house of prayer, offering up both praises and petitions on high, to the Lord our God, our heavenly Father. If we had to say, what is the most important task, how many, I wonder, would name preaching?

Preaching dominates the Bible. Beginning with the warning God gave Adam in Genesis 2:16–17, and going on through the Lord’s dealings with the patriarchs, the preaching of Moses to Israel, and the work of the various prophets, the proclamation of God’s will is the standard means of communication in Scripture. Preaching is given as the primary work of the Lord Jesus Christ, who came ‘preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God’, Mark 1:14. It was the work to which the apostles were called, in that they were commissioned to be witnesses to the Lord Jesus and his resurrection, Acts 1:8. The preaching office was shared with others who were not apostles,

such as Barnabas and Silas. It was passed on, to men such as Timothy, to whom the Apostle Paul gave such instruction in the work.

Preaching was the main means by which Christianity spread in this country; not the preaching of those who came with Augustine to Canterbury, but those who came with Aidan to Northumbria. Preaching was the main vehicle for spreading the Protestant Reformation, both in England and Scotland, and in every part of Europe where the Reformation took root. Preaching awakened so many in our nation during the eighteenth century. It was preaching that characterised the revival of the nineteenth century.

I was reminded recently of the words of Hugh Latimer, who declared in a sermon before King Edward VI,

I told you before of *scala coeli*, the ladder of heaven; I would you should not forget it. The steps thereof are set forth in the tenth to the Romans. The first is preaching, then hearing, then believing, and last of all salvation. *Scala coeli* is a preaching matter, I tell you, and not a massing matter. God’s instrument of salvation is preaching. (*Sermons of Hugh Latimer*, Parker Society, p178)

This being the case—and who would deny that the Apostle Paul roots salvation in the preaching of the gospel, Romans 10:13–15?—we may well ask ourselves a solemn and serious question. How many churches in this land are really engaged in the matter of salvation?

Go into any church or chapel, and have a look at the noticeboard. What dominates it? Many have their supported missions and

missionaries on display. Take a closer look. Do they support missions or humanitarian projects? Are the organisations concerned with preaching the gospel or supplying clean water? Is it the work of a missionary society, or is it rural development? Is it gospel work specifically, or is it not? If we believe Jesus Christ to be the Way, the Truth and the Life, let Christ be preached. That is our duty and calling.¶

CRUCIFYING THE FLESH

A SERMON BY THE EDITOR

'And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts' (Galatians 5:24)

THE great privilege of the Christian is that we are no longer under condemnation. The wrath of God, revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness, is no longer aimed at us. The threat of eternal judgment, of hell and damnation, no longer hangs over us. We are, in short, no longer under the Law. That is, we are no longer under the Law's judgment or condemnation. Whereas some people may be said to be 'known to the police', and are numbered among 'the usual suspects', we are overlooked by the law, as not coming to its attention. We are no longer under the Law. This much the apostle declares in v.18. Those matters which, if present, would bring us to the attention of the Law are called 'the works of the flesh', v.19. The list of them continues into v.21, and the apostle repeats the warning the Galatians had already received from him, concerning the fate of those who do such things. He then lists those evidences that a man is led of the Spirit, v.22–23, showing what it is to walk in the Spirit. Let us not move from this thought until we have grasped this truth, that to be led of the Spirit means, according to Paul's doctrine, to walk or to live in righteousness and

holiness. It is to forsake sin in all its forms, and to do those things, to bring forth those fruits, which show that we have new life in Christ. Let us be clear on what is meant by being 'led of the Spirit', of our living in the Spirit, v.25.

But the cry of those who seek after righteousness so often is, 'How can I put away the works of darkness, those fruits of the flesh, that I might be able to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit?' We admit to that war in our members of which the apostle speaks elsewhere, Romans 7. We know that the evil that we would not, that we do; and the good that we would, that we do not. How may we deal effectually with our sins? Has not Christ dealt with them? And if so, why do I yet struggle and fall, as the weakness of the flesh gives way before the wiles and crafts of the devil or man?

The answer is to be found in these words. 'They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts thereof.' In which words we shall consider two main things; first, what it is to be Christ's; and, secondly, what it is to crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts.

1. What it is to be Christ's. *They that be Christ's*

To call oneself a Christian, and to be Christ's, are not necessarily the same. Many call themselves Christians, or are given the name of Christian, who are nothing of the sort. Ask a Muslim who is a Christian and he will reply, anyone born in the West. To such we are by birth Christians. Go back to the Middle Ages and ask who is a Christian, and everybody in Europe would have said they were. They dwelt in Christendom. They acknowledged the supreme authority of Christ's Vicar on earth, the pope. They had been baptized, and they would be buried in consecrated ground, unless they died excommunicated.

But turn to God's Word and see who is a Christian! 'Whosoever denieth the Son hath not the Father', I John 2:23. 'Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin', I John 3:9. 'We know that we have passed from death to life because we love the brethren', I John 3:14. 'Everyone that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God', I John 4:7. 'Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God', I John 4:15. Now, note that these things are evidences—because we are in Christ, we do or believe these things.

Yet all these things can be counterfeited. Some can profess Jesus to be the Christ, yet have no faith in him. Some can profess to love the brethren, who are not in Christ. We must beware the danger of counterfeit Christians, that we be not such, and that we are not speaking falsely or hypocritically in claiming to be believers.

For this is the heart of the matter—faith. Note I John 5:1; 'Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God'. It is not a matter of lip-claims, but of heart- and will-claims. Do we have faith? What is faith? Is it not that pure, simple trust, which looks to the Lord Jesus, even when it must cry, 'Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief', and trusts in him as Saviour. It is faith which marks the one who is truly in Christ. Those who possess

saving faith are being described here.

And what is saving faith? It is, to put it briefly and simply, that looking unto Jesus alone, that relinquishing of all other hopes, helps and happinesses, in the confident assurance that Christ *can* save, and that Christ *will* save; and that he saves to the uttermost. This looking to Jesus is a looking to him crucified—the Substitute who has stood in my place to bear the punishment due to me. This looking to Jesus is to him risen again—the mighty victor over the grave and sin. This looking to Jesus is to him ascended—sitting at the right hand of God, and gathering all under his hand. Saving faith trusts the Saviour alone, looking to his finished work. It believes the promise, that all who come to him, he will in no wise cast out.

Thus the words of the Apostle are addressed to those who possess saving faith. Let us know whether we do, in the examination of our hearts, under the searching gaze of God's holy Word written.

2. What it is to crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts

i. *What is the flesh, and why speak of its affections and lusts:*

'The flesh' is what the Apostle elsewhere calls 'your members which are on earth', Colossians 3:5, which are not to be yielded as instruments of unrighteousness, Romans 6:13. By 'the flesh', then, the Apostle means that part, or those parts, of our nature which are as yet so tied and bound to this earth, being concerned with present, carnal and passing things; those parts of us which are not under Christ's authority, not renewed by grace, and which belong to the old nature.

'The flesh' is what Cain heeded when preparing the sacrifice to the Lord. It suited his carnal, faithless nature, and was rejected.

'The flesh' is what guided the people when they commanded Aaron, 'Up, make us gods'.

'The flesh' was what Hymenaeus and Alexander served, when they turned aside from faith and a good conscience.

In short, the flesh is that part of us which holds on, after the example of Lot's wife, to what we can see, taste, handle and hear, rather than that which is beheld with the eye of faith.

He adds, 'with the affections and lusts' to teach us a most important truth. We are not being commanded to set about a personal moral reformation, a mere outward change of behaviour. Paul would not have commended Cain for offering the sacrifice of blood, unless it were offered by faith. He would not have commended his fellow Israelites if they had put away the golden calf, unless they did it out of fear and love for the Lord God. He would not have commended Hymenaeus and Alexander for returning to Paul, if they had done so merely to avoid a reprimand. No, Paul seeks such a change as reaches to the affections—our love of sin—and the lusts—our appetite for sin.

And so the Apostle is dealing with the root of the matter in us, of sin which arises out of the thoughts and intents of the heart. What we need is to so deal with the source of sinful desire as to be able to conquer it—not always, not completely, perhaps, while we are in the flesh—but to such a degree and in such a manner as is not possible for or desired by the unbeliever.

ii. What it is to crucify the flesh

Elsewhere he says, 'Mortify your members which are on earth', Colossians 3:5—mortify, or put to death. The word used here differs from the word used in Romans 8:13; there, it is to kill, and here it is to deaden. The difference may best be discerned by looking at the agency involved in each case. In Romans 8:13 the agent is the Spirit, through whom this putting to death, this killing, is to happen. It is therefore his work, and not ours. When we come to Colossians 3:5 we find that we are the agent, but we know that we do not possess the power to put to death the sin which is in us. What we are to do is to deaden it, to reduce its life within our members which are otherwise given over to sin. This is why he says 'crucify'. Why?

Consider, first, what crucifixion is. Consider, secondly, who was crucified for us.

First, as to what crucifixion is; it is a slow death, as proven by the requirement for the soldiers to come and break the legs of the two malefactors. Although they had hung and suffered, they had not perished. Had they been left on their crosses for a longer time, they would undoubtedly have succumbed. The actions of the soldiers were aimed at hastening a slow death—and that, not of mercy, but of necessity because of the high sabbath about to begin. Crucifixion is a slow death. In this way, Paul teaches us that the death of the flesh with the affections and lusts will not be quick. We must be patient, and, like the soldiers who crucified our Lord, we must take up our watching point at the place of execution.

Secondly, consider who was crucified for us; it was Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. Now, the Apostle Paul could doubtless have used another term if he had merely meant to convey the idea of a slow death. His choice of crucifixion points us to Christ, and deliberately so. When we look upon Christ, and remember his death on Calvary, are we not moved to nail to the cross those evidences of the sin for which he atoned? The handwriting of ordinances which was against us—our condemnation at the hands of God's holy Law—was nailed to his cross; he died to bear our sin and guilt as the Law accused and condemned us for our iniquities. How can we not then also nail our flesh—our sinful desires and loves—to his cross?

For we are called upon to learn the way of obedience, walking in Christ's footsteps. As we walk we see just how far short we come of his glory, how poorly we show forth his saving grace and endless love. We are pitiful in ourselves, as we seek to follow him. What we see is how earth-bound we are, how smitten with frivolities and trivia. As we draw nearer to Christ we grow more and more ashamed of these things, so that the desire to be like him ought to grow mightily in us.

3. How we are to crucify the flesh

Which leaves us to consider how we are to crucify the flesh. Let us note the history of our Lord, and apply it to our need.

1. *We must hate the flesh with the affections and lusts.* Christ was hated by the religious leaders of his day, and so they sought to put him to death. His crucifixion arose from that hatred, at least as far as human will was concerned. We must likewise so hate our flesh with the affections and lusts that nothing short of death is deemed suitable for them. We must imitate Paul's would-be assassins, Acts 23:12, vowing neither to eat or drink until we have brought the flesh to its cross. But too many of us mistake the sins of the flesh for Barabbas, and cry for his release, rather than the release of our Saviour.

2. *We must arrest the flesh, and bring it before proper authorities.* Those who sought Christ's death were not content with mob violence, although they did on one occasion try to stone him; they wanted a judicial verdict, an official condemnation of his sin. So they arrested him, and brought him before Pilate. So too we must arrest our flesh—restrain it, not allow it the freedom to go about sinning. We must bring it before proper authority.

3. *We must try and examine the flesh,* as our Lord and Saviour was tried and examined before Pilate. It is true that he answered not a word; but he was innocent, and he was prepared to die in the place of sinners. Our flesh may keep silence before the Lord, Habakkuk 2:20, but that is the only fit response of the guilty when their shame is made known. There is no use crying over sin if our motivation is nothing more spiritual than our own good name. There is no use crying over our many faults if we see them as obstacles to advancement in the eyes of men. There is much good in crying over sin when we see it as offensive to the holy God, and the just cause of righteous anger, and as the reason why our blessed Lord and Saviour had to suffer the contradiction of sinners, before dying on the cross to save us from our sin. There is our

motivation to try and examine the flesh, that its sinfulness might be exposed, and its guilt laid bare.

4. *We must submit the flesh to the judicial sentence.* It is true that our Lord told Pilate that he could have no power except it were given him from above, but we come to the lawful power in this matter. We come before the Lord our God, through his word, being exposed to his truth by the power and working of the Spirit within us. We are not to plead for any sins, nor to 'dissemble nor cloak them', in the words of the Prayer Book exhortation to public confession. When the sentence of death goes out against our flesh, as it undoubtedly will since no sin can be acceptable in the presence of God, we must affirm the verdict, confessing its rightness and necessity. If we are reluctant to part with any sin, if our affections and lusts pull against the sentence, then we know that we have yet more need of grace, we have further need of the application of God's Word, and of the Spirit's cleansing power.

5. *Finally, we must see the sentence carried out.* Many of the Pharisees and scribes and elders of the people passed by to see Jesus of Nazareth on the cross. They mocked him with cruel, unbelieving words. They delighted in his death. We must delight in the crucifixion of our flesh with the affections and lusts, not because we are now free from committing any sin, but because we have obeyed the word of God, and we have shown our utter abhorrence toward sin. For sin, God cast Adam and Eve out of the garden, out of his presence, and into a bitter world. For sin, God brought the Flood upon the world, destroying all living. For sin, God overthrew many of the children of Israel in the wilderness, twenty-three thousand perishing in one day alone. For sin, God gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life. If we have that true expectation of eternal life, let us crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts. Let us seek God's grace in this matter, and seek it earnestly, until it is granted. AMEN.¶

KEPT BY THE POWER OF GOD

CARINE MACKENZIE

SAFETY is very important in many activities in our lives. When we cross the road we have to be aware of danger around and obey the safety rules. Car drivers have to learn how to keep themselves and others safe. No plane takes off before safety advice is given to all passengers. Many devices come with safety instructions—an electric kettle, a child’s high chair or even a step ladder.

Some of our family recently went to an adventure park and had great fun on zip wires, tree-top trails and a Tarzan swing. Before going near the course they were given a very serious safety briefing. The key point was that they must always be attached with the safety clips to the zip wire. They were given a lecture, the process was demonstrated and they had to practise clipping and unclipping several times before they were allowed on the zip wire. Their safety depended on them being attached to the wire. Even if they lost their footing on one of the obstacles they would still be safely hooked up to the wire.

The Christian life is full of danger too—our sinful heart, the temptation of Satan, the attraction of the world—can all cause us to fall into sin. Our safety depends on being attached firmly to the Lord Jesus Christ. ‘Our safety cometh from the Lord, who heaven and earth hath made’ (Psalm 121:2, metrical).

There is no safer place than to be ‘in Christ’, trusting in him and leaning on him. In Christ ‘old things are passed away’ and ‘all things are become new’ (2 Corinthians 5:17). God’s promises of help are wonderful. ‘I will uphold you with the right hand of my righteousness,’ he tells us in Isaiah 41:10. Even if we fear danger, we can be joyful in the security that comes with being ‘in Christ’.

We may be weak but God is strong. The way may be rough but our all powerful God can hold us up. He is faithful to his promises.

We can go to bed at night and sleep peacefully because ‘the Lord only makest me dwell in safety’ (Psalm 4:8). The Lord who ‘keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep’ (Psalm 121:4). He is always keeping watch over us and guarding us.

Sometimes the one who is trusting in Christ does fall into sin or temptation. David committed adultery and deceit and murder yet God continued to hold on to him. He was brought to repentance and restored to fellowship with God. ‘Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit,’ he prayed in Psalm 51.

We too can be confident that if we are trusting in Jesus then his grip of us is far stronger than our grip of him. He has a mighty arm and a strong hand which will keep us safe in any situation. When Peter was nearly sinking beneath the waves the strong arm of Jesus reached out and saved him.

Our great safety comes from what the Lord Jesus did on the cross—his arms stretched out in crucifixion as he died for his own people. What a wonderful Saviour.

BIBLE SEARCH

Find the missing words. The initials of your answers will spell out the theme of the story.

- 1. Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are _____ by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ (Jude 1:1).
- 2. Now unto him that is _____ to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy (Jude 1:24).
- 3. The _____ of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe (Proverbs 29:25).
- 4. But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from _____ (2 Thessalonians 3:3).
- 5. The things which are _____ with men are possible with God (Luke 18:27).
- 6. The _____ of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe (Proverbs 18:10).
- 7. The beloved of the LORD shall dwell in safety by him; and the LORD shall _____ him all the day long (Deuteronomy 33:12).
- 8. My _____ cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth (Psalm 121:2).
- 9. Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be _____ in the last time (1 Peter 1:5).
- 10. Wash me thoroughly from mine _____, and cleanse me from my sin (Psalm 51:2).
- 11. I will both lay me down in peace, and _____: for thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety (Psalm 4:8).
- 12. Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with _____ let your requests be made known unto God (Philippians 4:6).

A SERMON ON MATTHEW 6:10

PART III

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

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

YET he discouraged such thoughts through a deliberate determination (Job 13:15 and 27:5–6). So man should submit himself willingly to God’s guidance. So man should not only bear happily that the Lord demandeth his goods back, but offer them willingly and thank him, that he in his wisdom is pleased to take away the enchanting creature, so that we would not have our heart resting idolatrously upon it.

This should not be only so concerning physical, but also concerning spiritual goods. We saw that clear in David when he says: ‘If I shall find favour in the eyes of the LORD, he will bring me again, and shew me both it and his habitation: but if he thus say, I have

no more delight in thee; behold, here am I, let him do as seemeth good unto him. (2 Samuel 15:25–26). O great and unusual virtue! How far should we resign our will, before any come to this height? But the holy Paul came even further and nearer, when he was affected in that which is most precious on this earth. He said: ‘Lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure’ (2 Corinthians 12:7). It was given for a specific reason. And what need would there have been for God to send it, if the Lord had been pleased to accept Paul’s prayer for its removal?¶

TO BE CONTINUED

SEPTEMBER—OCTOBER MAGAZINE

Subscribers to *The Gospel Magazine* received their September–October Magazine over a month late, for which the Trustees apologize. The printing firm we were using entered administration between printing the *Magazine* and binding it, and were then unable to mail it. This issue of *The Gospel Magazine* is the first to be printed by a new firm, and we ask prayer that the Lord would be pleased to undertake for them, and us, so that we are kept from problems of this kind in the foreseeable future.

If any subscriber has not received their copy, please contact the Secretary, Mr Philip Lievesley, whose details are on the inside front cover, and another will be sent.

The Editor

STUDIES IN EZEKIEL

P KING (HAILSHAM)

Chapter 37:15–28

BUT NOW IS CHRIST RISEN

THIS second section of the chapter is a picture of the reunion of the two parts of Israel, broken by Jeroboam after Solomon’s death. Spiritually, it is a resurrection scene following the making of the dry bones to live again.

1. The two sticks. Here are the two parts of the kingdom of David, Israel and Judah, joined together to become one ‘wood’. David is seen as the natural head of old Israel, and David’s greater Son, who unites the Church, as being its federal head. As king, David had the sole right to rule ancient Israel, so Christ has the right to rule over the elect of God. Some think this chapter points to the rising again of Israel in the latter days, but there is no literal fulfilment after the Babylonian captivity, and there is no reason to believe it will happen in the future. To achieve such an event David would need to be raised from the dead, but the reality is that Christ has, by God’s appointment, taken his father’s throne in a spiritual rule. Now the whole earth is Christ’s heritage, as Canaan was King David’s.

2. The Promises.

- They were given to encourage the hearts and minds of God’s people in captivity, so the promises of Scripture are given for the Christian’s comfort in an ungodly world.
- The captives had a duty to believe Ezekiel’s words, as coming from God, and

Christians should not doubt Scripture, which is a more sure promise of our future estate.

- Some believed the old order would return, and once again Israel would be great and influential. These prophecies are not saying the past would return, but the past is used as a picture of the future. So let Christians look back in thankfulness and anticipation of the future, not with longing eyes for the ‘good old days’.
- The old order was good, but the new kingdom of Christ is infinitely better. The Epistle to the Hebrews teaches us about better promises, and a better covenant. The one shepherd (v.24) is Christ, not King David, and the prince the new ruler of spiritual Israel. Now all people are gathered, and all believers will know God (v.28).
- What has been spoken to one class of people (the Jews) is now to be spoken to all people, for we cannot conceive of a literal Israel with a non-literal David!
- The scene is also set for the great Day when the Church, like a bride, will be announced, and all nations, tribes and tongues will be gathered to glory. ‘The shell has gone but the substance remains’ (Fairbairn, p422).

Why seek ye the living among the dead?

It is our duty to watch and pray; but God himself must keep us, for we are no match for our spiritual enemies. ‘If the Lord does not keep the city, the watchmen wake in vain’ *Psalms 127:1*.

NEW COVENANT THEOLOGY: PART 4

KEVIN MCGRANE (Bury St Edmunds)

IN the first three parts we showed how New Covenant Theology (NCT) militates against Reformed Theology, teaching that there is no moral law, and that the Ten Commandments have been abolished. We now consider NCT's concept of a replacement lawgiver and his replacement law.

NCT's replacement Lawgiver

NCT proponent John Reisinger states,

We insist that Christ is the new lawgiver ... the full and final Lawgiver who supercedes and replaces all others.¹

But who were all the others? There is but one Lawgiver (James 4:12, Isaiah 33:22), so there cannot be 'new' lawgivers, 'replacement' or 'supersessionist' ones, or a 'full and final' one in a line of succession. Yet NCT insists that Christ is a replacement:

[W]e believe that Christ replaces Moses as the new lawgiver ... we will continue to insist that our Lord replaces Moses as God's lawgiver over the church.²

The idea that there is an ultimate lawgiver who delivers a new, final lawcode is the cherished doctrine of false religion and cults:

It is a very wicked error when the monks and sophists portray Christ as a new lawgiver after Moses, not unlike the error of the Turks who proclaim that their

Mohammed is the new lawgiver after Christ. Those who portray Christ this way do him a supreme injury.³

Those who have not perceived this have pretended that Christ was only a second Moses, the giver of an Evangelical Law, to supply the deficiency of the Mosaic Law ... This idea is in many ways most pernicious.⁴

In an effort to demonstrate that Reformed covenant theology is 'without a foundation in its view of law and grace', Reisinger offers to 'show some instances where Christ, the new lawgiver, changes one of the Ten Commandments'.⁵ He thus claims 'to refute the basic premise of ... Covenant Theology' in regard to the immutability of the Ten Commandments,⁶ by demonstrating not merely potential mutability but their *actual* mutation. Prominent NCT proponent as he is, we expect Reisinger to have selected and perfected the best examples and arguments that NCT can muster, with unimpeachable

3. M. Luther, comment on Gal 4:5, in *Works*, Vol. 26, p368. The Church of Rome teaches that Christ, as new lawgiver, invested the Church with power to invent laws and abolish others, including the Ten Commandments, as Cardinal Avery Dulles SJ asserted: "The Church, adapting the law to a new stage in salvation history, was able ... to cancel the Mosaic prohibition against images", *The Covenant with Israel*, in *First Things* (November, 2005).

4. J. Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book II, VIII, 7. This fairly describes an axiom of NCT, as Reisinger (*Open Letter*) asserts of NCT: '[W]e believe that our Lord Jesus Christ is a true lawgiver in his own right and, as such, gives higher and more spiritual laws than anything Moses ever gave.'

5. Reisinger, *An Open Letter to Dr R.C. Sproul*.

6. Ibid.

1. J. G. Reisinger, *In Defense of Jesus, the New Lawgiver* (2008).

2. J. G. Reisinger, *An Open Letter to Dr R.C. Sproul*, in *Sound of Grace* Vol.9: 4, (2003). If Christ 'replaces Moses as God's lawgiver over the church', then this logically requires that the church was under Moses. But then this is inconsistent with NCT's dogma that the church began at Pentecost.

use of Scripture, exposition and logic. We thus do well to consider the finest that NCT can deliver. Reisinger frames his argument in the following way:⁷

Major premise: Covenant Theology implies the immutability of the Ten Commandments.

Minor premise: Christ changed one of the Ten Commandments.

Conclusion: Covenant Theology is false.

The major premise is unobjectionable, thus all hinges on whether NCT can satisfactorily demonstrate the minor premise.⁸

Alleged changes to the Seventh Commandment

Reisinger's instances of Christ changing the Ten Commandments turn out to be an alleged change in meaning: 'Jesus clearly changed the definition of what constitutes adultery'.⁹ Reisinger seeks to establish this by three examples of 'mutual exclusivity' on matters of marriage and divorce, claiming that Moses and Jesus each forbids what the other allows. His first alleged change is that

Under the Law of Moses, divorce was possible under different rules than it is for a Christian ... The old rules allowed divorce for reasons other than adultery ... [which reasons were] replaced with marital unfaithfulness as the only grounds for divorce ... Jesus specifically forbids precisely what Moses allowed.¹⁰

Though these opinions are objectionable,

7. Reisinger chooses not to set it out formally as such, but this represents the form of argument from his presentation of it.

8. As shall be demonstrated, for the minor premise to be considered true one must first accept the axioms, fallacies, and exegesis of NCT. Thus NCT's 'knock down' argument against Covenant Theology is formally fallacious, for it begs the question by intruding as a *hidden co-premise* something from its desired conclusion: that NCT is true (and thus Covenant Theology is false).

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid.

let us accept them for argument's sake to see where the logic leads. Let us term Moses' definition of adultery 'M' and Jesus' definition 'J', making no *a priori* assumptions about whether 'M' and 'J' are the same or different to avoid begging the question. Acts 'other than adultery' according to Moses we term 'non-M'. Reisinger argues that Moses allowed divorce only on grounds of 'non-M',¹¹ whereas Jesus forbade 'precisely what Moses allowed', and substituted 'J' 'as the only grounds'. The sole valid conclusion is that Christ establishes 'non-M' and 'J' as mutually exclusive categories. Yet 'non-M' and 'J' would be mutually exclusive categories *by definition* if the Ten Commandments are immutable since 'J' and 'M' would then be identical. Thus Reisinger's first argument is futile for refuting Covenant Theology's 'basic premise'.¹² Undeterred, Reisinger presses on, extending the case to re-marriage following divorce:

The second change in the seventh commandment ... concerns the legitimacy of allowing a man to remarry a woman after he had divorced her. Under the Law of Moses that situation was not allowed under any circumstance. The very same thing is not forbidden in the New Covenant ... It is obvious that ... what was 'detestable'¹³ in the eyes of the LORD' under the Old Covenant is not detestable to him under the New Covenant.¹⁴

A more egregious example of 'begging the

11. Reisinger argues that 'M' proved at trial by witnesses or by ordeal issued in execution not divorce.

12. Some NCT proponents follow the Hillel sect of the Pharisees in believing that Moses allowed divorce 'for any cause' other than 'M'. Such a belief would falsify Reisinger's claim that Christ re-defined adultery: if *every* cause other than 'M' is forbidden by Jesus then only where 'J' = 'M' could 'J' be grounds for divorce, i.e. the position of Covenant Theology.

13. Reisinger is quoting from the NIV: the Hebrew is *towebah*, morally repugnant.

14. Ibid. His particular case is re-marrying an ex-wife after she had become another man's wife. There is no evidence that Christ repealed this prohibition, so his 'obvious' conclusion that God's view changed is invalid.

question' it is impossible to imagine. Evidence that Christ 'changes one of the Ten Commandments' is said to be that Christ countermanded God's declaration of what was morally abominable to him, because God's views had changed.¹⁵ Reisinger begs the question by intruding as a hidden co-premise the very thing to be proved: that NCT is correct to assert (and thus Covenant Theology is wrong to deny) that whenever the prohibition of a practice designated as abominable in God's sight is not *re-affirmed* in the New Testament, then the prohibition is repealed, so the practice is 'not forbidden in the New Covenant', and counts as evidence of a change to the Decalogue.¹⁶ Other than this being an appallingly specious argument from silence, one may not validly take a conclusion one wishes to draw as a hidden premise.

[Excursus on Deuteronomy 24]

As well as being fallacious, Reisinger's argument is exegetically unsound. It is incorrect to assert that under the Mosaic Law a man could not 'remarry a woman after he had divorced her ... under any circumstance'. Deuteronomy 24:1–4 (which he cites) sets out a special case from which one may not validly draw such a general conclusion.¹⁷ This passage precludes no man being reconciled to the woman whom he repents of dismissing for some slight cause *provided* she has not

15. Part 2 showed that Steve Lehrer made a similar claim that incest, divinely revealed as abominable [*towebah*] in God's sight for all peoples of the earth (Lev 18:9, 26, 27), is 'holy in God's sight' where legalized under civil law. S. Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology: Questions Answered* (2006), p155.

16. NCT's default position made axiomatic by Jon Zens is that unless specifically forbidden by Christ and his apostles, all practices are permissible, even those recorded in the Old Testament as abominable to God.

17. The main clause (apodosis) occurs in v.4. Verses 1–3 concatenate thirteen consecutive clauses joined by *waw* conjunctions to form a protasis of *thirteen conditions precedent* to the prohibition against re-marrying one's ex-wife who had married a third party. See footnote 23 for translation issues.

entered into marriage with a third party.¹⁸ She suffers defilement¹⁹ when a second marriage is contracted because the first husband remains alive, v.4.²⁰ New Testament teaching that separated partners should wherever possible reconcile and not contract a subsequent marriage, because remarriage after a divorce for a light cause entails adultery if the original marriage partners are alive, is entirely consonant with this:

Let not the wife depart from her husband: But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife. (1 Corinthians 7:10–11)

[W]hosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery:²¹ and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced²² committeth adultery. (Matthew 5:32)

18. If the divorce *itself* led to defilement precluding reconciliation, there would be no purpose in Deut 24 in introducing the third party. It is the liaison with the third party that creates the defilement [Heb. *tameh*] of which the woman was put at risk by being sent away.

19. The sense of the Hebrew is that she becomes a *victim* of defilement. This aligns with the Greek in Matt 5:32 in many manuscripts where the woman divorced for a light cause is a *victim* of adultery when taken by another man. An apt English expression would be 'adulterated'. For cultural, social and economic reasons, women in much of the Ancient Near East often had little choice but to suffer the wrong of being 'adulterated' through re-marriage following unjust divorce.

20. When used in a moral sense *tameh* refers to illicit conjugal union (Gen 34:5, 13, 27, rape/fornication; Lev 18:20 adultery; Lev 18:23 bestiality) or to idolatry (not in view here, but often figuratively associated). Thus Keil & Delitzsch: 'The second marriage of a woman who had been divorced is designated by Moses a defilement of the woman ... in the same sense in which adultery is called a defilement in Lev 18:20 and Num 5:13–14.'

21. If she re-marry, as is obvious from the following clause. It is re-marrying after being divorced for a light cause, i.e. not valid in God's sight, that causes the defilement, as is also implied in Deut 24:1–4.

22. 'Saving for the cause of fornication' is implied.

The Hillel sect of the Pharisees corrupted Deuteronomy 24:1–4 into a man's right to put away his wife 'for any cause' as a paperwork exercise, missing the point that the conditions precedent to the particular abomination were not authorizing or giving instructions for divorce and remarriage.²³ The School of Shammai studied the same texts and concluded that the only ground for a valid divorce was adultery; hence the testing of our Lord on this point. The sinfulness and grave danger of 'divorce on demand' can be deduced from Deuteronomy 24:1–4 with reference to other Scriptures; but to put an end to Pharisaical casuistry, what is deducible our Lord makes *explicit*. Notwithstanding, NCT prefers that the Hillel sect were essentially correct, with the result that Christ must needs *replace* the law rather than uphold its correct application. This vandalizes the law, calling good evil, and evil good: 'Jesus specifically forbids precisely what Moses allowed',²⁴ and '[what] under the Law of Moses ... was not allowed ... is not forbidden in the New Covenant'.²⁵

Reisinger's third example is an old chestnut:

A third change to the adultery commandment concerns polygamy. Under the Law of God given to Moses, polygamy was not considered adultery. In fact, the Law of Moses actually mandated that a man had to sleep with both wives if he took a second wife (Exodus 21:10, 11). I think any honest person will admit that a change

from a law allowing ... polygamy to a law insisting on monogamy alone (Ephesians 5:22, 23) is more than just a surface change in the definition of adultery.²⁶

Again, Reisinger begs the question from beginning to end. To establish that Christ 'changed the Seventh Commandment' to outlaw polygyny,²⁷ Reisinger would need to demonstrate (not merely assert) *both* that polygyny 'was not considered adultery' under the seventh commandment in the Old Testament *and* that polygyny is clearly designated as adultery in the New. Reisinger proves his case not at all. The sole New Testament passage he alludes to makes no mention of adultery or polygyny; neither does the sole Old Testament passage (see below), nor does it mandate polygynous conjugal unions.

[Excursus on Exodus 21]

Exodus 21:2–11 sets out case law on restoring Hebrew servants to liberty. A maidservant enters a household on the understanding that the master will marry her,²⁸ so liberation does not ordinarily ensue. Verses 7–11 thus deal with her liberation when her master *resiles* from marrying her,²⁹ whereupon he must immediately grant her an unconditional and gratuitous release unless he can satisfy one of 'three things', v.11.³⁰

(i) Arrange for her redemption by her own kin, v.8;³¹ or

26. Ibid.

27. We give Reisinger the benefit of the doubt that he means polygyny (having more than one wife). Polygamy is too general a term since it includes polyandry and polyamory.

28. The Hebrew vv.8–9 does *not* mean betrothed, merely designated, appointed.

29. Thus polygamy is precluded.

30. The Hebrew structure requires that the 'three things' refer to the three options in vv.8–10, not the items in v.10.

31. There is implied more than passively 'letting her' be redeemed—he must actively facilitate it. Selling her on is not permitted. The Hebrew connotes the folk outside her family, not a 'strange nation'.

23. The translation 'let him write her a bill of divorcement, and ... she may go and be another man's wife' suggests instruction and permission, but those senses are not present in the Hebrew. Translators appear to have read back questions of the Pharisees taken at face value, 'Why then did Moses command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?' (Matt 5:31).

24. Reisinger, *An Open Letter to Dr R.C. Sproul*.

25. Ibid.

- (ii) Arrange her marriage to his son instead, v.9;³² or
- (iii) If arrangements to take an alternative wife proceed,³³ continue to provide the maidservant with food and raiment, and all necessities for the remainder of her time in the master's household, v.10.³⁴

This was well understood by Calvin:

If a master shall repudiate his bondmaid, whom he has ... destined to be his wife, he must give her liberty ... [H]e must provide for her redemption ... [Or, if] he would make her his daughter-in-law ... he is commanded to deal liberally with her ... treating her as if she were free. Finally ... if he should choose another wife for his son [instead of her], he should not ... defraud her of her food and raiment, or some third thing, concerning which translators are not well agreed. Some render it ... duty of marriage, but this is too free a translation ... [T]he girl who has suffered ignominious rejection should obtain her rights as to food, raiment, and her appointed dowry; otherwise, God commands that she should be set free gratuitously, in order that her liberty may compensate for the wrong she has received.³⁵

32. As might be the case with widowers.

33. The Hebrew simply says 'if he take for him other', i.e. neither the master nor his son will take the woman to wife, but will take a wife *instead of* her. Every other use of the Hebrew expression 'take (an)other' connotes *replacement*, not addition: Lev 14:42, Jer 37:28, 32.

34. The Hebrew word *ownah* (third in the list, v.10) is not used elsewhere in Scripture, and is of very uncertain meaning. Nothing in the word connotes 'duty' or 'marriage'. Similar law codes in the Ancient Near East have the triad 'clothing, food, and oils'. Some suggest it means 'necessities', or a regular allowance. Calvin suggests 'compact', i.e. that the 'appointed dowry' that would have been hers had the son married her must be given in compensation. The LXX translates using 'homilia', company, communication: in this context, family life.

35. J. Calvin, *Harmony of the Law*, Vol. 3.

Rabbinical perversions, Pharisaical casuistry, and NCT misconstructions aside, there is not a hint of polygamy in the passage.]

Reisinger rests the NCT case on an appeal to authority that merely begs the question: 'I think any honest person will admit that a change from a law ... to a law'. The case rests on the authority of his opinion of the persuasion of the proverbial honest man coached by his question-begging presentation of a case based on a *hapax legomenon* of unknown meaning tortured by rabbinical and Pharisaical casuistry. If that really is the best that NCT proponents can do, and they are unable to handle biblical material without framing invalid arguments, this says a great deal about the strength of their case.

NCT's replacement law

The expression 'the law of Christ', which NCT attaches to its replacement law, is another *hapax legomenon* that appears only once in Scripture,³⁶ and, as David Gay concedes, the content of this law is not directly set out therein, nor can it be:

The phrase, 'the law of Christ', appears but once in Scripture ... once in the entire word of God.³⁷

[T]he New Testament does not directly set out the law of Christ ... this is impossible!³⁸

[T]he law of Christ is a new law ... It is an entirely new entity.³⁹

36. Gal 6:2, 'Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ'. At 1 Cor 9:21, NIV's 'Christ's law' and RSV's, ESV's, NASB's etc 'law of Christ' are indefensible: there is no substantive in the Greek that can be Christ's, and the adjectives *anomos* and *ennomos* that relate to law correspond to *Paul*, the subject. Thus even if 'Christ' is genitive (as in some textual variants), it would be objective suggesting relation 'unto' Christ, similar to the dative in the *Textus Receptus*. Paul's point is that in relation to Christ he remains 'within the law'.

37. D. Gay, *Christ is All: No Sanctification by the Law* (2013), p279.

38. *Ibid.*, p219.

39. *Ibid.*, p232.

Gay further admits that 'The New Testament ... does not explicitly state that Christ is the new law',⁴⁰ yet he asserts:

Christ is his law!⁴¹

[T]he law of Christ is nothing less than his person ... Christ himself is the law of Christ.⁴²

Christ is all. He is his law.⁴³

In this scheme, therefore, New Covenant law is ontologically and existentially a person of the Holy Trinity, as well as being 'an entirely new entity'. One could get into quite a tangle with that.⁴⁴

Without compelling evidence, it is prudent to be sceptical that Paul is introducing 'an entirely new entity' in Galatians 6:2, supplanting the law of God that he mentioned thirty times previously. His point is that we do not come 'under the law' for justification by works (Galatians 5:4, 18) in order to 'fulfil the law' (5:13, 14; 6:2) by works. Just a few verses before mention of what fulfils the law 'of Christ', the apostle had indicated the works that fulfil the law (Galatians 5:13–14), quoting Leviticus 19:

[B]y love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.⁴⁵

40. *Ibid.*, p261.

41. D. Gay, *Four 'Antinomians' Tried and Vindicated* (2013), pp194–195.

42. D. Gay, *Psalms 119 and the New Covenant* (2014), p67. *Italics original.*

43. D. Gay, *New-Covenant Theology: A Summary* (2015).

44. Modern expression that the law is 'ontologically and existentially' Christ in his person is found in Romanism, e.g. Bernard Häring, *The Law of Christ* (1954), and his address *Christian Morality as a mirror image of the mystery of the church*, 18th Annual Convention of the Catholic Theological Society of America, 1963. Gay's idea (*Psalms 119 and the New Covenant*, p66) that 'Christ is the *torah* of the New Covenant', was anticipated by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (later Pope Benedict XVI), who declared 'The Torah of the Messiah is Jesus the Messiah himself ... this Torah ... is Jesus himself' (*The new covenant: A theology of covenant in the New Testament*, in *Communio* 22, 1995).

45. It is noteworthy that the same verb (*pleroo*) is used for when the law (*nomos*) is fulfilled by serving one

Since the command 'Bear ye one another's burdens' (Galatians 6:2) is *an element* of the requirement 'by love serve one another' (5:13), it follows that the law 'of Christ' (6:2) fulfilled by bearing these burdens cannot be 'an entirely new entity' compared to 'all the law' (5:14) fulfilled by loving our neighbour, i.e. the law of God summarized in Leviticus 19, containing the substance of the Decalogue. Thus

As many exegetes have observed, [Galatians] 6:2 with its reference to the law of Christ is closely related to 5:14 ... Since 'fulfilling the law' in 5:14 clearly refers to the law of Moses, the use of the similar verb in 6:2 strongly suggests that the 'law' here also refers to the law of Moses ... These verses confirm that in spite of the numerous negative comments on the law elsewhere in this letter, Paul did not repudiate the law of Moses, as some of his later followers (most notably Marcion) ... wrongly supposed.⁴⁶

The burden of proof falls on those who propose a disjunction in meaning when the verbs and the contexts are 'similar' and 'closely related'. Clearly aware that NCT presuppositions generate dissonance here, Gay suggests that

After all he has said in the letter, it seems as though Paul must have blundered, forgotten himself and written an absurdity.⁴⁷

Gay wildly conjectures that Paul would have chosen a more appropriate term than 'the law' in Galatians 6:2 to avoid confusion with the law of God, had he not been so fond of 'word play' as to seize an opportunity to be provocative.⁴⁸

But of course the apostle [was] ... using another by love (Gal 5:14) as when Christians fulfil the law by loving one another by keeping the Decalogue (Rom 13:8–10), and Paul quotes Leviticus 19:18 in both places.

46. G. Stanton *What is the Law of Christ?*, in *Studies in Matthew and Early Christianity* (2013), pp320–321.

47. Gay, 'The Law' in 'The Law of Christ'.

48. *Ibid.*

... provocative language ... Paul deliberately chose to use 'law', precisely because of the association his word play entails. In particular, the apostle engaged in word play in 'the law of Christ' (Galatians 6:2).⁴⁹

This 'law of Christ' thus becomes a plaything, a wax nose that NCT shapes any way it likes. Indeed, we will show in a subsequent part how NCT fashions it into a yoke of bondage.

Preaching to unbelievers undermined

NCT teaches that the moral law of God should not be preached to unbelievers because it does not apply to them:

[R]ather than showing an unbeliever his sin by pointing him to the Ten Commandments ... [the preacher should] point him to Ephesians 4:25–32 and 1 Thessalonians 4:3–8 ... 1 Corinthians 10:31 and 1 Thessalonians 5:16–18 ... Those texts make up what Paul calls the Law of Christ.⁵⁰

But as we saw, NCT's replacement 'Law of Christ' does not apply to 'hard-hearted sinners' either, so the preacher must

divide his congregation by making it clear to his hearers that the text he is preaching is addressed to believers, and, while he wants the unbelievers present to listen to him ... none of this actually does belong to them!⁵¹

What are unbelievers to make of the

49. Gay, *Christ is All*, p216.

50. S. Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology: Questions Answered* (2006), p128. The passages are directed to believers, and include such expressions as: 'your sanctification', 'given unto us his holy Spirit', 'ye are sealed unto the day of redemption', 'we are members one of another', 'God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you', etc.

51. D. Gay, *The Glorious New-Covenant Ministry* (2014), p190. Gay excoriates those who have 'ruined the assemblies of God's people for well over 1500 years' by failing to make this distinction.

command 'Let him that stole steal no more', which, it is to be emphasized, applies to believers only, while 'Thou shalt not steal' is 'null and void'? Lehrer's solution is very telling: preachers should direct unbelievers to higher life teaching, to ethical principles 'about how we must live' as Christians, that they might aspire to them and thereby discover how far short they come.⁵² NCT insists that no mention may be made of unrighteousness in light of the moral law since unbelievers are not subject to it, so there must be no 'preaching of judgment' for sin.⁵³ Gay throws out a challenge to the reader to 'go through the New Testament and see how many preachers brought sinners to Christ' having preached about sin and judgment. He also sets his readers another challenge:

Can you find Paul advocating the law when addressing sinners ... Can you imagine it? ... the notion is utterly risible ... Go through the entire New Testament, and see if you can find any preacher addressing unbelievers ... preaching the law to them ... Where can you find Gentiles being addressed with the law?⁵⁴

In this, NCT resorts to outright denialism: [S]ermons to Gentiles, as documented in Acts 14:15–18; 17:22–32, lend no support whatever to the claim that he preached the law.⁵⁵

52. Lehrer, op. cit., p128. The 'Law of Christ' thus has some use to bring one to Christ, after which one is sent back to the 'Law of Christ' to keep it: two uses of the law that NCT deprecates when the moral law is in view.

53. Gay, *The Glorious New-Covenant Ministry*, p134.

54. Ibid., pp209, 210. Gay is following Jon Zens' questions from 1979, '[I]f all things are to be approached through Christ, why do we put the law ahead of Him in evangelism? Where in Acts were the Ten Commandments preached before the gospel?'. *Law And Ministry In The Church: An Informal Essay On Some Historical Developments* (1972–1984), (1984).

55. Gay, *Christ is All*, p135. This idea was popularized by F.F. Bruce: "through law comes knowledge of sin" ... but not, it appears, as an aid to gospel preaching ... [T]here is no evidence that Paul ever used the law in this way in his apostolic preaching ... Not even in

[N]ever once in these addresses did Paul explicitly quote the Old Testament.⁵⁶

Let us see. When Paul and Barnabas were in Lystra (Acts 14) they reproved the Gentiles:

We ... preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein.⁵⁷

Gay says that they merely used an argument 'from nature'.⁵⁸ But they did not start 'from nature' and argue inductively ('natural theology'), they started with *God*, and his own revelation of himself in the hearing of all at Sinai, at the giving of the Law *par excellence*. The words describing God as creator are recorded *explicitly* in the Ten Commandments, Exodus 20:11, and also in Psalm 146:5–6.⁵⁹ The argument is deductive from Scriptural

the reports of his preaching in Acts.' *Paul and the Law of Moses* (1975).

56. Ibid., p32. This position was advanced by Jon Zens, and appears to be a misunderstanding between formal and informal quotations, the former attributed, and the latter woven into speech without attribution. When the *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (2007), eds G.K. Beale and D.A. Carson, says 'contrast the lack of direct citation in the speeches in Lystra and Athens', the contrast is with 'quotations introduced by formulas', p513. The *Commentary* p552 states in relation to Acts 4:24 that "You who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them" (repeated in 14:15; 17:24) corresponds exactly with Ps.146:6 (145:6 LXX). At Acts 14:15 (p588) mention is made of the 'citation ... already used in 4:24 and that will reappear in 17:24 ... from Exod. 20:11 or Ps.146:6 (145:6 LXX)'. New Testament and Greek scholar A.T. Robertson confirmed that in Acts 14:15 'Paul here quotes Ps 146:6', *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, (1927). If all that Gay means is that Luke doesn't supply a specific attribution or introductory formula then his point is seriously weakened.

57. Cf. 1 Thess 1:9, another Gentile group.

58. Gay, *Christ is All*, p32.

59. Psalm 146:5–6 is most apt, for as Matthew Poole says, 'The design of this Psalm is to persuade men to trust in God, and in him alone'. The disciples also 'lifted up their voice with one accord' to recite the very same words in Acts 4:24.

premises: since God is creator, sustainer and ruler of all, the pagans cannot escape judgment unless they turn from 'vanities' to this true and living God.⁶⁰

A second example is at Athens (Acts 17), where Paul tells the Gentiles⁶¹ that this

Lord of heaven and earth dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men's hands ... [W]e ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold etc.

This 'Lord of heaven and earth', whose rule of law runs universally,

commandeth all men every where to repent: because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness.

Here is sin, righteousness and judgment, of which the Holy Ghost convicts the world. Preaching what a man *ought* or *ought not* to do, preaching of sins that *must be* repented of, and warning of an impending day of judgment where God *will judge* all men in righteousness for their sins, is most assuredly preaching the law.

A third example is found in Paul's interviews with the Gentile, Felix (Acts 24). Tacitus records that 'Felix ... thought that he could

60. Suffering people to 'walk in their own ways', v.16, is not benign neglect but giving them over to their sin, heaping up judgment, Jer 14:10 'Thus have they loved to wander, they have not refrained their feet ... he will now remember their iniquity, and visit their sins.' There is very strong allusion to a subsequent verse, 'Are there any among the vanities of the Gentiles that can cause rain? or can the heavens give showers? ... thou hast made all these things' (Jer 14:22). Having turned from the Jews to the Gentiles, would not Jeremiah 16 also be in their thoughts? Vv.11–12, 19–20: '[Y]our fathers ... have walked after other gods ... and have not kept my law ... [Y]e walk every one after the imagination of his evil heart ... [T]he Gentiles shall come unto thee from the ends of the earth, and shall say, Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit. Shall a man make gods unto himself, and they are no gods?'

61. Using the very words from Stephen's address to *Jews* that he witnessed (Acts 7:48).

do any evil act with impunity',⁶² being 'one who, rioting in the excesses of licentiousness and cruelty, exercised the authority of a king with the spirit and baseness of a slave'.⁶³ But Felix became fearful when Paul pressed 'righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come': 'temperance' condemned sins of 'rioting in the excesses of licentiousness and cruelty', and 'righteousness ... and judgment to come' challenged the conviction that one 'could do any evil act with impunity'. Paul was preaching the law, and then the gospel (v.24). Accordingly, the early church did not follow NCT but Christ and his apostles, preaching the law, addressing sin, righteousness, and judgment, laying a foundation for proclaiming the gospel:

62. C. Tacitus, *Annals*, Book XI.

63. C. Tacitus, *The Histories*, Book V.

[When] preaching to pagans, either the rustic pagans of Lystra ... or the cultured pagans of Athens ... or a pagan governor ... [Paul] begins by preaching the Moral Law ... He argues the unity, morality, and providence of God, the folly of idolatry, and divine judgment hanging over the licentiousness of paganism. Only with this foundation securely laid can the preacher declare the distinctive Christian message ... [W]e know that this approach was ... the missionary method of the ancient Church.⁶⁴

We turn our attention in the final parts of this series to the corrosive attacks by NCT on the doctrines of justification, sanctification, and the gospel itself.¶

64. J. Lawson, *A Theological and Historical Introduction to the Apostolic Fathers*, (2005).

TO BE CONTINUED

A SERMON ON JOSHUA 24:15

BY THE EDITOR

Preached on the 116th Anniversary of Landford Wood Mission Hall, Wiltshire

3. Present deliverance

From Joshua's point of view, the matter is plain. What befell Jericho when Israel, obeying the revealed will of God, and trusting in his promises, encompassed the city seven times on that last day, and shouted as the trumpets were blown? The walls, we know, fell down. Jericho was overthrown. The city was captured, and the inhabitants and their wealth were made an offering unto the Lord. So too the kings of the Amorites, Sihon and Og, who trusted in their strength, were overthrown. It was the Lord's doing, and their gods could not save them. There is no power in idols, for they are no gods. Hear what the Psalmist wrote—

Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake. Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is now their God? But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased. Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: They have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not: They have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat. They that make them are like unto them; so is

every one that trusteth in them. O Israel, trust thou in the Lord: he is their help and their shield. (Psalm 115:1–9)

The inability of idols to save is a theme of the prophets, as Isaiah 2:20 and others, show.

The true and living God, on the other hand, is he who delivered Israel out of Egypt. He saved them at the Red Sea and destroyed the army of Pharaoh. He gave water from the rock, and manna from heaven, to sustain them in the wilderness. He was a shield and a defence to them, so that the sun should not smite them by day, nor the moon by night. He led them as a flock, through the sea and through the desert. He was truly good to Israel.

It was the Lord God who saved Joseph, Mary and the infant Jesus from the wrath of Herod. It was the Lord God who saved Peter from the prison, Paul from stoning and storm, and who spared Dorcas and Eutychus from death. True, it was the same Lord who permitted the death of Stephen, and of James, and who allowed Saul of Tarsus to go about, breathing out threatenings and slaughter against Christ's precious people. It was the living God who permitted the fiery trials which befell the fledgling church at Thessalonica, and who revealed through his servant John the suffering which would shortly come upon several of the churches of Asia, Revelation 1–3. Yet, for all these fiery trials—and indeed, because of these fiery trials—the Church of Jesus Christ flourished. The gospel went out into all the world. Countless numbers were added to the Church, and the faith of Jesus Christ was sounded far and wide. Present deliverance belongs to our God, who delights to save his people. This is a strong evidence to us of gospel truth, and of divine power.

And yet, more must be intended. For if the Lord spares some and not others, has he not shown more grace to those who are spared than to those who are not? Have not those who perish in the faith fallen short of the benefits of faith in Christ? Indeed not, for we consider, finally,

4. Future hope

We know that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob all died when the land belonged to the Amorites. Joseph gave commandment concerning his bones, for he died when the people were not even strangers and pilgrims in the land. Moses and Aaron perished without having ever set foot in the land, even though the Lord God had raised them up to be his representatives, both in law, in leadership, and in the priestly office of intercession for the nation.

Did these all die in vain? Would the Thessalonians consider that they were in the same condition as those of their own number who had died before the return of Christ? Indeed not, as the Apostle Paul declares in Hebrews 11; 'these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect' (Hebrews 11:39–40). For faith, we are told, is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. By faith, Abraham was content to be a stranger in the land promised to him. He knew that, through resurrection, he would possess the land one day. We can say this with confidence, because belief in resurrection is the only sure explanation of his confident words to his servants, that he and the lad would go and worship, and would return, when he took Isaac to Mount Moriah to offer him for a burnt offering as the Lord commanded. It is the only explanation of his willingness to put his beloved son, the child of promise, the one on whom all the future hope rested, to death on that stone altar he had made. He believed that the Lord would restore his son to him again. In this, he was perfectly correct, even if the means by which it happened were not the expected ones.

Beyond present deliverance must lie future hope. This is as true for us as it was for the patriarchs. We know the blessing of our new life in Christ now, and one effect of these blessings is to cause us to see ourselves and the world in which we live in their true colours. We see sin and corruption, change and decay, in every

one and every thing. We see rebellion against God, and we see hatred of the Lord Jesus Christ. We see people behaving contrary to nature, and contorting themselves in logic and imagination to justify their wicked behaviour, and their rebellious thoughts. We know that the whole creation groans and travails together, awaiting redemption, even the redemption of the body. It awaits the manifestation of the sons of God, and when, at Christ's return, the sons of God are revealed, then will the creation be renewed, and behold all things shall be new. Then shall that state of sinless perfection exist for Christ's people. Then shall the dwelling place of God be with men. Then shall all sorrow and suffering be at an end. Then shall all tears be wiped away, and death will touch us and ours no more.

The gods of Ur and of Haran could neither promise nor deliver these blessings. The gods of the Amalekites, of Sihon and of Og, could grant none of these things. Where are they now? Who serves them today? They are all overthrown, and so are all who served them. But our God has set before us the promise of future deliverance. Christ will return, for he has promised to come and gather to himself his people. He has gone to prepare a place for us, there being many mansions in his Father's house. It is so, since he has not denied it. The future hope of the Christian is that upon which we finally fix our faith. As the world around us grows ever more hostile, as the certainties of life prove increasingly more uncertain, it is that which is fixed and eternal which draws the child of faith. And it is the very Person of our Lord Jesus Christ in whom these promises are settled, and so it is to him, our Saviour, that we look with the eye of faith. Let Christ be our hope. Let heaven draw us. Let the promises of God as revealed in his Word support us on the way, so that, whether granted present deliverance or not, the future hope will so capture our thoughts, that we will bear the loss of all things for Christ's sake.

Which leaves us to consider, by way of conclusion, the affirmation of faithful Joshua. 'As

for me and my house, we will serve the Lord'. What does he intend by this?

First, to show that he received the revelation of God to his people. That is, he understood that the Lord had made himself known, in word and deed. He had made himself known in word, in that he had spoken to and through Moses. He had given the law. He had caused the nation to know his will. There was nothing left for them to imagine or make up. In this the Lord is very gracious. Since we are not capable of coming to a right understanding of the Lord our God, of his holy will and nature, and of his majesty and glory, by ourselves, it follows that he must reveal himself to us if we are to worship and serve him aright. Joshua had been with Moses in a number of situations where the Lord had made himself known. He had been approached by that one who revealed himself to be captain of the armies of the Lord of hosts, and who had revealed to him the Lord's command for taking Jericho. When Joshua commanded the people to do as he was told, and when they obeyed his voice, the Lord gave them the victory. That this was not by chance, or an isolated occasion, is proven by the consequences, namely that the people now live in cities and houses they had not built, enjoying the vines and olives trees they had not planted. The Lord's word, as revealed to Israel, is to be trusted.

Now, we have something far better than even Israel had. We have the revelation of the gospel through our Lord Jesus Christ. We have revealed to us the way of salvation, through faith in Jesus Christ. He is revealed to us to be the propitiatory sacrifice for our sins, the Substitute who has been made sin for us, that we might be the righteousness of God by faith. This is not a matter to which we could have come unless it had been revealed. This is part of that mystery of godliness. A mystery, as you no doubt know, is a matter which would remain hidden had it not been revealed. When it is revealed, we are given to see something that, we confess, we could never have known by ourselves. Thus we view it as a

mystery, as a great secret which has been declared. We ought to treasure it as such. This is the nature of God's revelation of himself. He tells us things we could not know by ourselves, and he tells them to us in order that we might be taught the things we need to know. Joshua, confessing the truth of God's revelation of himself, declares in public his commitment to that same Lord. Let us be of the same mind as Joshua in this matter.

Secondly, to show that he believes the promises of God. This may seem obvious, since he is living with the benefits of those promises. But note that Joshua did not begin to believe the promises after the Lord had overthrown Jericho, and conquered Sihon and Og, and led Israel through the wilderness, and fed them with manna from heaven and water from the rock, and brought them through the sea, and delivered them from Pharaoh's hand. Rather, he gained the blessing of faith because he believed the promise. The whole nation followed Moses through the parted waters of the Red Sea. The whole nation witnessed the overthrow of Egypt's army. The whole nation owed its very survival to the water from the rock, and the manna from heaven. The whole nation had stood at the foot of the mount of God, and had seen the lightning and heard the thunder, and had cried out in fear. And yet a whole generation perished in the wilderness because they would not obey the Lord. And they would not obey because they did not believe the promise. How do we know this? They lusted after the flesh pots of Egypt. They considered Egypt, the house of bondage, where they had been forced to make bricks without straw, as being the land flowing with milk and honey. They would not believe that Canaan was the promised land, because they did not remember that their plight in Egypt had been so terrible as to cause them to cry to the Lord for mercy.

We too must be clear about the Lord's gracious promises to us in Jesus Christ. Many begin well, when they profess faith in Jesus Christ. Some, to be sure, have no real faith,

having been led down a false path, one of 'decisionism'. But some, who have been taught the way of salvation in truth, still turn back. Like Lot's wife, they find the draw of the present world to be too powerful. They are not enraptured with the view promised to them. That which lies beyond is not as dear to them as that which lies at hand. Joshua was enraptured by the promised future. He longed to enter into the rest of God. He had entered the land once as a spy, and had seen at first hand the fruitfulness of the place, and its pleasant views, and its good climate, and its rich cities, and he desired what God had promised. He did not desire these things out of carnal lust, but because the Lord had taught him to expect them, to believe that they would be his one day. He trusted in the promises, and so he trusted in the One who made the promises. Do we? Pray God we do.

Thirdly, to show that he was thankful for present deliverance. Israel's coming into the promised land was no straightforward matter. They were not a marauding army, capable of defeating any foe. When they were in Egypt they had been slaves, and when the Lord had begun to appear for them, and to trouble the Egyptians, and when the taskmasters increased the burden on them, rather than see this as evidence of the Lord's might, they cried out against Moses and Aaron. Again, when they came to the shore of the Red Sea, rather than trust that the Lord would fulfil his promise to them, they cried out in fear, and accused Moses of bringing them into the wilderness to slay them because there were not enough graves in Egypt. This same attitude of fear in the face of danger repeats itself over and over. At no time did the people pause, and look back, and remember how the Lord had saved them in the past. Moses kept on reminding them, but they would not accept that he could do the same again. Doubt assailed them. Fear robbed them of hope. And all because they lacked faith in the Lord and his word, doubting the promises and the Lord's intentions toward them.

Joshua, however, did believe, and was thankful for present deliverances. This is why he and Caleb counselled a bold attack on Canaan, once the people had reached the border. He knew that the Lord, who had brought them that far, would not abandon them there. And this is the attitude we must have. We believe, I trust, that we have been saved from our sins through faith in Christ. We believe, I trust, that we have that earnest of our redemption, even the promise of the Father, God the Holy Spirit. We believe that heaven is promised to us, and that no weapon forged against us can prosper. We believe that there is no temptation which afflicts us which is not common to man, and we believe that, with the temptation, the Lord provides the way of escape. If we believe that we enjoy the benefits of present deliverance, shall we not also lay aside every weight, every besetting sin, and serve the Lord our God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in faith and love? Joshua served the Lord, with his household. Let us, like him, serve the Lord also.

Fourthly, to show his confidence in the future hope. It is not possible that Joshua, who knew that the conquest was not yet complete, could believe that they had achieved all that the Lord had promised. There must be more to Israel's hope than a precarious conquest of a land they were not yet capable of holding. Moses had spoken of their having a king, and he had warned of trouble to come if the people failed to remain faithful to the Lord and his laws. So

Joshua must have known that the rest which they currently enjoyed was not the full and final rest. By declaring in public that he and his house would serve the Lord, Joshua was expressing confidence that the same Lord would grant that future blessing, that future hope. He was willing to die warning the people of the danger they were in by unfaithfulness because he knew that all the faithful would enjoy something far better in the future, even though death may seem to rob them of that hope for a season. He professed faith in the God of power, and not in idols, for he knew where his future hope lay.

So must we be clear that we look for the future hope. And what is that hope? It is not death. It is not release from this mortal, this sinful, life, that we look for. Death is the curse, and although we know that death does release us from this sinful state, yet we know that far more is promised than mere relief. Rather, we look for the glory yet to be revealed. We look for the promise of the eternal kingdom, in the presence of our Saviour Christ, who has gone before. This is our hope, this is our joy. May this ever be our goal, to encourage us, and to keep us faithful in the midst of a perverse and foolish generation. Let us, like faithful Joshua, declare our hope in Christ, and demonstrate it by living faithfully before him all our days. And may all the glory be to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. AMEN.¶

At that time when God withholds comfort from thee, yet he doth really love thee. Jesus Christ doth sometimes serve his children as Joseph served his brethren: he spake roughly to them, and he put them in prison; and yet Joseph did dearly love his brethren, 'and his bowels did yearn towards them.' Thus Jesus Christ, his real love is the same to his children at all times, though the manifestation of it may not be always alike. Joseph knew his brethren, though his brethren knew not him. 'The Lord knows who are his;' though they that are his, perhaps, do not know that they are so. Jesus knew Mary, though she did not know him.

Christopher Love

STUDIES IN BRITISH CHURCH HISTORY

Thomas Cranmer 1489–1547 (Part 4)

EDWARD MALCOLM (Reading)

Executing the office whereunto he was called

Returning to the course of Cranmer's life, he was, to begin with as Archbishop, almost subservient to the Vicar-General, Sir Thomas Cromwell. It was Cromwell who chaired Synodical meetings, and who directed the discussions and debates. Cromwell was the author of much of the legislation which emanated from those synods, or who shaped the legislation which they approved. The account of the debates, the arguments, the triumphs and losses, and the fortunes which ebbed and flowed, is long and tedious, although we will need to cover it in another paper. Suffice it to say that while Cromwell, though a supporter—and indeed instigator—of reform, was in favour of pushing forward a more Protestant doctrine for the Church, he was sufficiently wily a politician to allow his conservative opponents the occasional victory. Such victories tended to prove hollow, as, for instance, the return to seven sacraments in *The Bishops' Book*, in place of the three contained in the Ten Articles. These three were baptism, the Lord's Supper and Penance. While the conservatives may have been delighted to see the other four included in *The Bishops' Book*, they were disabused when, shortly afterwards, the revision of the Ten Articles was published, in which a paragraph was added to the effect that the four sacraments recently readmitted in *The Bishop's Book* were not instituted by Christ, and so there was 'a difference in dignity and necessity' between them and the three. Of course, in time the three would be reduced to two.

Cromwell was not acting on his own initiative in all this. He had a clear mandate from King Henry to ensure that all theological changes and conclusions were based on Scripture. Henry was keen to separate the old, medieval doctrines which were based on the unwritten traditions from those which could be proven by most certain warrants of holy Scripture. It was anomalous, therefore, that there was no English Bible, and, with the support of Archbishop Cranmer, the printer Richard Grafton was permitted to begin an authorised printing of the work we know as Matthew's Bible. This was in fact an extension of William Tyndale's unfinished translation, by his friend John Rogers. Fearing the same fate as that which befell Tyndale, Rogers worked under the pseudonym Thomas Matthew. Cranmer commended the work to Cromwell as being far superior to any other English translation then available.

Cranmer was himself dealing with opposition to reform in his own diocese. Convocation of 1536 had banned certain saints' days, and yet Canterbury cathedral was one venue where relics were exhibited, in February 1537, on a prohibited day. The monks saw the ban as being a direct attack on the cult of saint—which it was—and used the Archbishop's absence to test the limits of government will in the matter. Cranmer showed that limit when he visited by disciplining some clergy, cautioning others, and by eating meat on the eve of the feast of St Thomas Becket, which caused a sensation in Canterbury!

The main source of opposition remained

the leading families of Kent, including the Lisle family in Calais, whose links with Dover meant that they were of influence on both sides of the Channel. The other leader was Sir Thomas Cheyney, a Justice of the Peace and high steward of the archiepiscopal estates. Correspondence between Cranmer and the latter is highly informative, as it shows Cranmer attempting to instruct the laity in such matters as the doctrine of justification through Christ's finished work, and attempting at the same time to turn them from the superstitions of the medieval Church. It was concerning the latter, and Cheyney's supposed influence in promoting them, that so upset the Archbishop. Cheyney replied disarmingly that he was only a magistrate and not a theologian, but then undid his own argument by citing Stokesley's writings on the trustworthiness of the unwritten traditions. Cheyney had friends at court, and their rivalry would continue until as late as 1552.

During the 1540s the archiepiscopal estates were subjected to the same confiscations and enforced sales as other dioceses, with perhaps the added bonus of some exchanges for equal estates; other bishops simply came out of the matter a good deal poorer. The mint at Canterbury was closed down, and those at Durham and York closed a few years later.

We see Cranmer supporting humble evangelicals who had been indicted for holding unlawful assemblies, arguing that the only thing 'unlawful' about their gatherings was that their doctrine was offensive to the conservatives. At the same time we see him pulling strings behind the scenes to fix the elections of Justices of the Peace, to ensure that all new posts went to evangelicals.

On more positive theological matters, a good deal of attention was being given to the *Bishops' Book*. Slow to appear, cumbersome in length, and lacking the quality of English found in the later Homilies, it was nevertheless an attempt at placing in the hands of the clergy a series of sermons to be read in the churches. Perhaps first among the doctrines dealt

with was that of justification, tied as it was in Cranmer's mind to the doctrine of predestination. For Cranmer, the once-for-all nature of justification was a necessary consequence of God's decree of predestination, and this is the teaching we find in the Book of Common Prayer, the Homilies and the 39 Articles.

In March 1539 some German students wrote home with an enthusiastic report about the 'orationes' being prepared by Archbishop Cranmer for use by the clergy. The Parker Society translated this word as 'discourses' and this has led to an assumption that Cranmer was preparing homilies. However, the word properly translates as 'prayers', and suggests very strongly that he was preparing part of the daily offices to be said in the vernacular. This, then, is the earliest indication of Cranmer's intention of producing an English Prayer Book.

There is much more which could be said of Cranmer's activities, his involvement in Henry's politics, his attempts at making progress with reform, his part in the ending of the cult of Saint Thomas Becket, and his part in the trials, and subsequent executions, of Anabaptists and zealous evangelicals. Cranmer is often criticised for prevaricating, when others could see the issue very clearly. One such critic was the continental reformer, Simon Grynaeus of Strassburg. He complained to Cranmer that the English reformers were far too busy making compromises with their opponents. Martin Bucer, an equally conscientious reformer, understood something of Cranmer's difficulties. He wrote of Grynaeus,

He is a theoretical, and not a practical divine. He conceives the perfect form of a church, and of the process by which a church ought to be reformed; and since he himself is not involved in the drama of affairs and has not had difficulties of what experiences arise, when the tyranny of Antichrist is really to be destroyed, and the kingdom of Christ restored, he thinks that it is very easy to accomplish whatever he sees founded upon the

word of God, and therefore beneficial to humanity.

This quotation, contained in MacCulloch's biography of Cranmer, also illustrates a fundamental error of the continental reformers, the belief—at this stage at least—that the kingdom of Christ can be set up on earth through the reformation of the church militant.

The years 1539 to 1542 were spent rescuing the course of the reformation, both from Anabaptists, from conservatives (Papists) and from Henry's own interference for his own political ends. We will take a closer look at the course of reformation in a later paper, since the subject is both detailed, lengthy, and important. Suffice it to say that, by the close of 1542, Cranmer and the reformers were, in the providence of God, in the ascendancy. However, within two months, it became clear that the conservatives were planning a counterattack.

The details of the counterattack are to be found in MacCulloch's biography, in the chapter entitled, 'A Problem of Survival'. The opportunist 'Wiley Winchester', Stephen Gardiner, used the troubles to try to undermine Cranmer's position. The essence of the attack was that Cranmer had acted unlawfully in suppressing certain practices in his diocese. Some of the clergy had been accused of disobedience to the King, who were, in their own minds, merely doing what had always been lawful. Such was the extent of their hatred of Cranmer, and such was the extent of their influence and power, that they petitioned Henry for permission to charge Cranmer with heresy. Henry granted the request, to their delight, and the trial was set for the following day, it being late November 1543. That night Cranmer was summoned to the king, in secret, and was, according to an eye-witness, berated severely for his naivety, in thinking that he could expect a fair trial from his enemies. They wanted to commit him to the Tower, and from there summon him to judgment. Cranmer had been willing to submit to this,

but Henry had forbidden it. There would, he said, be no chance of a fair trial once he was in prison. Henry, wishing to appear disinterested in the affair, allowed it to run its course. However, he lent Cranmer his ring, a signal of royal favour. Cranmer was kept waiting outside the court room for some forty-five minutes, and once admitted, was informed that he was under arrest. He responded by handing over the king's ring, at which point the assembled clergy and nobility fled to the king's presence to cry out that they had never suspected the Archbishop of heresy, but merely wished to expose those who did, etcetera, etcetera. The crisis had passed, Cranmer was safe, and the course of the reformation would continue. A good deal would be accomplished in the final year of Henry's reign, thus preparing the way for the more obvious acts of reformation under Good King Josiah, Edward VI.

Conclusion

What we have seen thus far is that Cranmer's rise to prominence, indeed, to power, was through a series of unlikely chances. From the elevation of his grandfather in the social order, which resulted, indirectly, in his being able to receive a university education, through the death of a wife and thus the ending of a married state which would, otherwise, have barred him from ordination, to the chance meeting between himself and Wolsey's servants at which he revealed a new direction for the appeal to the Pope regarding Henry's first marriage, the list of coincidences is remarkable. Indeed, it is so remarkable that we cannot in all fairness consider these to be coincidences. It was the Lord's providential dealing which so arranged affairs. The Church in this realm, as throughout Christendom, was in desperate need of reformation. God graciously raised up a man whose character, personal integrity, spiritual growth and love for the truth, were the major weapons by which victory was won. We have every reason to be grateful to the Lord, even in our day, for the life and work of Thomas Cranmer.¶

STUDIES IN I PETER

EDWARD MALCOLM (Reading)

X Further teaching about Christian suffering, 4:12–19

WHEN we began the previous section, v.7, we spoke about the meaning of ‘sober’, and defined it as the having of a right mind, one moved and guided by the things of God. This right thinking is vital, and it is so very important that we begin to think aright now. The reason why this should be so is given in v.12—the potentially damaging effect of fiery trials. Now, it would be natural for us to assume that the damaging effect would be that which the trials themselves cause, such as the physical tortures and the mental and emotional scarring the experiences would bring. However, that is not what the Apostle has in view. For him, the greater damage is of an altogether different nature. He says, ‘Do not receive fiery trials as though they were unexpected guests’; that is the literal translation. The word translated ‘think it not strange’ has the original sense of ‘show hospitality’, and may have been suggested to Peter’s mind by what he had dictated in v.9 (different Greek word, but similarity of thought). So, says Peter, do be ready to entertain one another, but do not feel it necessary to take in the unexpected guest of fiery trials. Or, to put it in more straightforward language, do not be thrown into confusion by the arrival of fiery trials.

We must note that the fiery trial is spoken of as certain; ‘which is to try you’. Since its coming is to be expected, there ought to be no surprise at its happening. If you remember back to the first Gulf War, when the Iraqis were removed from Kuwait, the date of the military action was announced a long way ahead. Some wit imagined the panic of the Iraqi high command on the morning of the invasion, as the generals all ran about crying, ‘If

only someone had told us when this was going to happen!’ Fiery trials are going to happen, says Peter, so do not be surprised as if some unexpected thing were happening to you.

We must note also the intended purpose of the fiery trial—it is ‘to try you’, meaning it comes for the same reason that the refiner puts the silver and the gold into the fire, to purify them. Being purified through testing is part of the believer’s lot, I Peter 1:7, Psalm 17:3, Daniel 11:35, etc.

It is suggested, and with reason, that this is James’s main point in his epistle, that although these Jews have believed the Gospel and are faithful subjects of Messiah, they must still suffer in this life. It would seem very strange that the servants of the Lord should be so terribly treated once that Lord has manifested his power through the resurrection. Yet we live in what has been called the pause between the lightning flash of the resurrection and the thunder-clap of our Lord’s return. His power has been manifested, but as yet not every foe has been defeated. His servants therefore suffer.

The right response to suffering is rejoicing. This is not what we may expect, but we must take careful note of Peter’s reasons. He tells us, v 13, that those who suffer ‘are partakers of Christ’s sufferings’, meaning the cross. This is a powerful argument. It means we must have the cross of Christ ever before us, to remind us of what Christ suffered for our salvation, and by what means he came to his throne. Suffering, therefore, derives from our fellowship with Christ. If we are accounted worthy to suffer with Christ it follows that we shall also reign with him in glory. This is a cause

of much rejoicing, or ought to be, if properly understood.

That we must understand aright helps to show us why we need to study the Word of God, so that we have been taught, before we come to suffering, the reasons for it. It is not just in suffering that we need the teaching of Scripture, but for every aspect of our Christian life. Spiritual education is vital!

How does this comfort operate? Not by freeing us from suffering, as if Christ will return and rescue us in the midst of the trial. The three friends were not taken out of the fiery furnace, but were comforted by the presence of Christ with them in the midst of the trial. We are to rejoice, not that we are about to be spared, but that we have a strong evidence that the hope of glory is truly ours. This is consolation indeed!

So, v 14, when we suffer for the sake of Christ, this is not a misfortune but a cause of rejoicing, for we have been found worthy. This fits with Matthew 5:11. This is the confession of Christ before the world, for which we will never be ashamed before God. To deny Christ, to be ashamed of him, is to be denied by him before his Father in heaven. Let us confess Christ no matter what the cost.

Those who are reproached for Christ’s sake are to know that the spirit of glory and of God rests on them. When our Lord came up out of the waters of baptism a voice spoke from heaven, and the Spirit was seen by John to descend in the form of a dove. Our suffering reproach for Christ’s sake is the evidence that the Spirit has descended on us.

Some see this as a trinitarian reference, taking ‘the glory’ to be ‘the glory of the Godhead’, and so a reference to Christ. Since both God and the Spirit are named, this would bring all three Persons of the Trinity into this verse. Our persecutors speak evil of Christ by persecuting us for his sake, but he is honoured by our bearing such reproaches in the knowledge that we are sealed with the Spirit.

Peter now introduces a necessary warning; necessary, not because his words are open to

misinterpretation, and far less because there may be an error on the part of the Spirit who may bring comfort to one who suffers for their own sake, but because evil-doers may seek to justify their sufferings by a misapplication of these words. If you suffer, he says, because of your own sins, because of unlawful and criminal behaviour, that is your own affair. No Christian should suffer for these things, since no Christian should do them. However, v 16, if anyone truly suffers as a Christian, this is a cause of rejoicing. When he says ‘Christian’ he ‘regards not so much the name as the cause’, says Calvin. That is, it is not those who call themselves Christians but those who suffer for Christ’s sake he has in view. This is an important distinction.

In the Psalms David has a good deal to say about his sufferings at the hands of the ungodly. The history of Israel shows how the righteous have to pass through times of persecution, as Jeremiah in the latter days of the kingdom. Malachi speaks of judgement coming on the people of God, in preparation for the appearing of Messiah. We are in such day. Suffering must come, but whereas it usually began with foreign nations, Isaiah 10:12, it must now begin with the house of God. The Gentiles were once made to suffer as evidence of their wickedness, and to serve as a warning to Israel of the effects of their own sinfulness. Now, says Peter, suffering serves a somewhat different purpose; the righteous suffer now but look forward to glory to come, whereas the wicked prosper now but must look forward to eternal punishment to come. The effect of this is to keep us from unwise envy of the ungodly, who appear to enjoy many aspects of life denied to us, and who have no qualms about engaging in forms of behaviour we would avoid at all costs. Since our righteous living tends to bring suffering, it may be tempting to think that by living unrighteously we would have an easier existence. Such thinking fails to take into account both the reason for suffering, and the end of those who are found faithful. If God spares not his own children, what hope

is there for those who are strangers from the commonwealth of Israel?

Then, v.18, he adds what some take to be a quotation, and others a general proverbial saying. It is very close, but not identical, to the Greek of the Septuagint in Proverbs 11:31. Either way, Peter's intention is to show that if the righteous come to their eternal home via a rough and stony path, what hope is there for the careless (the ungodly) and the wicked (the sinner)? By saying that the righteous are scarcely saved he means that our pilgrimage is not meant to be easy, but that we are tested at every turn, and that we come to the heavenly harbour through many storms, and in danger of rocks, rather than after a gentle passage.

In conclusion Peter tells us that we need to surrender our hopes of eternal happiness to the Lord our Creator, the God who has ordered our ways from the beginning. He is faithful, and these trials are not intended to keep us from heaven, but to bring us to it with fullness of assurance, and confidence in the power of God to save. If we cease wondering how we can either avoid trials, or how we might mitigate their fierceness, but instead cast ourselves on the Lord in faith, we will enjoy the benefits of God's mercy and grace more fully. Let us leave to him the ordering of our ways, and content ourselves with faithful obedience and service, no matter what his will ordained for us.¶

TO BE CONTINUED

BOOK REVIEWS

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

YOU MUST READ. Books that have shaped our lives

Various

Banner of Truth, 2015 290pp £7.80 epub £8 pbk £15 cloth ISBN 978 1 84871 566 0

This volume is a collection of 32 book reviews, and each title reviewed has been a Banner publication! The point of the book, however, is not to advertise the publisher's titles, but to give personal testimonies to the usefulness of reading. The names of many of the reviewers will be well-known to most readers of *The Gospel Magazine*. The volume is dedicated to Iain and Jean Murray, as an appropriate expression of affection for them.

There is not space to make comments about each review, or its reviewer. Suffice it to say that the reviews cover biography, history, doctrine, commentaries, and much else besides. They are personal testimonies, and they ground a book's helpfulness in practical considerations. The Introduction touches on a matter which becomes more and more serious in our day, the

problem of how to get Christians to read. 'You must read' needs to go from being an exhortation from someone who has written or read a book, to 'I must read'; it must become the response of those who, hearing of a title (old or new) and of the blessing it has been to another, become determined to obtain and read for themselves. Fewer and fewer Christians are reading today, as the sadly-frequent closure of Christian bookshops testifies. This volume aims at encouraging us to read, and not just the titles being reviewed. May we read, and grow thereby.

EJM

HIS LOVE ENDURES FOR EVER. Reflections on the love of God

Garry J Williams

IVP 2015 192pp paperback £11.99 ISBN 978 1 78359 283 8

The doctrine of Divine love is perhaps the most misunderstood of all doctrines. As Dr Williams points out in his Introduction, many people come to the subject through their own understanding of love, rather than submitting to what the Bible reveals about God's love. The limits of human reason are demonstrated, and the reader is exhorted to submit to the authority of Scripture in handling this doctrine.

The first chapter proper continues to explore limits, and shows that the Fall has both corrupted the image of God in us, and blinded us to the truth of God as set out in nature and in Scripture. In the second, we are shown that God has condescended to speak to us in ways we can understand, both in the Bible and through the revelation of Jesus Christ. The reader is shown the proper way of reading the Bible; it must be read as a whole, and not in part. We are not meant to take anything in isolation, for that is the way to serious error.

Subsequent chapters (there are 12 in total) set out the true nature of divine love, and its effects toward us. Each chapter ends with a short meditation, with questions to consider, and then a prayer which sums up the main points of the chapter as a confession of our errors, and a plea for grace to know the truth.

The style is easy, technical terms are explained, and Dr Williams show that he is a very able teacher. The reader will need to ponder carefully what he reads, since these are deep matters. Those who make good use of this book will come away with a deeper understanding of a most glorious truth, one which ought to be reflected in our lives and witness for Christ.

The Bible version used is the English Standard Version.

EJM

SIDELIGHTS ON LUTHER

John M Brentnall

2014 144pp wire-bound 5 Rosier Crescent, Swanwick, Derbyshire, DE55 1RS

Mr Brentnall states plainly in his Preface that his title is chosen carefully, since these are "side-lights" rather than "highlights", for although they touch on the most momentous issues man can ever consider, the angle of approach is not the one usually found in books on the Reformer, and my treatment of them is neither comprehensive nor intense' (p3). Sixteen short chapters follow, dealing with such matters as 'Luther's Gospel' ('The gospel is mine, and yet not mine, because it is God's,' p4); 'Learning to live with Luther by faith alone' ('we are justified by faith alone, not through faith formed by love,' p10); 'No master of prayer' ('The main requirement in prayer

... is not length, but faith and sincerity,' p27); 'Our dear Lord and Saviour' ('Everything points to Christ,' p38); 'Why we need the Solas' ('all other ground is shifting sand,' p58); 'Is this hair-splitting?' ('When [God] distinguishes things that really differ, we are to take note and adopt the same distinction,' p59); 'Throwing the inkwell at Satan' ('Luther's severe conflicts, both within and without, have become part of our rich spiritual heritage,' p89); 'Luther and human reason' ('Reared on Aristotelian logic as understood by the Medieval "Schoolmen", he came to see that the venerated Greek philosopher was a mere specimen of "the wisdom of this world,"' p90); 'O how I love Thy law' ('The Gospel is not a rule of life ... The Law ... is a rule of life, never abrogated,' p100); 'Dictating to God' ('The upshot of all is trust and yield,' p106); 'Martin Luther and the wrath of God' ('God's gracious wrath is at work when punishment comes quickly, and calls us back from sin,' p116); 'When I was a monk' ('It was not life at all, but living death, for it was life without Christ,' p121); 'Luther's hymns' ('after theology, I accord to music the highest place and greatest honour,' p123); 'The Protestant work ethic' ('Because God values man ... man in turn should value himself and the works of his hands,' p137); 'Luther in Leipzig' ('Because Eck and Leipzig sought their own glory and not the truth, it is no wonder they began badly and ended worse,' p141); and 'Luther's legacy' ('All who have sympathetically read his vigorous, homespun sermons and affectionate correspondence have seen the heart of a unique Christian leader,' p145).

This is a worthwhile and uplifting read, which will, we trust, move readers to explore more of Luther's life, witness, doctrine and faith. Recommended.

EJM

PASTORAL COUNSEL

George Rose (J North ed)
Gospel Standard Trust Publications, 12b Roundwood Lane, Harpenden, Herts, AL5 3BZ
2015 145pp pbk £5 + p&p ISBN 978 1 897837 53 5

How may a busy pastor fulfil his duties regarding pastoral visitation when he spends five days a week preaching at various locations? How does a pastor who has a genuine pastoral heart make contact with all the members of his congregation, and beyond, when time is so short? The answer at which George Rose (1873–1965) arrived was to print a 'Monthly Circular' and have it distributed around the locality. Many men flatter themselves that they possess a gift for the written word; Mr Rose truly possessed it—not ostentatiously, but plainly and directly.

The tracts which comprise this little volume (55 in all) are fine examples of the way in which a spiritually-minded and scripturally-literate individual can observe the signs of the times, delve into the underlying causes and problems, and present a helpful and encouraging word from the Lord in response. Mr Rose knew the Bible, and expected his readers to have some familiarity with it, yet he did not presume on knowledge. He was plain in his exposition of national sins and personal sins, but in a way which aimed at drawing readers to see their guilt, and to look to Christ.

There is much to commend here, and those who write blogs and who use modern forms of communication to disseminate the Christian gospel will do well to observe Mr Rose's method. The facsimile of an early issue of the 'Monthly Circular', reproduced at the beginning of the book, shows how well-designed the enterprise was. His language may be a little old-fashioned to the modern ear, but the truths he taught remain unchanged and are unchanging. Do not read them to imitate, but to learn and be blessed.

Recommended.

EJM

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