

THE

# GOSPEL

MAGAZINE

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1975

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# THE GOSPEL MAGAZINE

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*Incorporating the Protestant Beacon and The British Protestant*

"JESUS CHRIST, THE SAME YESTERDAY, AND TODAY, AND FOR EVER."  
"ENDEAVOURING TO KEEP THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT IN THE BOND  
OF PEACE."

"COMFORT YE, COMFORT YE MY PEOPLE, SAITH YOUR GOD."

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## ***EDITORIAL***

The news headlines continue to run the gamut of predictable themes—inflation, soaring costs, economic recession, tension in the Middle East, continuing strife in Ulster, famines already with worse to come, pollution on a world scale, the disastrous dissipation of natural resources! It makes up a sorry catalogue of misery, uncertainty, and fear.

The tragedy is that with all the minute examination of our present ills, and with all the gloomy prognostications of impending disasters, there is such an abysmal failure to see the real cause of our troubles. It is true that many have moved from the old glib optimistic view of human progress, and now see that the fault is in man himself. But unhappily they do not see what the fault is. Hence the failure of all the reactions of our generation, and hence also the futility of all the proposed solutions.

Twentieth century man is in deep trouble because he has locked himself within nature, which he claims to be the only real world, and rejects or ignores the supernatural. He is in the closed world of his own sinfulness, and as a result is unable to find any answer to his predicament. A man who draws thick curtains to shut out the sunlight may make reasonable activity possible by switching on the electric light. But if there is a power failure and the candle is beginning to burn low, it is no surprise to find he stumbles over the mat in his own lounge.

But only a fool would rely on the dying flame of a candle when the sun is shining outside. And that is precisely how the

Bible describes man in his sin. 'The fool has said in his heart "there is no God".' His atheism may be quite explicit and outspoken, or it may be the practical atheism of the average ungodly man, but in practice it comes to the same thing. It means that a man lives and behaves—and dies also—as if there were no God, and as if this world was the only world. It is no wonder he so often feels lost and fearful and hopeless.

Of course, it is only in times of depression that most men feel like that—unless they are numbered among the more thoughtful members of the community who find the tinsel of our commercialised culture a mocking substitute for true living. By and large men and women try to ignore the headlines, or else they become so anaesthetised that they are almost immune to sombre tidings. But still the bleak and doom-laden news bulletins refuse to be silenced. With menacing persistence they continue to spell out in detail the tortured confusion in which our generation flounders.

The Bible answers the situation with one rich word—a word which has receded for modern man to the horizon of wishful thinking—it is the word 'hope'. But Christian hope is not wishful thinking. It is not a rather pathetic attempt to weave some kind of meaningful fabric out of the tangled bundle of broken threads left by man's selfish blundering. It is rather a solid confidence based on the assurance that God has not abdicated, that His throne is secure, and His purposes are unassailable.

For the Christian the room is not in darkness, lit only by the fitful light of man's own wisdom. Grace has drawn the blinds. The light of God's truth is shining. It lights up not only the room but the surrounding countryside. So the Christian sees not only the plan of God in his own life, but God's plan for all creation. Life is no longer a meaningless drift with no aim in view. The sovereign God is working out His purposes both in the miniature of each believer's life, and on the broad canvas of history. The dark shadow of death, which is the ultimate cause of twentieth century man's aimlessness, is met by the dawning glory of the everlasting day. The cold meaninglessness of an atheistic mortality is countered by the hope of the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting.

But hope for the Christian must never become another form of escape from the present. Thoughts of heaven are not to be a pious reverie which shuts out the clamour and ugliness of the present world. Hebrews 11 points us another way. The men of faith there, for whom faith was 'the substance of things hoped

for', were men who faced the demands of their own day, and in face of great difficulties and at times cruel circumstances, lived and worked with confidence. Paul reminds us indeed that it is only the hope of heaven which makes any activity purposeful. Without that aim life is a tragic waste of time. So he encourages us, 'Be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord' (1 Corinthians 15 : 58).

H.M.C.

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*'Mark what I say. If you want to do good in these times, you must throw aside indecision, and take up a distinct, sharply-cut, doctrinal religion. If you believe little, those to whom you try to do good will believe nothing. The victories of Christianity, wherever they have been won, have been won by distinct doctrinal theology; by telling man roundly of Christ's vicarious death and sacrifice; by showing them Christ's substitution on the cross, and His precious blood; by teaching them justification by faith, and bidding them believe on a crucified Saviour; by preaching ruin by sin, redemption by Christ, regeneration by the Spirit; by lifting up the brazen serpent; by telling men to look and live—to believe, repent, and be converted. This—this is the only teaching which for centuries God has honoured with success, and is honouring at the present day both at home and abroad . . .'*—J. C. RYLE.

*'The righteousness of the upright shall deliver them'* (Proverbs 11:6).

*'All the troubles and afflictions that you meet with in a way of righteousness shall never hurt you. The treasures of a saint are the presence of God, the favour of God, union and communion with God, the pardon of sin, the joy of the Spirit, the peace of conscience, which are jewels that none can give but Christ, nor none take away but Christ.'*—THOMAS BROOKS.

*We look for no other heaven, we desire none, but what we are led unto and prepared for by the light of the gospel; that which shall perfect all the beginnings of God's grace in us; not what shall be quite of another nature and destructive of them.*  
—OWEN.

*That faith which is not from Christ entirely, as its Author and root, will never lead the soul to Christ as its object and centre.*—ELISHA COLES.

# **Who Can Forbid WATER ?**

H. M. CARSON

*A sermon preached on Sunday morning,  
14th March, 1971, in Hamilton Road Baptist  
Church, Bangor, Co. Down.*

We turn to the 10th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles and to verses 44 to 48, noting particularly Peter's question: 'Can any man forbid water that these should not be baptised which have received the Holy Spirit as well as we?'

We have studied together this chapter of the Acts of the Apostles for three Sundays and it may be helpful if I recapitulate briefly the lines along which we have been moving. When we turned to this chapter in our study of the Acts, I said that this was a very significant chapter because it marked a great new departure in the outworking of the purposes of God, for in this chapter we see the door being opened to the Gentiles. What had, up to this point, been largely confined to Jews now becomes a faith for the whole world. The commission which the disciples received on the Mount of Olives is beginning to work out. They had already preached in Jerusalem, they had already declared the gospel to the Samaritans, but now the great moment has come and the Gentile world is open to the preaching of the gospel.

We saw Cornelius, this Gentile, as the typical seeker. Here is a man who is in deep earnest. He had already experienced the stirring of the Spirit because already he was wanting to know the truth, and in Judaism he had found something that transcended the pathetic kind of religion that was offered him by the paganism of the Roman Empire. And here is this Roman seeking the truth and ultimately finding it in Christ. We saw Peter, typical of his own Jewish contemporaries, slow to cast aside his traditions. We saw how God broke through the traditional attitude of the Jew and enabled Peter to see that the gospel was not to be confined within the narrow bounds of Judaism. It was to break those national shackles and to reach out to men and women of every nation and tribe and tongue. And then we saw Peter preaching his gospel, a gospel which centred upon Jesus Christ, which began with His incarnation, His coming in the flesh, and moved on to

His Cross and resurrection. Now we reach the climax of the chapter, when Cornelius and the others, intent, listening to the gospel, gladly receive that gospel, and are overwhelmed by a visitation of God the Holy Spirit.

Now there is something rather special about the accompaniments of their receiving the Spirit: 'They spoke in tongues and they magnified God'. Now I do not propose this morning to preach on the issue of speaking in tongues, but I think it is important to notice certain things about this phenomenon. First of all this speaking with tongues appears four times in the Acts of the Apostles, and each time it is a very special occasion. It appears on the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit, in accordance with the promise of Christ, was poured upon the Church. Now the Day of Pentecost was a very special occasion, it was the day on which, as it were, the charter was given to the church of Christ, and the church was launched on her task of going out with the everlasting gospel. That great occasion was marked by quite unusual occurrences, quite unusual phenomena. There was not only the speaking with tongues, there were also the rushing mighty wind, the shaking of the building in which they were assembled together, and the appearance of the cloven tongues like fire on the head of each one who was gathered there. The whole experience was accompanied by a quite unusual demonstration of the power of God, and so the speaking in tongues on the Day of Pentecost is to be set in the context of the shaking of the house, the great wind, the cloven tongues of fire. It was all in terms of a supernatural and miraculous intervention by God in which He was authenticating the Word and demonstrating that the Spirit had indeed come upon these believers.

You find the same thing happened at Samaria. Philip had preached the gospel and many of the Samaritans had believed. Then the apostles came down from Jerusalem and when they laid their hands on these young believers in Samaria, the Holy Spirit came upon them and they spoke with tongues. Again there is this supernatural accompaniment. It happened here with Cornelius, and later on in Acts 19 you find it occurs in the case of the disciples of John the Baptist whom Paul met at Ephesus. After they had received the full message of the gospel and Paul had baptised them, they spoke in tongues.

Now there are many other accounts of conversions in the Acts of the Apostles but in those cases there is no mention of speaking in tongues. Read the account of Lydia's conversion or of the Philippian jailor or of the believers at Athens

or of Paul himself, there is no mention there of speaking in tongues. I say these were special occasions. Not only was Pentecost special but the other occasions on which this phenomena appeared were also very special occasions. It was a special occasion when the Samaritans were received into the fellowship of the church of God. After all as far as Jews were concerned Samaritans were next door to Gentiles: 'Jews have no dealings with Samaritans'. Samaritans were outsiders, they were apostates, they were spiritual renegades as far as the Jews were concerned, and God demonstrates in Samaria by this outpouring of the Spirit, and by this unusual phenomena of speaking in tongues, that Samaritans are not outsiders, they are to be numbered with these Jewish believers in the Israel of God.

The same is even more true of Cornelius and his friends. These were Gentiles and as we have seen already it took a vision from God to persuade Peter that the gospel was to be preached to Gentiles. So when they turn to the Lord there is this speaking in tongues. It is as if God is authenticating by a special work of the Spirit that these men are also numbered with the people of God. The same is true in Ephesus in Acts 19—the disciples of John the Baptist, the disciples of the one who had prepared for the coming of the Messiah—how important that they should have brought home to them, and to all who stood with them in that kind of experience, that the great time had come, that the preaching of John had found its fulfilment, that the Messiah had come, that the gospel was being declared. So again there is the unusual phenomenon.

So I would say that in the New Testament the speaking in tongues is a special manifestation that God gives—not every time, as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12: 'Are all apostles, are all prophets?' No! 'do all speak with tongues?'—and he is obviously expecting the same answer—no, they don't all speak with tongues. They speak with tongues when God chooses to bestow this special gift, and this special gift was an unusual one, authenticating what God was doing and declaring, as at Pentecost, Samaria, in the case of the Gentiles and with John the Baptist's disciples, that a great new thing is happening and the gospel is reaching into a new area of life.

But that was the unusual. There was something that was very usual, and that very usual thing was that these men who had received the gospel and had received the gifts of the Spirit were baptised. One of the values of continuous expository preaching is that the preacher cannot be accused of riding his own hobby horse. If a preacher is always coming to a

particular subject, well you can rightly accuse him of a 'hobby horse' approach—he is always on one particular subject. I say the value of expository preaching is that you are confronted with issues—in the case of baptism, you are confronted with it again and again and again. So we discover as we go through the Acts of the Apostles that this is a subject which is constantly being thrust into the forefront. So unless we are to accuse the Holy Spirit of making too much of the ordinance, I believe if we are faithful to Scripture and if we are to get the balance of Scripture, each time we come to this we have to examine it in order to understand whether the Spirit of God has something fresh to say to us about this ordinance. I do not believe the Scripture was produced in any haphazard fashion. I believe that behind the careful historical writing of Luke, the author of the Acts of the Apostles, there is the directing hand of the Spirit of God. I believe that while Luke narrates the events with great care and with wonderful accuracy, at the same time he is led by the Spirit to emphasise truths in order that those truths may be brought vividly before our minds.

Now what fresh thing is Luke saying about baptism in this particular narrative? I would say that he is emphasising two things. From one point of view baptism is not essential, and from another point of view baptism is essential. You may well say that these seem to be rather contradictory statements! So one has to go further and say that he is emphasising that baptism is not essential for salvation, that it is possible for a man to be saved without being baptised. On the other hand he is saying that for the normal ordering of the Christian life baptism is indeed God's way of working.

Let us look first at the negative side—baptism is not essential for salvation. There are two groups of whom I can think who would emphasise that baptism is essential for salvation. There is of course on one side the Church of Rome, and at the other end of the ecclesiastical spectrum there is a body, which has a meeting place in this town, known as the 'Church of Christ', and both of these in their different ways would say that baptism is necessary for salvation. Now certainly this is the traditional teaching of the Church of Rome. That is why there is a tremendous concern that a child who is liable to die should be baptised. That is why in a Roman Catholic hospital for example there will be the most extreme steps taken in order to ensure that if there is any spark of life at all, that child will be baptised. It is because of traditional catholic

teaching that baptism is necessary to salvation. Now the 'Church of Christ' people basically take the same line, that in order to be saved you must be baptised. It is not enough to repent and believe, but you must be baptised or you are not saved, you are lost.

Let us look at this situation. Prior to their baptism, before they were baptised, it is quite clear that Cornelius and these others were truly saved by God's grace. Indeed, Peter acknowledges the fact; he speaks of them as 'those who have received the Holy Spirit as well as we'. Now he had received the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost and no one would question that those men who on the Day of Pentecost received this mighty power of the Spirit of God were truly new men in Christ Jesus. Are we to say that the apostles only came to spiritual birth at some subsequent date? Well, the idea would be absurd. Those men were quite clearly God's redeemed ones, and receiving the Spirit of God on the Day of Pentecost was a great token that they were truly Christ's. Now, says Peter, 'these men have received the Holy Spirit as well as we'. Was Cornelius, were the others, who were speaking in tongues, who had received the Spirit, were they the children of God? Well quite clearly and obviously they were. Were they baptised? Not yet! Their baptism was to follow. To say that baptism is essential to salvation, in the sense that a man cannot be saved unless he is baptised, is to run in face of the evidence of the New Testament. It is to shut the penitent thief out of the Kingdom, in spite of the fact that the Lord said to him, 'Today thou shalt be with me in paradise'. By the very nature of things there was no possibility of the penitent thief being baptised. And certainly it is to run completely contrary to what the Holy Spirit is here saying through Luke—these men were truly baptised of the Holy Spirit, they were truly in the Kingdom, they were truly God's children—their baptism in water was to follow. So I say, on the one side, Luke is telling us, baptism is not essential to salvation in the sense that without it no one can be saved.

But I do not believe he is letting us go to the other extreme, because it is possible, you see, to go to another extreme from Roman teaching or from the teaching of the 'Church of Christ' and to say, 'Well, baptism isn't really very important. The main thing is to believe in Christ, the main thing is to be born again. Baptism has some importance but it isn't terribly important.' But that is not the conclusion one should draw. While it is not essential to salvation, Peter is very clearly

emphasising here that baptism is of vital importance, that there is a very real sense in which it is an essential ordinance, because it is God's ordinance. It is the ordinance which God has set right at the beginning of the Christian life. It is the ordinance which God has associated with admission into church fellowship. It is the ordinance which God has given to be a means of blessing and of assurance to His people. So let's not go from one extreme of error to the other. Let's not say that because baptism is not necessary to salvation therefore baptism is really something rather secondary—and certainly we cannot say that and face this passage, because for Peter baptism is something which is very important.

It is, for one thing, the complement of the baptism of the Spirit. There are two baptisms mentioned here; there is the baptism with the Holy Spirit and there is the baptism with water, and Peter is quite obviously talking about literal baptism. He is not talking about some spiritual experience. 'Who can forbid *water* that these should not be baptised?' They have already been baptised with the Holy Spirit and now, says Peter, they must be baptised with water. The two, if you like, are different sides of the same coin, they are two ways of approaching the same experience. It was necessary, and it always is necessary, that a man should be baptised by the Holy Spirit. What is this baptism of the Spirit? Well I believe it is the baptism of the new birth. When a man is baptised with the Spirit he is baptised into the body of Christ, and whether as in this case, this baptism into the body of Christ is accompanied by some unusual phenomena or not, this is the basic experience, the baptism of the Spirit, the new birth. But Peter does not say that because these men have received the baptism of the Spirit they don't need anything else. He does not say spiritual baptism is enough, he says 'water as well'. He does not say a spiritual experience will suffice; these men have professed faith in Christ and we don't need to worry about anything else. He says, 'Who can forbid water that these should not be baptised?'

They had received the Holy Spirit, and what makes it all the more significant is the fact that in this case there were these unusual accompaniments. They had received the Holy Spirit and, in their receiving of the Holy Spirit, they had received a special gift of the Spirit, they were speaking with tongues. Well here, if anything, was an indication to them that something tremendous had happened. They had in their own heart and upon their own lips evidence that God had worked in them. They could well say to anyone, 'We are new

creatures in Christ Jesus'. Indeed that is what they are doing, they are praising God. Now they, if anybody, could well have said—Do we need anything more? We don't need anything surely in terms of an ordinance. We have got such a marvellous experience. Look what God has done for us, He has made us new people, and He has enabled us with renewed lips to praise His Name. Our hearts are overflowing in thanksgiving, surely we don't need anything else? Christians so easily argue in that way—I am born again, I have put my trust in Christ, do I really need anything else? And Peter is saying in this situation, where there is a quite unusual demonstration of the presence and power of God in the lives of these newborn believers, there is something more you do need. You have been baptised with the Spirit, well now you need to be baptised with water.

He puts it in terms of a challenge. Peter, remember, is a Jew, a Jewish Christian, a Jewish believer, and, as Luke points out, those who have accompanied Peter are also Jews. Now Peter has just been weaned away from his Jewish traditionalism and he has found it very hard to accept the possibility that these Gentiles will become members of the church with him, and of course his companions are quite liable to feel the same—even more liable, because Peter has had the vision on the housetop back there in the town. The Lord has already spoken to Peter and Peter has capitulated; he has given way as far as his traditional attitudes are concerned. But the others have not had the vision, they have simply got Peter's word. You can quite understand that these Jewish Christians who are with Peter may well be saying—What are we going to do with these Gentiles? They may well have felt that they were almost in a compromising situation already even to go in and meet Gentiles and talk to them—it was ceremonially defiling as far as the Jew was concerned. So Peter has to deal with his companions and he turns to them and says, 'Who can forbid water that these Gentiles should not be baptised? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have.'

You see what Peter's argument is. He is speaking to his Jewish believer friends, and he says, 'These Gentiles have quite obviously received the gospel and quite clearly God has received them—we certainly cannot reject them and we ought to baptise them.' But you see how his mind instinctively moves from the preaching of the gospel to the new birth, to baptism. The whole thing is so linked together. Of course one can understand that because in the Acts of the Apostles those three things are always linked together. Gospel preaching in

the Acts of the Apostles, you may have noticed, is quite different from a lot of gospel preaching today because when Peter is asked in Acts 2, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?'—he does not say, 'Here is a card, you sign your name'. He says, 'Repent and be baptised every one of you'. When Ananias goes to Saul, he does not say to Saul, 'Now this is the way you do it, and we have got a follow-up scheme to help you afterwards'. He says, 'Saul, arise and get yourself baptised', this is God's way of doing it. So with this background, because that kind of gospel preaching is the whole context in which his ministry is exercised, Peter's instinctive reaction to the big thing that has happened is—Look they have been baptised with the Spirit, they ought to be baptised with water. 'Who can forbid water that these should not be baptised, who have received the Holy Spirit as well as we.'

I believe one can well apply this on a very personal and practical level to a believer who has not seen this issue. I would say to such an one, 'Who can forbid water that you should not be baptised?' In fact I might come at it this way and say—Are you yourself forbidding the water that you should not be baptised? Peter's argument is—Are you going to deprive these people of the blessing which God intends they should have, are you going to deprive them of the ordinance? Well I might say lovingly to a Christian who has not seen this issue in its New Testament importance—Are you going to forbid water for yourself, are you going to deprive yourself of a very precious blessing that God intends His people to have? Indeed Peter does not even leave us at the level of suggestion or exhortation, or encouragement, he is quite emphatic. He commanded them to be baptised in the name of the Lord. He commanded them! This is not something that perhaps they might have or perhaps they might not. This is not some blessing along the line of the Christian life that you may have or you may not have. It is a command, and a command from an apostle of the Lord, a command from a man to whom God has given a great commission to throw open the door of the gospel to the Gentiles—such a command comes with divine authority.

Of course Peter commands because behind Peter's command he knows there stands One who commands with an even greater authority than that of the apostle. He remembers how the Lord commissioned them, Matthew recorded it in the last chapter of his gospel; the Lord commissioned them to go and make disciples of all the nations. What does it mean to make disciples? It means to declare the gospel to them,

calling them to repentance, calling them to faith. What was the commission? 'Make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.' So when Peter commands quite firmly, with the decisive determination that this must be carried out, behind him there is the command of Christ. I believe if you search through the Acts of the Apostles you never get any hint that baptism is something that you may have or you may not have, that it is something that you may consider or perhaps just leave in the background. It comes in terms of a command. On the Day of Pentecost, Peter said, 'Repent and be baptised every one'. Ananias said, 'Arise and get yourself baptised'. It is the same in Ephesus, with Paul to the disciples of John the Baptist. Wherever you turn it is something that is firmly commanded.

But you know, and I believe this is important, it is a command of love. It is not a command that we should perform some duty, that we should conform to some church ordinance, that we should rather reluctantly give way to something that we feel is rather a restriction or rather a burden. It is a command of love. It is the Lord saying—I want to bless you richly. I want to give you an ordinance which will deepen your assurance that you are truly my child. I am wanting you to enjoy an ordinance in which, buried with Christ and raised again with Him in symbol, you realise in a deeper and newer way the marvellous thing that has already happened to you. These men have already had the experience, they have already been born again, they have already been raised to newness of life, and now they were to enjoy the ordinance. And the command is the command of One who loves His people and wants to enrich them.

'They were baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus.' You may say—Surely they were baptised in the name of the Trinity? Well I am sure they were, but from another point of view it was in the name of the Lord Jesus because it was as they confessed the Lord's Name that they were baptised in the name of the Trinity. Trusting in Christ, they receive the ordinance. Trusting in Christ, saying that Jesus is Lord, this is the basic testimony, this is what stands right at the beginning of the Christian life. When I call a man to faith in Christ, what am I calling him to say? Not from his lips only, but from the very depths of his heart, I am calling him to say, 'Jesus is Lord, He is my Saviour, He is my Lord, I trust Him'. That is

where it begins and indeed baptism always stands after that. You don't have baptism before. The basic thing, the fundamental thing, the requirement that stands right at the forefront, is that a man should confess that Jesus is Lord. But how should he confess it? I would say in God's divinely appointed way, because it is the way in which God purposes that the believer should confess that Jesus is Lord, by submitting to the ordinance. Indeed 'submitting' may give rather a wrong flavour, it may suggest the idea of reluctance. Rather, it is gladly receiving the ordinance and in receiving the ordinance, receiving as it were heaven's seal on the document of acceptance. It is as though God addresses us: 'You have said, "Jesus is Lord"; I am declaring to you, "You are my child".' May the Lord enable us to see the truth of His most Holy Word.

### CHRIST'S OMNIPRESENCE

*'I know whence I came, and whither I go.' This Person who in presence speaketh to you, hath what He quitted not, and yet came: for He did not either by coming hither depart hence, or by going back thither forsake us. Why marvel ye? He is God. This is not possible to be done by man: not possible, even by the sun. When he goeth to the west, he quitteth the east, and until, when he is about to rise, he return to the east, he is not in the east. But our Lord Jesus Christ both cometh, and is there; both returneth, and is here. Hear what the Evangelist himself saith: 'God, no man hath seen at any time, save the only-begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him'. He said not, was in the bosom of the Father, as if by coming He quitted the bosom of the Father. Here was He speaking, yet affirmed Himself to be there: and when also He was about to depart hence, what said He? 'Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world.'*

—AUGUSTINE.

### THE NATURE OF SIN

*All sin, in the heart and in act, is reducible to two terms. (i) An opposition to God—enmity (Romans 8:7). (ii) An active prevalence, a positive violation of His Word. The first is the nature and principle of sin. This is our woeful alienation from God. The second is the power of sin. The one says: 'Who is the Lord?' 'There is no God.' The other fights against His revealed will. O what a death is in me! But I can say sometimes: 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' Also the following word: 'I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord,' etc.—J. K. POPHAM,*

# Aut Dominus Aut Nullus

*A Plea for the Doctrines of Grace, commonly called  
Calvinistic*

HUGH D. BROWN

Philosophic doubt and modern theology seem to have joined in an unholy conspiracy to hustle, if that were possible, the Lord God Almighty Himself out of His own universe. A Creator, bound hand and will by the red-tapeism of so-called scientific discoveries, whose actions are circumscribed by the supposed findings and arrogant dicta of His creatures, and whose purpose is liable to amendment or restraint through the antagonism of sinners, and the assistance of divines, is to us, old-fashioned thinkers, a Deity in name only, unworthy alike of credence and of worship. *The God* must be supreme, indisputable President of the universe, physical and spiritual, nor will He condescend to consult any committee, human or angelic, in 'working all things after the counsel of His own will' (Ephesians 1 : 11); McCabe may logically voice Arminian theology in the words, 'This new factor, the God-like liberty of the human will, is capable of thwarting, and in uncounted instances does thwart, the Divine will, and compel the great I AM to modify His actions, His purposes, and His plans in the treatment of individuals, and of communities'; but to us such language savours of blasphemy itself. **AUT DOMINUS, AUT NULLUS**, is our war-cry; God in the beginning, God in the continuing, God in the ending, God in the eternal yesterday, God in the everlasting future, God in creation, God in regeneration, God in preservation, God in destruction, God in the celestial glory; God supreme over praiseful angels, feeble mortals, and disloyal friends; God shaping, directing, controlling mind and matter, animate and inanimate, to work out His purposes and discharge His sovereign will; God ruling and over-ruling for His own glory the mistakes of men and the rebellion of devils; God incomprehensible in the mysteries, half seen and apparently conflicting workings of His machin-

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*Aut Dominus aut nullus literally means 'Either God or Nobody'.*

*The address here reprinted was originally delivered at the Eighth Conference of the Pastors' College Evangelical Association in the year 1895.*

ery, yet comprehensible in Christ at the cross of Calvary and on the resurrection throne; 'This God is our God for ever and ever; He will be our Guide even beyond death' (Psalm 48 : 14—R.V. margin). Give us Him, or give us nothing; rob us of Him, and we are bereft of all things, 'for in Him we live, and move, and have our being' (Acts 17 : 28). Such *is* our creed; such *was* the Creed of Old Testament prophets and New Testament Apostles, of Waldensian martyrs and Continental Reformers, of British and New England Puritans, of the founders of Free States, and the pioneers of Foreign Missions.

#### I. WHAT IS CALVINISM?

The three main fundamental ideas of what is popularly known as Calvinism, we take it, are the absolute sovereignty—the benevolent despotism, if you will—of God; the utter depravity and helplessness of man by nature, inheritance, and practice; and the eternal, electing grace of the Father, who 'hath chosen us [the redeemed] in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love' (Ephesians 1 : 4). These tenets were not, however, first promulgated by the Genevan Reformer; Martin Luther held them, Wycliffe held them, Augustine held them, Paul held them, Isaiah held them, Moses held them, yea, they were enunciated by the Lord God Himself in Eden's garden. Calvin, indeed, with logical acumen and critical accuracy, systematized them as a theology, possibly with overmuch mathematical precision, for the boundless truth of the infinite God cannot be squared and harmonised like an arithmetical table, within the confines of mortal mind, or in the pages of any volume of divinity; but *they existed before his day*, and were accepted by nearly all contemporary Reformers, and by the greatest teachers of the subsequent century. It is ridiculous for certain professors and so-called 'leaders of thought'—playing to the gallery—to speak and write as if 'election' were a word coined by Calvin, though such utterances may likely enough awaken plaudits, not only from the gallery, but from the very pit itself, since the doctrine of Predestination is the *natural* target for the scorn, odium, and rage of all those who have not themselves received a *supernatural* revelation; yet Moses speaks of 'a holy, chosen, special people' (Deuteronomy 7 : 6); Isaiah, of 'Israel Mine elect' (Isaiah 45 : 4); The Lord Christ, of 'His elect' (Matthew 24 : 31), Paul, of 'elect angels' (1 Timothy 5 : 21), and 'the elect of God' (Colossians 3 : 12); Peter, of an 'elect Church' (1 Peter 5 : 13); and John, of an 'elect lady' (2 John 1). The Arminian, therefore, must join issue with these witnesses, and with Augustine,

Wycliffe, and a host of other notable theologians, patriots, and Reformers who, in pre-Calvinistic days, held and taught firmly the Divine sovereignty, electing grace, and the utter depravity of man; nay, he must further assail the theology of even Martin Luther himself, for every onslaught on these doctrines attacks the German just as vigorously as the Swiss Reformer. Listen to Luther:

'This is my absolute opinion; he that will maintain that man's free will is able to do or work anything in spiritual cases, be they never so small, denies Christ. This I have always maintained in my writings, especially in those against Erasmus, one of the learnedest men in the whole world, and thereby will I remain, for I know it to be the truth, though all the world should be against it; yea, the decrees of Divine Majesty must stand fast against the gates of hell.' (*Luther's Table Talk*, edited by Hazlitt, page 119).

'The sentences in Holy Scripture touching Predestination, as "No man can come to Me except the Father draweth Him", seem to terrify and affright us; yet they but show that we can do nothing of our own strength and will that is good before God, and put the godly also in mind to pray. When people do this, they may conclude they are predestinated.' (Page 21).

Did Calvin ever write anything more terse and cutting to human pride than this? Yet, who wonders at such sentences from the monk who, as he staggered up the sacred staircase under the intolerable burden of sin (which so many thousands and tens of thousands had done before, but to return, still groaning under conscious condemnation), was arrested, Paul-like, by a voice from Heaven as *his Elector* thundered the words into his ear, 'The just shall live by his faith' (Habakkuk 2 : 4)? Why, if ever a man recognised God in his conversion, Martin Luther must have done so, since the Divine sovereignty was written in such large letters over his entire biography that even Arminians are almost constrained reluctantly to exclaim, 'See here the Hand of God!' And if here, why not in Calvin's case, and Zwingli's, and Melancthon's; yea, in all the Reformers, in all the Reformed Churches, and for that matter in all the true members of every Church; then, and now, everywhere and anywhere?

In addition to this, remember that almost all the great Continental and British Reformers taught those views which are now generally termed Calvinistic. The Savoy, Helvetic, Gallic, Belgic, Synod of Dort, and Westminster Confessions of Faith are Calvinistic to the core; so are the articles of the Church of England, the seventeenth especially being prac-

tically a paraphrase from Calvin's Commentaries; while it is notorious that not only the Churches in Switzerland, but also in France, the Netherlands and Scotland drew their theology exclusively from Geneva. Bucer, Beza, Cranmer, Knox, William the Silent, Coligny and the Huguenots were Calvinists; as were nearly all the Puritans, including such men as Bunyan, Cromwell, Owen, Watts; so were Leighton, Rutherford, and the Covenanters in Scotland, Ussher and his Evangelical *confreres* in Ireland; so were the Pilgrim Fathers and that intellectual giant, Jonathan Edwards, and, in later times, Doddridge, Gill, Fuller, the Haldanes, Carson, Whitefield, Toplady, Newton, and Rowland Hill. Why, we could almost count upon our fingers any other than Calvinistic divines whose names live after the fretting, searching criticism of a hundred years; while in our own days, Krummacher in Germany, Malan in Switzerland, Monod in France, Hodge in America, Chalmers in Scotland, Cooke in Ireland, and Charles Haddon Spurgeon in England—the leading theologians *par excellence* of the nineteenth century—fully maintained the spiritual and intellectual prowess of their illustrious ancestry.

Let me submit here a quotation which, linked with Luther's utterances, surely demonstrates the substantial concord which existed among all the Reformed Churches upon the twin truths of sovereign grace and human inability. It is from the Augsburg Confession, which formed the doctrinal basis of the Lutheran, Danish, and Scandinavian Churches, and was also adopted by the United Brethren, or Moravians, as their standard. It runs thus: 'That the power of free will may produce an exterior good conduct, and regulate the morals of men towards society, but that, without the grace of the Holy Spirit, neither faith, regeneration, nor true righteousness can be exercised or attained to'. No doubt, Geneva outdistanced Germany in the stern strength of its doctrinal position, and Westminster possibly went further than both; yet he who quarrels with the latter must also combat Calvin, and he who opposes Calvin is logically compelled to join issue with the inimitable Luther. Let anti-Calvinists face these inexorable facts!

Again, be it remembered that Calvin preached the Gospel to every creature as fully, freely, and unreservedly as Bunyan, Whitefield, Rowland Hill, and Charles Haddon Spurgeon ever did. It was not his desire, nor is it ours, to analyse the inscrutable decrees of an all-wise God, or reconcile to our half-blind reason apparently conflicting conceptions of the programme, scope, and offer of redemption; God's thoughts are not our

thoughts, neither are our ways His ways, for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are His ways higher than our ways, and His thoughts than our thoughts (Isaiah 55 : 8, 9). Bewildered reason can wait possible explanations in Heaven; but faith believes, for Jehovah has spoken. To understand God, I must myself be God; His very incomprehensibility linked with His manifestation, the hidings and outshinings of His power, the concealings and revealings of His love—these are the allied factors which command my reverence and call forth the worship from an awestruck, gladsome heart, 'My Lord and my God' (John 20 : 28). I know nothing much of man's machinery, its clattering noise, its multitudinous and conflicting revolutions, its little wheels whirling at lightning speed, its big ones imperceptible in their motion—these things amaze, confuse, confound me, and I shrink back lest an incautious curiosity should mean the mangled body of a once strong man; yet I know there is a mind behind it all, to whom the discord is all harmony, and the conflictings peace. Shall we, who dare scarce touch the fringe of the Divine omnipotence, ascribe to human engineering skill a tribute of respect and faith which we deny to the Eternal God? 'Canst thou by *searching* find out God?' (Job 11 : 7). Arminians may, but Calvinists cannot, nor do they pretend to: 'We *believe*, and therefore speak' (2 Corinthians 4 : 13). Still, Ezekiel-like, we see upon a throne above it all 'the likeness as the appearance of a man' (Ezekiel 1 : 26), and that gives rest.

Listen to Calvin's comment on that well-known, much-loved passage, John 3 : 16:—

'For His (Christ's) meaning was plainly to express that, though we seem to be borne to death, yet there is certain deliverance offered in the faith of Christ; so that death, which otherwise hangeth over our heads, is nothing to be feared. He added also the universal note "whosoever", both that he may invite all men in general to the participation of life, and cut off all excuse from unbelievers. To the same end tendeth the term "world"; for though there be nothing found in the world that is worthy of God's favour, yet He showeth that He is favourable to the whole world, when He calleth all men without exception to the faith of Christ. Let us remember, however, that though life is promised to all who shall believe in Christ so commonly, that yet faith is not common to all men; for though Christ lieth open to all men, yet God doth only open the eyes of the elect, that they may seek Him by faith.'

The Synod of Dort\* says: —

‘The death of the Son of God is the only and most complete sacrifice and satisfaction of sins, of infinite value, abundantly sufficient to expiate the sins of the whole world. The promise of the Gospel is, that whosoever believeth in Christ crucified shall not perish, but have eternal life; which promise, together with the command to repent and believe, ought promiscuously and indiscriminately to be published and proposed to all nations and individuals to whom God in His good pleasure sends the Gospel. The reason why many, who are called by the Gospel, do not repent and believe in Christ, but perish in unbelief, is not through any defect or insufficiency in the sacrifice of Christ offered upon the cross, but through their own fault. All those who truly believe, and by the death of Christ are delivered and saved, have to ascribe it to the grace of God alone, which He owes to no one, and which was given them in Christ from eternity. The gracious will and intention of God the Father was, that the life-giving and saving efficacy of the precious death of His Son should exert itself in all the elect to endure them alone with justifying faith, and thereby infallibly bring them to salvation.’

Assuredly, these men were not ‘hypers’; and we re-echo solemnly their teaching, for this is Calvinism—Paulism!

## II. WHY AM I A CALVINIST?

Firstly, *I am a Calvinist because this theology is Scriptural.* Indeed, the Bible is simply full of it: in complete bewilderment by the *embarras de richesse*, I know not where to turn, nor how to begin. A few moments would suffice to quote all references to the Lord’s Supper, and possibly the allusions to Baptism might occupy fifteen minutes; but a labourer’s eight-hours day or a pastor’s twelve-hours day would not exhaust the detailed proofs and statements of the sovereignty of God in history and in grace. I subjoin a few testimonies culled almost at random from the Holy Scriptures: —

*Joseph* saith: ‘So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God . . . But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.’ (Genesis 45 : 8; 50 : 20).

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\* *May, 1619, to which deputies were sent from England and the Reformed Churches in Europe, to settle the differences between the doctrines of Luther, Calvin, and Arminius, principally upon points of Justification and Grace. The Synod condemned the tenets of Arminius.*

*Moses* saith: 'For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto Himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The Lord did not set His love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people: for ye were the fewest of all people: but because the Lord loved you, and because He would keep the oath which He had sworn unto your fathers, hath the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh, King of Egypt.' (Deuteronomy 7 : 6-8).

*Job* saith: 'Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one. Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with Thee, Thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass.' (Job 14 : 4, 5).

'But he is in one mind, and who can turn Him? and what His soul desireth, even that He doeth. For He performeth the thing that is appointed for me: and many such things are with Him.' (Job 23 : 13, 14).

*David* saith: 'The Lord bringeth the counsel of the heathen to naught: He maketh the desires of the people of none effect. The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of His heart to all generations. Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord; and the people whom He hath chosen for His own inheritance.' (Psalm 33 : 10-12).

'Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in Thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.' (Psalm 139 : 16).

'For the Lord hath chosen Jacob unto Himself, and Israel for His peculiar treasure. For I know that the Lord is great, and that our Lord is above all gods. Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did He in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places.' (Psalm 135 : 4-6).

*Solomon* saith: 'The Lord hath made all things for Himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.' (Proverbs 16 : 4).

'The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: He turneth it whithersoever He will.' (Proverbs 21 : 1).

*Isaiah* saith: 'For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel Mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though you hast not known me.' (Isaiah 45 : 4).

*Jeremiah* saith: 'Before I formed thee in the belly I knew

thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.' (Jeremiah 1 : 5).

*Daniel* saith: 'At the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured Him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation: and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and He doeth according to His will in the army of Heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou? At the same time my reason returned unto me: and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honour and brightness returned unto me; and my counsellors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me.' (Daniel 4 : 34-36).

*Our Blessed Lord* saith: 'I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Thy sight. All things are delivered unto Me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him.' (Matthew 11 : 25-27).

'All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me: and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. . . . No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. . . . Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto Me, except it were given unto him of My Father.' (John 6 : 37-39, 44, 65).

'I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given Me; for they are Thine. . . . Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me: for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world.' (John 17 : 9, 24).

*Luke* saith: 'For of a truth against Thy holy child Jesus, whom Thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered

together, for to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done.' (Acts 4 : 27, 28).

'And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.' (Acts 13 : 48).

*Paul* saith: 'For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calleth; it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For He saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. For the Scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for the same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that My name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath He mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth. Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth He yet find fault? For who hath resisted His will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why hast Thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to shew His wrath, and to make His power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory, even us, whom He hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?' (Romans 9 : 11-24).

'It pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace.' (Galatians 1 : 15).

'According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.' (Ephesians 1 : 4, 5).

'But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto He called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.' (2 Thessalonians 2 : 13, 14).

*James* saith: 'Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures.' (James 1 : 18).

*Peter* saith: 'Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.' (1 Peter 1 : 2).

'Unto you therefore which believe He is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.' (1 Peter 2 : 7, 8).

*Jude* saith: 'For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained unto this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.' (Jude 4).

*John* saith: 'For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil His will, and to agree, and give their kingdoms unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.' (Revelation 17 : 17).

Brethren, any system of scriptural interpretation which will explain away, or will not recognise such Divine utterances, must surely be of men, and not from Heaven.

Secondly, *I am a Calvinist because this theology is reasonable*. Do not misunderstand me; I have given the first place to Scripture, and if reason and Revelation conflict, then I unreservedly, unquestionably, and immediately bow to Heaven's ultimatum: 'Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding' (Proverbs 3 : 5). 'Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established' (2 Chronicles 20 : 20); but if there be no such antagonism, it is not only my privilege but my responsibility to exercise such mental powers as God has given me, always, however, proceeding cautiously and humbly as befits a fallen creature whose semi-enlightenment leaves him often a prey to subtle dangers to which one absolutely blind is unexposed.

If the Supreme Power we worship be something more than a mere condensation of blind force, if, in short, we acknowledge that He is God, infinitely wise, and invincibly steadfast, it naturally and necessarily follows that, as such, He is possessed of Fore-knowledge. Theism, and above all, Christianity, demands this. Now, if God, looking down the vista of time, foresaw the panorama of the future ere that future existed, it must have then lived only in His Almighty

mind, as sleeps the drama in the poet's brain, or else have been His infallible forecast of the inevitable outcome of the Divine decrees, and in either case we are logically forced a step further in our conclusions, and compelled to add to Theism and Fore-knowledge, Fore-ordination (or Predestination), since, if God foresaw the result of such decrees, and knowing the necessary consequences of His laws, decreed them, then not only causes but consequences are fore-ordained, and those who reject Predestination must also repudiate Fore-knowledge. This did not James when, in his memorable pronouncement at Jerusalem, he founded and drove home his conclusions from the argument that 'known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world' (Acts 15 : 18); and all prophetic utterances concerning 'the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world' (Revelation 13 : 8) not only predict but predetermine the necessary sequence of events from Eden unto Calvary.

Again, if the argument from order and design—those great hall-marks of a Creator's hand—stamped upon every fragment of the material world, and covering all our physical being, compels us to abandon the theories of chance or fatalism, if we accept the resistless logic of those laws which, penetrating the universe from its hundred thousand suns down to the tiny snowdrop and the homely daisy, control also the human organism, and set their sanctions round our general morality, surely the conclusion that a supreme mind, and not mere matter, governs the material, forces us to further acknowledge that the same mind governs the immaterial, and that God is, in short, sovereign over mind as well as matter; that He devised and set a-going the mechanism of the universe, the clock-work of human events, and designed the end and programme of all physical and moral being. We cannot possibly evade this conclusion without in a greater or lesser degree degrading God from His position of indisputable supremacy. While we demur to many of the dicta of Spinoza, Mill & Co., yet it is a singular fact that all philosophy worthy of the name is deterministic; and Professor Fairbairn has aptly described modern science as 'Calvinism with God missed out.\*' But we prefer to have God in, and contend that all conceptions of intelligent creation and moral government demand His universal presence. Fore-knowing, fore-ordaining one event, He fore-ordains all, for each hinges and impinges on the other; and

\* *Address at the Congregational Union, 1894.*

thus the foolish problem—How can the Almighty answer prayer?—is easy of solution, since prayer, being part of the programme, is but a means to an end, and itself an element in the complex machinery of the Divine decrees.

Is the all-wise, all-holy, all-loving God then verily responsible for evil, its origin and continuance? I dare not say! God only knoweth. Far stronger minds than mine have gazed again into the fierce white light of this age-lasting mystery until both brain and heart have been scorched, and rendered useless for the practical service of this work-day life; yet pray remember that Calvinists have no monopoly of this vast difficulty, it is common to all systems of religious faith. Still have I my thoughts—Is sin itself a means unto an end which could not otherwise be accomplished? One thing I do believe, a God of love permitted evil, and has ruled and over-ruled it for His glory. Humility, gratitude, faith, sympathy—these words had practically no *expounded* meaning until the gates of paradise had closed. The strength of conscious knowledge, and not the innocence of ignorance, the holiness and, above all, the love revealed at Calvary—these were unknown quantities until the Fall was an accomplished fact; and I know that, on the glory-shore, it shall one day be said of all the powers of darkness, 'But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good' (Genesis 50 : 20), 'to do whatsoever His hand and His counsel determined before to be done' (Acts 4 : 28).

Is man, then, not possessed of free will? Again, I cannot say; although the clearly-revealed truth of personal responsibility would argue strongly in that direction; yet be it not forgotten that we are born fallen, with a distinct bias as regards the mind in certain directions. If Adam had free will in Eden's garden, who gave it to him? Was it not God who bestowed this fatal gift, foreseeing the inevitable consequences, and therefore negatively permitting, if not positively fore-ordaining them? Besides, after all, was it free will? Is not the will largely conditioned by character, and even if the will engage in conflict with formed character, is it (the will) not then impelled and governed by other and external influences? It matters little whether these be physical, social, educational, or spiritual, the fact remains; freedom, absolute and uncontrolled, is but an idle boast; nay, further, license is not liberty, freedom being only possible through law, whether in the civil realm or in the soul. If, then, what we call free will is thus admittedly shaped and influenced by other minds, and other forces, shall we deny to God the power we readily concede unto our fellow-men? Freedom hath certainly its limitations, sanctions, and

restraints; who placed them there? If God or devil, fate or chance, then is not man free unreservedly. If these be but a legacy from ancestry, or the outcome of present-day environment, then are we not absolutely free, and everyone is moulded and influenced by surrounding circumstances. Diogenes once claimed exemption from the directings of human criticism, yet did his tub environment largely produce his cynicism. Calvinists but assert that God is supreme factor in all such influences, and that 'His people shall be willing in the day of His power' (Psalm 110 : 3). Our life abounds in paradoxes and seeming contradictions; the centripetal and centrifugal rule in the world of soul as in the world of space; but God can reconcile these contradictions, and as in Wagner's music discords blend in harmonies, so, when the pierced hand plays on the keys of this life's unsolved mysteries, shall poet, theologian, and philosopher discover that 'of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.' (Romans 11 : 36).

Thirdly, *I am a Calvinist because this theology is supported by objective testimony.* The phenomena of human experience with singular unanimity endorse its findings. Is it a fact that Almighty God elected to pass by the fallen angels, and to buy back unto Himself a much more worthless and unattractive race? Is it a fact that the Eternal Jehovah selected one people from among the many nations of the earth as the recipients of special favour; and if so, were they chosen on the ground of any overwhelming unselfishness, humility, integrity, or generous-heartedness? Is it a fact that Anglo-Saxons have been reared in an atmosphere of special civil, social, educational, and spiritual blessings, though Balolos and Hottentots are bereft of philanthropic, intellectual, and religious advantages? Is it a fact that we in this assembly are saved and justified by the grace of God, whereas many of our old playmates and school-fellows, more gifted, more amiable, more advantaged than we, are now this day outside of Christ, and in some instances lost in a grim eternity? Is it a fact that riches, gifts, graces, brains, friends, are unequally, and, as it seems to us, often unevenly divided? Is it a fact that climate, physical, social, educational, political, national, and religious surroundings largely shape our lives, and govern and control their future? I have no desire, brethren, to turn myself into a kind of theological Mr. Gradgrind: but, like him, I say, 'Give me facts, sir, facts, facts!' We are told that it is only legendary to suppose, in this enlightened day, that tens of thousands of skilled warriors fled before a handful of Israelites—that God

Almighty interposed to break up worldly Jehoshaphat's ships, and to spoil his ambitious trading enterprise by an unfavourable wind at Ezion-geber—that mighty King Sennacherib's army became dead corpses, and he returned home baffled and discomfited by an angel of the Lord. Well, it may be so; but what of those stranger 'legends' nearer home—the flower of Continental armies panic-stricken and routed before a singing Hussite band—a sudden storm, and the sea engulfing Philip of Spain's Armada and ambitions by England's southern shores, while a propitious wind gently wafts our Protestant Prince of Orange across the Channel—a Russian snow-storm turning the fate of Europe when the Jehovah fought out *His* Waterloo with Bonaparte? If the free will of wealthy royal Xerxes caused defeat to Persia, who dare assert that free will constituted the poor clerk Clive master of India? If free will caused Erasmus, graced and gifted, to die a worthless trimmer, who dare assert that the rough, plain-spoken Luther planned his way from the monk's cloister to the conquest of Pope and devil at Worms? If free will caused the scion of a noble house to end his days, unwept, uncoffined, and unknown, who dare assert it led the peasant boy 'from log cabin to White House' to die President of the great Western Republic? Who or what is responsible for all these things? Fate, chance, God? We would indeed be sorriest idiots did we not respond, in the language of the world's greatest poet—

'There's a divinity that shapes our ends,  
Rough-hew them how we will'.

Fourthly, *I am a Calvinist because this theology appeals to my subjective experience.* Rejoicing in the conscious knowledge of salvation, and loving my God this day, I solemnly avow the reason is, because He first loved me (1 John 4 : 19). I dare say naught else; it would be contrary to fact, a libel on my memory, which affirms the truth that—

'I once was a stranger to grace and to God:

I knew not my danger, and felt not my load;

Though friends spoke in rapture of Christ on the tree,

Jehovah Tsidkenu was nothing to me':

but our peerless, tender Saviour, in the obstinacy of His irresistible love, conquered the waywardness of my rebellious heart, and wooed and won me for Himself. I am wondering, with a more supreme astonishment each day, why He did it; but in every onward step of life must bear my humble steadfast testimony that I have seen His hand and recognised His wisdom.

'With mercy and with judgment  
 My web of time He wove;  
 And aye the dews of sorrow  
 Were lusted with His love.  
 I'll bless the hand that guided,  
 I'll bless the heart that planned,  
 When throned where glory dwelleth  
 In Immanuel's Land.'

Brethren, is not this your witness, too? Nay, further, is it not the testimony of every ransomed soul? I verily believe that, in his heart of hearts, as on his knees, every genuinely-regenerated man, whatever he may profess theologically, is at bottom a Calvinist. We cannot reject the aggregated mass of subjective evidence drawn from the hearts and lives of regenerated humanity.

Ay! and the wearinesses, conflicts, storms, and sins of life are all so many factors forcing redeemed men and women up to the same great truth. The loosening of earth-ties, the facing of human and Satanic antagonisms, and the ever-widening and deepening consciousness of human need and creature frailty teach us, increasingly, our utter and continual dependence, in all we have and hope for, in heart and life and work, upon God's all-sufficient momentary grace. Will you pardon a personal allusion? I started life a mild Arminian, believing that God foreknew something grace-worthy and respectable in me (though it must have long since disappeared, for I can now discover no trace of it); then I became a theoretical Calvinist through the sermons of C. H. Spurgeon; but it was not until the devil himself taught me (and as a Christian, too) my overwhelming sinfulness and his exceeding subtlety and strength, that I became a practical Calvinist. Thus may even Satan's wickedness be overruled of God to inculcate sound theology. I do affirm, and state it solemnly, this strange trio—the gracious Holy Spirit, the devil, and a noble preacher—were my divinity instructors in the practical doctrines of grace.

*(To be continued)*

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*Just as the merciful Father offers us the Son through the Word of the Gospel, so we embrace Him through faith and acknowledge Him as given to us. It is true that the Word of the Gospel calls all to participate in Christ, but a number, blinded and hardened by unbelief, despise such a unique grace. Hence, only believers enjoy Christ; they receive Him as sent to them; they do not reject Him when He is given, but follow Him when He calls them.—JOHN CALVIN.*

# The Attributes of GOD

FERRELL GRISWOLD

Simonides, a heathen poet, being asked by Hiero, king of Syracuse, 'What is God?' desired a day to think upon it; and when that day was at an end, he desired two days; and when these were past, he desired four days. Thus he continued to double the number of days in which he desired to think of God, ere he would give an answer. Upon which, the king expressing his surprise at his behaviour, asked him what he meant by this. To which the poet answered, 'The more I think of God, He is still the more dark and unknown to me!' Indeed no wonder that he made such an answer, for the true God is not only past finding out in His ways, but in His Person and Perfections as well.

Man, by nature, is religious, and worships them who by nature are no gods (Galatians 4 : 8). He worships that which is the image of his own imagination, which image is created out of self love and, in the long-run, is nothing more than a worship of self and demons. His worship is controlled by a darkened understanding, a perverse will, and a heart of enmity against that which is Truth. He does not know the true God, and cannot find Him out by wisdom. A knowledge of the true God comes from a searching into the Word of God (the Scriptures) under the illumination of the Spirit of God. In the Scriptures we find that God is by nature God, and is the only fit Object of worship and adoration. This fitness of nature we call the attributes or perfections of God. By His attributes, we mean those necessary characteristics of His nature that make Him God. Although God is above the comprehension of all men, and certainly cannot be known by a sin-darkened mind, yet there are many things that He has seen fit to reveal that can be comprehended by man. It is man's duty to search after this God that he might know Him in His true character. A knowledge of God is absolutely necessary to one's salvation, for an unknown God can neither be worshipped nor loved. It is the purpose of your writer to bring before you several of these perfections with the desire that you carefully study to see if this be the God whom you worship. If you are a member of the family of heaven you will find that you love this God of

the Bible, but if you are yet in your sins you will find enmity in your heart against Him.

### I. GOD IS A PERFECT SPIRIT!

Christ said, 'God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth' (John 4 : 24).

This means that God is not a body, and does not possess a body. There cannot be perfection to a body, but limitation, which admits imperfection. The Bible reveals that God is omnipresent and independent. If He had a body as does man He could be neither. A body would limit Him to one place at a time which would rule out His inherent perfection. Also, a body would destroy the independency of God. A body is dependent upon its several members, and, being a compound, rules out independency. But, did not Christ have a body, and is He not God? Yes, He had a body, which He assumed in His incarnation, and He is God. But it must be remembered that He had humanity also. His was a human body, and as man He was limited. He did not cease to be God, although He had taken upon Himself a human nature, and as God He was perfect Spirit with full omnipresence and independency.

Does not the Bible ascribe bodily parts to God? Yes, but these are ascribed to Him only figuratively, and for the purpose of illustrating His perfections to us. The Scriptures often use language in a manner to accommodate our finite minds. God is said to have a 'face' (Psalm 27 : 8) to illustrate His presence; He is said to have 'eyes' (Proverbs 15 : 3) to illustrate His omniscience; i.e. that everything is known to Him, and is beheld by Him. He is said to have 'ears' (Isaiah 59 : 1) to show His ability and readiness to hear His people when they call unto Him; He is spoken of as having a 'nose' to show that He accepts His people in Christ as a sweet smelling savour, or His rejection of people as something that stinks in His presence; a 'mouth' is ascribed to Him (Isaiah 1 : 20) to illustrate His commands and promises; His 'arms' are for the purpose of showing His power and strength. Therefore our God in illustrating His perfections in this manner shows Himself able to meet every need of His people and to have full sufficiency in all things.

If God is free from a compound body then we must rule out images of Him. Not only does it go contrary to the Word of God to make images of God, but it shows the misconception men have of God. They think Him to be one as themselves. He is to most just an 'old grey-haired man' with love to all.

This is not the God of the Bible, but the god of man's imagination. It is idolatry to have any representation on earth of things in heaven. We are not to have pictures of God, Christ, angels, the heavenly city, etc. 'And the Lord spake unto you out of the midst of the fire; ye heard the voice of the words, BUT SAW NO SIMILITUDE; only ye heard a voice. And he declared unto you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, even the ten commandments; and he wrote them upon two tables of stone. And the Lord commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and judgments, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go over to possess it. Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves; for ye SAW NO MANNER OF SIMILITUDE on the day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire: *lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image*, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female, the likeness of any beast that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged fowl that flieth in the air, the likeness of anything that creepeth on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the waters beneath the earth; and lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even all the host of heaven, shouldest be driven to worship them, and serve them, which the Lord thy God hath divided unto all nations under the whole heaven' (Deuteronomy 4 : 12-19). 'Thou shalt have none other gods before me. *Thou shalt not make thee any graven image*, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the waters beneath the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me, and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments' (Deuteronomy 5 : 7-10).

The only pictures that Christ left of Himself are the Word of God and the Lord's Supper. As we read the Scriptures we receive a full picture of God in His perfections, and as we come to the Lord's table in communion we have a picture of Christ in all of His sufferings. We must not have crucifixes, man-made paintings, images of Christ, Mary, the apostles, or angels. These externals are of no value in our worship of God. To pray before a painting or an image is idolatry, and is not a worship of the God of the Bible! God is Spirit and we worship Him in spirit and in truth. We worship Him spiritually, out of a spiritual nature; in the truth as it is

revealed in the Scriptures, and in opposition to types and shadows. This is the true worship of God, and is that which He receives.

God is Spirit! Again, this means that He not only is without a body, but that *He is invisible and immortal*. 'Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only-wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen' (1 Timothy 1 : 17). 'Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see; to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen' (1 Timothy 6 : 15-16). Again, we see that God has been seen by no man. When Jesus Christ was upon the earth in the days of His flesh men did not see His Divine nature, His Godhood, except as He illustrated it in His works and words. They saw only His human body, which veiled His Deity. Eyes cannot behold spirit except through the activities of that spirit. God being Spirit is invisible and immortal. Bodily substance can perish, but not spirit. Also, these verses tell us that God is eternal. Matter is not eternal. It was created by God, and had a beginning. Body is matter, therefore God who is eternal is not body. Oh, Divine mystery! Oh, marvellous thought that such a perfect One would condescend to have fellowship with man, and provide for him life eternal!

I must close my observations under this perfection of God by stating that we see in what way man was made in the image of God in his original creation, and what that image is that is renewed in regeneration. It is not our bodily substance that was made in the likeness of God, but that we were made spiritual beings. As man left the hands of his Creator he was holy as well as spiritual. In his fall into sin he lost this likeness. In regeneration it is this likeness of holiness and spirituality that is restored. 'And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, WHICH AFTER GOD IS CREATED IN RIGHTEOUSNESS AND TRUE HOLINESS' (Ephesians 4 : 23-24).

## II. GOD IS INFINITE

The infinity of God means that He is unbounded and unlimited, immeasurable, unsearchable, and not to be comprehended. This statement of definition is of utmost importance, and I urge you to give attention to it. Herein is declared that God is eternal and cannot be bound down to time; that He is omnipresent, and cannot be limited to space; that He is unsearchable, immeasurable, and cannot be found out by man's

wisdom or science, but must be revealed according to His own will; and that He is not to be comprehended, i.e., He cannot be fully understood and known when He sees fit to reveal Himself to His creatures. There is much of God that we can comprehend, but it is impossible to comprehend Him in His fullness. 'Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?' (Job 11 : 7). 'O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and His ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?' (Romans 11 : 33-34).

*God is infinite in respect to His being.* Man's science cannot arrive at the proper conclusions concerning His being and person. Who of their own wisdom will conclude that there is one God? Who of his own knowledge found out that this one God is Three, consisting of three Persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? Who can tell me of all His perfections and claim that they searched these out of themselves? The answer—NONE! God is known only by revelation. Christ Jesus, the Son of God, in His incarnation tells forth the Being of God. From God we have the Scriptures which give a further revelation of His Being. God must make Himself known, for He is far above the wisdom of man.

*In respect of place God is omnipresent,* and cannot be measured, or limited. It will help to understand that the presence of God can be divided into His *glorious presence*, which is in heaven, and is spoken of as His throne. There is His *essential presence*, wherein He is everywhere at the same time. This does not mean that God is evenly distributed over the vast universe, but that all of God is everywhere present at the same time. Marvellous mystery! Then there is *the gracious presence of God*: which is with His people in salvation, worship, fellowship, etc. It is this presence that He promises where two or three are gathered together. It is this presence that we pray for Him to give, and not to take away. This division will help us to understand much of what is written of our God in the Scriptures. But God's omnipresence shows His infinity, and the testimony of Scripture concerning this is evident: 'O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;

it is high, I cannot attain unto it. Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me' (Psalm 139 : 1-10). 'Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?' (Isaiah 66 : 1). 'Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord' (Jeremiah 23 : 23-24).

*In respect of time God is eternal*, and cannot be bound down to days, years, past, present, and future. He always has been, and He always will be! He is without beginning or ending. He is the eternal 'I Am'. He is spoken of as having eternal power (Romans 1 : 20), eternal knowledge (Acts 15 : 18), and eternal mercy (Psalm 103 : 17). To these we can add all His attributes and perfections, for these are essential to Him, and are part of His blessed nature. There has never been a time in which He was without these perfections, and there will never be a time when He shall cease to be all that we shall try to bring before you in this study. Also, God has always existed as a blessed Trinity, in the Persons of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. They are co-eternal, and there has never been a time, nor will there ever be a time when the Father is without the Son and the Spirit, the Son without the Father and the Spirit, and the Spirit without the Father and Son. The Scriptures declare the *Father to be eternal*: 'Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God' (Psalm 90 : 2). *The Son is eternal*: 'But thou, Beth-lehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting' (Micah 5 : 2). This is a prophecy of the birth and incarnation of Christ, and where He was to be born. He who was to be born in time is said to be 'from everlasting', that is, eternal with the Father. *The Spirit is eternal*: 'How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through THE ETERNAL SPIRIT offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? (Hebrews 9 : 14).

In view of the fact that God is infinite, and being infinite is eternal, everywhere present at the same time, and knows all

things at once, we should be encouraged at the thought of redemption being in His hands, and of His purpose. There is no possibility of a miscarriage in salvation if it is of the Lord. He has the power to redeem; He is present everywhere, therefore can search out His own and apply redemption; being eternal in power He can make it effectual in the lives of the redeemed.

On the other hand, a knowledge of this should strike terror in the hearts of the ungodly sinners who despise this God of the Bible. He knows your whereabouts, your frame of mind, and there is not one thought, deed, or desire hidden from Him. He states that every sin will receive its recompense of reward. He has the wisdom, power, and eternity to carry out His threats against you that know Him not in redemption through Christ the Lord.

What an incentive it should be to fly to Him from wrath through the mercy that is in Christ Jesus, to know that such a perfect, spiritual, infinite, eternal, omnipresent, omnipotent One as this has regarded man in His purpose, and in justice and mercy has provided the only suitable Sacrifice to take away the wrath of the law, and to pardon sins. You must not come to God apart from Christ, or you will find Him a devouring fire. If you would find mercy and forgiveness of sins you must come pleading Christ's merits and blood between you and your sins, and for acceptance only in Him!

### III. THE IMMUTABILITY OF GOD

The attributes of God divide themselves into communicable and incommunicable, the former being those attributes which are seen to some degree in man and the latter being those that may be predicated of God alone. The communicable attributes include the love, hate, mercy, justice and knowledge of God, whilst the incommunicable attributes would include His immutability. This means that God is unchangeable, and is not subject to, nor ever will be subject to, change. This is a steadfast anchor for the believer in this uncertain time when events are changing with such rapidity that it makes one's head swim! Oh, the joy to know that He who is in control of all events is the unchangeable One! Oh, to have faith in the fact that all is working according to His eternal purpose, for His glory, and for the good of the elect! Only the God who is unchangeable is worthy of our trust in times like these; and only to the God of the Bible is ascribed this perfection: 'For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed' (Malachi 3 : 6). 'Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and cometh down from the Father

of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning' (James 1 : 17).

First, we will note wherein God is immutable. He is unchangeable in His nature, in His perfections, in His love, in His purpose, and in His covenant.

God is immutable in His *nature*. 'But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end' (Psalm 102 : 27). 'Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever' (Hebrews 13 : 8). If God were not always the same in His nature He would cease to be God. If He were to change it would have to be for better or worse. It could not be for better for He is perfect in every way now, therefore it would be for worse; and for Him to become worse would be an imperfection which would not allow Him to be God. That our God can never change for the better, for there is no imperfection in Him that would admit betterment, and that He cannot change for the worse because He is immutable in this state of absolute holiness, ought to bring forth praise from the heart of every true believer!

God is immutable in His *perfections*. All His attributes are essential to His nature and therefore cannot be changeable. He could never change in His perfection of power. He now has all power and authority which He can neither lose nor increase. His power is the same from eternity past to eternity future. He can never change in His knowledge. There is nothing that He does not know, or has not known from eternity. He cannot learn anything because there is no imperfection in His knowledge. He is unchangeable in His faithfulness. Every promise that He has made will be accomplished. Every threat that has been given will be brought to pass. If He has placed His promises and threats upon conditions we can be sure that these will be certain as to the conditions being met or failed in. We could take every attribute (which is not necessary to the purpose of this study) and illustrate them to be immutable. If God is immutable then it is necessary that His perfections be so too.

God is immutable in His *purpose*. 'The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of His heart to all generations' (Psalm 33 : 11). 'The eternal purpose which He has purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord' (Ephesians 3 : 11). The purpose of God has interest in every thing that comes to pass, and in a special covenant way with the things of salvation. This is His secret will that is known only as His predestinated plan is worked out in providence, and is brought to light through the Word of God. What He has purposed before the foundation

of the world will be brought to pass with accuracy, and in His appointed time. He does not make plans and change them because of unforeseen events. He has a perfect knowledge of all events, and all circumstances are in His perfect control. I grant that some of the things of God's secret will are not to be understood by man, and there are many things in which we are unable to see His hand directly, but this does not mean that He is not in control. These dark things belong to Him, and in glory we will see the purpose of them. The things that are revealed belong unto us, therefore let us obey herein, and trust all else to His wisdom.

God is immutable in His *love*. This the Arminian world cannot take. Their problem is that they have a 'god' that is enslaved to their own wills, and cannot do anything with perfection from eternity. But to the child of God it is no problem to see that if God loves, it is an act of His sovereign will, and that He chooses the objects of this love. Understand, God's love is not emotional, nor governed by the nature of the creature. He set His love upon us when we were unlovely. Also, God does not hate His elect up to a point in their experience, and then change that hatred into love, but His love determines who it is that will be the object of His redemption. You say, 'But, are not the elect "children of wrath, even as others"?' Yes, this is what the Scriptures declare. The problem is solved when we remember that God views all men as to what they are *by nature*—therefore even the elect are spoken of as the children of wrath—and what they are *by His eternal decree*—therefore they are already loved, redeemed, called, justified, and glorified. 'For a small amount have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer. For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee' (Isaiah 54 : 7-10). As a word of caution let me say, You that do not know Christ as Redeemer, you that have not embraced Him by faith, you that have not fled to Him from the wrath to come, can take no pleasure in the thoughts of God's eternal, unchangeable, love! You cannot know that you are in this love until you are brought to the end of your sins and know Christ to be your Saviour! The objects of His love are in His secret counsels until they are brought to

a saving knowledge of Christ. To all whom He loves He reveals Christ. All who are the objects of His love are brought to the realisation of His purpose, i.e., holiness and conformity to the image of Christ. You must conclude that you are a child of wrath as long as you appear to be such in your experience. Flee to Christ and then, and not before, I will declare that you are an object of His love!

God is immutable in His *covenant* of mercy and redemption. This covenant is the eternal agreement of the Godhead in the redemption of a people who were elected by the Father, given to Christ, for whom He was to be Mediator, Surety, and Substitute, by which their sins were to be laid upon Him, and a full payment for them made into the hands of justice. This covenant guaranteed that those for whom Christ died would be given life by the Holy Spirit, and brought into the full enjoyment of the benefits of salvation. These benefits are called the 'sure mercies of David'. Christ Himself is given to the elect for a covenant, with the promise that He will not fail, but will fully accomplish salvation for those given to Him. 'Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him; he shall bring forth judgment (salvation) to the Gentiles . . . *He shall not fail nor be discouraged*, till he have set judgment (salvation) in the earth; and the isles shall wait for his law . . . I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and *give thee for a covenant of the people*, for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house. I am the Lord: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images' (Isaiah 42 : 1, 2, 4, 6-8). This covenant is not only eternal, but is immutable. It cannot be defeated, nor will God change that which He purposed therein. He has both wisdom and power to bring it to pass as it was determined before the foundation of the world. All that were elected are redeemed by Jesus Christ; all that were redeemed will be effectually called by the Spirit. All the elected, redeemed, called-out ones, will persevere in grace and be brought to glorification. Christ 'shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied'. If we did not have this foundation to faith we would be most miserable. We could not be sure that Christ would have a people. We could not be sure that any who now have a hope in Christ

would ever be brought to glory! But, praise His Name, we can be sure! He has promised, and He will fulfil. He cannot deny Himself!

Second, there are some difficulties that must be viewed at this time in reference to the unchangeableness of God. These difficulties are in the form of objections that unbelievers have brought against the immutability of God. Objection one: If God is unchangeable, what about creation? There was a time when there was no creation, and then God brought into existence the worlds; is this not a change? This is no change in God, but in the outward existence of things. God has had all creative power from eternity, therefore there was no change in His power. He had eternally decreed to create, therefore there is no change in His purpose. And, besides, in speaking of the creation, the Scriptures state that there was no change in God: 'Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. THEY shall perish, but THOU shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end' (Psalm 102 : 25-27).

Objection two: If God is unchangeable, and Christ is God, what about His incarnation, wherein He became man? This objection is removed when we remember that in His incarnation Christ had two natures: deity, which is eternal; humanity, which He assumed in time. In His incarnation He did not cease to be God, nor was there any change that took place in His deity. He was the same eternal, omnipresent, omnipotent God that He was before the incarnation. The change that took place in His birth, growing, dying, etc., was within His human nature, and not within the divine. Concerning the purpose of God in this: He was from of old pre-determined to become man as our Representative.

Objection three: What about the providence of God, and its constant change? In providential changes it is only God's outward dealings with men that undergo such a change, and not the nature or purpose of God. God has made certain conditional laws wherein there will be a change in the outward ministrations of His providence according to our obedience or disobedience. This does not change His eternal, secret purpose, which has ordained even these things, but the change is within

the creature. 'But he is in one mind, and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth, even that he doeth. *For he performeth the thing that is appointed for me:* and many such things are with him' (Job 23 : 13-14).

We could give other objections against the immutability of God, such as, prayer, Scripture language that seems to speak of change in Him, etc., but this is unnecessary since they can be answered as the above objections. Prayer never changes the purpose of God, but is an act of submission on the part of the believer wherein he is brought into harmony with the will and purpose of God. When God is said to repent it does not mean change in Him, but this is language to accommodate man. The change is in man, wherein there appears to be a change in the treatment by God of man. The change is not in God but in outward providence. Though these are things above our understanding we can trust the Word to be true, and put full confidence in God that He is the same from eternity past, now, and throughout eternity future!

(To be continued)

*'Predestination to life is the everlasting purpose of God, whereby, before the foundations of the world were laid, He hath constantly decreed by His counsel, secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation those whom He hath chosen in Christ out of mankind, and to bring them by Christ to everlasting life as vessels of honour. Wherefore they which be endued with so excellent a benefit be called according to God's purpose by His Spirit.'*—ARTICLE 17.

*'As the godly consideration of predestination, and our election in Christ, is full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly persons . . . so, for curious and carnal persons, lacking the Spirit of God, to have continually before their eyes the sentence of God's Predestination, is a most dangerous downfall, whereby the devil doth thrust them into desperation.'*—ARTICLE 17.

# EVOLUTION

E. W. JOHNSON

*A broadcast talk on the subject by the Minister  
of Calvary Baptist Church, Pine Bluff,  
Arkansas. U.S.A.*

(Continued from previous issue)

We are considering evolution as the cultural myth of our generation. We have already related our theme to Romans chapter 1 and must now consider it in relation to the 14th Psalm.

We see in this Psalm that men are religiously foolish. The apostle Paul makes reference to this Psalm in the 3rd chapter of his letter to the Romans to teach the universality and completeness of the fallen condition of mankind.

The religious foolishness of mankind is due to the fact that men say in their hearts that there is no God, when in their hearts they know that there is. God has made man upright, but in his denial of God, man has sought out many inventions.

Out of this denial of God, man has brought forth his myths, and out of this has come his corrupt and abominable works. And out of this has come man's contempt of those who are poor in spirit, who trust in the living God, as we can see in this 14th Psalm.

But the Psalmist goes on to speak of another day, the day when the salvation of Israel shall come out of Zion. In that day, men shall be driven from their foolishness in which they would deny the existence of God.

Every generation has had its myths in which men would seek to get away from the pure fear of God, to corrupt the knowledge of Him in their hearts. Our generation also has a myth in which men do this.

The myth of our generation, being a generation which has turned to something called *science* as its great source of truth, is not basically religious in character. It is scientific.

All myths, if they are to be believed, must be based on certain facts, but they must ignore certain other facts. I want to show those facts which the myth of evolution would ignore. In a succeeding talk I shall show that the evidences upon which evolution is based are not conclusive.

Let us look at those facts which evolution ignores.

### **I. Evolution ignores the evidence for a young earth.**

Evolutionists have a trinity in their concept of creation. They believe a trinity created the heavens and the earth, and all things in them, but their creating trinity is not the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The creating trinity of evolution is pre-existing material things, time, and chance. Theoretically almost anything can come about by chance, if you have enough time. Let me illustrate this. I flip a coin. Fifty per cent of the time it lands on the heads side. Fifty per cent of the time it lands on the tails side. But there is the possibility that it will not always land this way, if I flip the coin a sufficient number of times.

There is the possibility that, given enough time to do the flipping, that the coin will land on its edge, and not fall over to be either heads up or tails up.

Thus you can see that, given enough time, theoretically a remote possibility can come up. The scientific world in our generation believes that the difference between an organic compound and an in-organic compound is basically the complex arrangement of the molecules in the former.

And they believe that this very, very complex arrangement of the molecules would come up, like the coin landing on its edge and not falling over to be either heads up or tails up, given enough time.

And they believe that this living material has within itself vast possibilities of adjustment to environmental conditions. Thus given enough time, this minute form of life, in the organic material which has come about by chance, can evolve into the vast complexities of life which we see today.

They even believe that man has thus developed, but their thought is mythological. I just cannot swallow the myth. I simply do not believe that chance can devise such a complex organic compound, which can develop into the vast intricacies of life, including man, which we see about us today. However much time they add to the mythological stew, to make it palatable, I cannot swallow it.

But the real fly in this mythological ointment is this—modern science simply does not have as much time back there in ages gone by as they think they need, in order to make their myth plausible. So, what do they do? They ignore the evidence that the earth is not as old as they like to think it is!

The reason why I do not believe the earth has been here as long as the evolutionists say it has is this: We know that great

rivers, as the Mississippi and Amazon, flow into the oceans every hour of the day. And yet the oceans are not getting any fuller. What becomes of all this water which is flowing into the oceans? It is evaporating, and falling back to the earth as rains.

Now, these rains and these rivers are bound to be washing vast amounts of soluble salts into the oceans every day, every hour, but these salts are not taken up out of the oceans, as the waters evaporate. Therefore, the oceans are bound to be getting saltier every day, every hour. If the earth has been here as long as the evolutionists say it has, the oceans by this time would be as dead with salt as the Dead Sea.

Evolution is based, in this dependence on vast amounts of time in ages gone by, on what is known as uniformitarian geology. Charles Darwin stood, as it were, on the shoulders of Charles Lyell. Charles Lyell with his uniformitarian geology gave Charles Darwin all the time he needed for his theory.

Before Charles Lyell, men believed that great changes which we can see in the earth, as the Grand Canyon, came about because of great catastrophes in ages gone by. This system of looking at the geology of the earth is known as catastrophic geology. Lyell overthrew this concept in the scientific thought of the world. He said that the present is the key to the past. He said that no great changes took place back there which are not taking place today.

If this is so, if the Grand Canyon for example was cut by erosion, then it took a long time for it to get that way. If modern science is based on this concept of Charles Lyell, let them take a look at the oceans of the earth. Why are not they far saltier than they are today?

There are other evidences for a young earth to which modern science closes its mind. For example, every time a comet rounds the sun, parts of it are knocked out of it by radiations from the sun. This is the reason why a comet, when it approaches the sun and gets about as far away as Mars, begin to show a tail. Parts of it are being knocked out of it.

If the universe, of which this earth is a part, were as old as the evolutionists would have us believe, there would be no comets left. Otherwise, their rejection of catastrophic geology is overthrown.

## II. Evolution ignores the uniqueness of man.

If evolution is true, then the difference between man and animal is fundamentally that of degree and not of kind, but there are evidences that man differs from the animal, not merely in degree, but in kind.

The animal is incapable of pure, abstract thought, which is evidenced in his being without a true symbolic language. An animal has certain sounds with which he communicates with another animal, and an animal can be conditioned to respond to man by certain sounds, as when we teach our dog to come to heel or to fetch.

But the animal is without the use of visible symbols which represent not merely sounds, but pure abstract thought which is set forth by these sounds. A young chimpanzee has a high degree of intelligence which for a time is comparable to that of a human infant, but when that human baby and that chimpanzee reach a certain age, a wonderful thing happens. You cannot keep that human baby from beginning to convey its thought with language, yet you cannot teach the chimpanzee how to do this. Small children will quickly develop a language of their own, if we do not teach them the right names for things, for language is a part of our very being, because abstract thought is a part of our very make up. We differ from the animal in this, not merely in degree, but because we are a different kind of creature from him. We have a rational soul.

The second difference between man and animal which is not merely one of degree, but one of kind, is this: The animal shows no signs of a religious consciousness, but man is incurably religious. His religion might be all fouled up, but he will be religious.

## III. The third field of thought into which modern science does not go is that of absolute beginnings.

Evolution, whatever truth might be in it, could only explain *change*. It could never explain beginning, certainly not in the truest sense of this word. The term *evolution* speaks only of *change*. That which evolves, or turns over, only changes. And as sure as *change* is of the essence of the concept, that which changes not cannot be presupposed by the theory. All three of the creating gods of the evolutionary theory, time, chance, and eternally-existing material, are idols fashioned in the myths of men—gods of clay without substance.

They are telling us today that God is dead. They tell us that He never existed except as an explanation for things in the minds of men. They are telling us today that we do not need the concept of God any more, for all things can now be explained without the concept.

But before we lay aside the God of Moses and of Jesus Christ, let us take a second look at the trinity of the evolutionists—time, chance, and pre-existing material things.

### ANNOUNCEMENT

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# Book Reviews

**The Reformed Faith.** Robert Shaw. Christian Focus Publications. 335 pp. £1.50.

This is a reprint of the 'Exposition of the Westminster Confession of Faith' which first appeared in 1845. Its author was Robert Shaw, minister of the Gospel at Whitburn, West Lothian, and Clerk of the Original Secession Synod from 1834 until the Union of 1852. This is the first production of a new publishing house—Christian Focus Publications—and it appears under a new title.

The exposition is eminently readable and the author strengthens his own work with quotations from some of the really great names in theology. In this respect he is particularly indebted to Dick's 'Lectures on Theology', which, as Principal John Macleod said, 'would do credit to the best days of the Secession'. The book also includes a very fine introductory essay by William M. Hetherington whose own 'History of the Westminster Assembly' is a work of considerable merit.

In preparing the exposition, it was the author's intention 'to state the truths embraced in each section, to explain the terms employed wherever it seemed necessary, and to illustrate and confirm the doctrines'; and being convinced that every truth set down in the Confession is most agreeable to the Word of God, the author says in his preface that he did not find it necessary to differ from the compilers of the Confession in any one point of doctrine. This is at once the strength and weakness of the book. As Shaw expounds the sections dealing, for example, with such themes as double predestination and the extent of the Atonement, one is conscious of the strength of the author's position. However unpalatable these doctrines may be to many—even to some who ostensibly subscribe to the Westminster Confession—the scriptural testimony is presented by Shaw with confidence. But when he comes to deal with the question of Church government and in particular with the Civil Magistrate, we are bound to confess that his exposition is not as detailed as we might wish it to be.

In the first place we are told that the *Civil Magistrate* really means the *State*, or supreme civil power of the nation. Yet the author goes on to say that the Confession speaks of 'such a magistrate as is also a Christian, making a profession of the true religion'. It might be argued that such circular reasoning involves him in the hoary problem of a sacral society. In any

event he does not deal with the much more likely circumstances where the magistrates are not christian! Nor does Shaw tell us how the magistrate shall 'take order . . . that all blasphemies and heresies be suppressed etc.'

After all, when some otherwise perfectly convinced Presbyterians have sought to make a reserved subscription to the Confession because of their inability to accept it at this point, and whilst others undoubtedly indulge in dishonesty, both intellectual and moral, by subscribing whilst not believing, it will hardly be wondered at if many outside the Presbyterian pale reject this position altogether.

Nevertheless we heartily welcome Shaw's exposition of the Confession. Our admiration for the Westminster Standards as a whole ensures a ready welcome for any volume written on them from a sympathetic point of view. We also wish Christian Focus Publications well. We note that they intend publishing McCheyne's 'Basket of Fragments' and we are convinced that publications of this kind, as attractively bound and modestly priced as the volume under review, can only do good.

ROBERT RODGERS.

**Lady Colquhoun.** James Hamilton. 210 pp. pbk. 45p.

**Sidelights on Two Notable Ministries.** 210 pp. pbk. 45p.

Both published by Free Presbyterian Publications, Scotland.

Many Christians have cause to be grateful for the publication of biographies as these have often proved, in the providence of God, to be a rich source of help and encouragement to them. To read of the way in which God has led a believer and accomplished in his life His own gracious designs, is to awaken in our hearts and minds, desires for a similar accomplishment of God's purposes in our own experience.

Unhappily, in this whole area of biography, the 20th century has run riot and we can now purchase biographies of converts of but a few years' standing who have neither proved nor indeed commended themselves to the churches at large. The subjects of such untimely biographies are usually famous in one way or another, though not necessarily as Christians, and the objectionable practice of publishing such biographies has produced an understandable revulsion on the part of the more discerning Christian readers.

It is therefore pleasing to the reviewer to commend the two volumes which record something of the lives of Lady Col-

quhoun and the brothers, Finlay and Archibald Cook. Lady Colquhoun was a kind of Scottish Countess of Huntingdon and her wealth and position were employed in the service of the Lord. The brothers Cook were Free Church ministers who, though scarcely known beyond the bounds of their own denomination, were singularly faithful and devoted pastors who experienced much of the Lord's blessing. Some letters and sermons are also included.

We trust these volumes will find a wide market and so extend their usefulness.

R.R.

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*'Now what is the end of Election but that, being adopted as children by our Heavenly Father, we may by His favour obtain salvation and immortality? The persons, therefore, whom God has adopted as His children, He is said to have chosen, not in themselves, but in Christ; because it was impossible for Him to love them except in Him, or to honour them with the inheritance of His Kingdom, unless previously made partakers of Him. . . . Christ, therefore, is the mirror in which it behoves us to contemplate our Election, and here we may do it with safety.'*—CALVIN (*Commentaries*).

*'As those who, in order to gain an assurance of their Election, examine into the eternal counsel of God without the Word, plunge themselves into a fatal abyss; so, they who investigate it in a regular and orderly manner, as it is contained in the Word, derive from such enquiry the benefit of peculiar consolation. Let this, then, be our way of enquiry, to begin and end with the calling of God.'*—CALVIN (*Commentaries*).

*Thou canst not lay hold of Christ's righteousness, till thou hast let fall the lie (thy own righteousness) which hitherto thou hast held so fast in thy right hand. When Christ called the blind man to Him, it is said, 'He casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus' (Mark 10:50). Do thou likewise, and then come and welcome.*—GURNALL.

*Every praying man that perisheth was a hypocrite; the faithfulness of God in His promises will not allow us to judge otherwise.*—OWEN.